



Annual Report

2022-23

justicesupportcentre.org.au

Message from the CEO



Melanie Noden, CEO

Dear clients, partners, supporters, and stakeholders,

I joined Justice Support Centre as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in March 2023 because I am driven by a long-held passionate belief in social justice. I wanted to bring my experience as a CEO over the last 13 years, to work towards a future in which there is equality of access to justice, and women and children are free from domestic and family violence.

I am thrilled to be joining such a talented group of people. I am grateful to each team member and thank them for their remarkable commitment to our mission.

This is evident through just one example of many testimonials sent to the team in writing which said,

“Thank you for all the support and your amazing work, it has made a huge impact and change for the better in my life that I can heal and feel safe... you are changing lives for the better and making a positive difference.”

In the last year, our services reached a record **10,582** people. This increase in demand is reflected in part by the increase in our community of levels of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV). In New South Wales (NSW) in the last two years to March 2023, domestic violence (DV) related assault is up 5.2%.¹ These figures serve as a reminder of the urgent need for our services and the critical role we play in supporting survivors.

By advocating for policy changes, collaborating with community partners, and raising awareness, we strive to create a society where people have access to justice, violence is not tolerated, and everyone can thrive.

We are particularly proud of the advocacy we did this year to bring about improvements in the Victims Support Scheme (VSS). We also continue the proactive work we do through our education programs, with the goal of empowering the broader community with the knowledge they need to understand their rights and responsibilities.

In our ongoing efforts to serve clients better and meet them where they live, during this year, we opened our new Head Office in Bankstown and expanded to two new satellite offices in Liverpool and Campsie.

We continued to operate out of our office in the city at the Downing Street Courts and our shared smaller spaces in the Sydney Family Courts and the Local Courts in Waverley, Newtown, Bankstown, Fairfield, and Liverpool.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of you - our donors, pro bono partners, funding bodies, peak bodies, and numerous community partners, who support our work and our clients. On behalf of Justice Support Centre, I extend my sincere gratitude for your continued partnership and advocacy.

Together, we will create a future where justice, safety, and support are accessible to all. Thank you for your commitment to our cause.

With gratitude and determination,

Melanie Noden

CEO, Justice Support Centre

¹ Statistic Source: [NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research](#)

Message from the President



Naushee Rahman, President

To our valued partners, clients, stakeholders and supporters,

I invite you to read through the 2022-2023 Annual Report on behalf of Justice Support Centre to gain a comprehensive understanding of our work and the positive changes that have been made. As President of the Board, I am proud to share the significant milestones, achievements, and challenges we have encountered in our pursuit of justice and support for women and children in our community.

First and foremost, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to our former CEO, Yvette Vignado, for her leadership and commitment to the organisation throughout her tenure. Yvette saw us through COVID-19 maintaining a steadfast determination to ensure we could still provide our services through a time that demanded them more than ever. Yvette was also instrumental in the refreshed branding which you see reflected throughout this report, and she championed the strategic vision of the Theory for Change. We extend our sincere thanks to Yvette, and we wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

As we enter a new chapter, this year marks the first full year that we have been operating under the new banner of “Justice Support Centre”. We changed our name given we have extended our services beyond South Western Sydney to cover the Inner West, Central Sydney and the East.

We also celebrate a reinvigorated visual identity (featured on the following page) which represents our aspirational focus on walking together with our clients, supporting them towards their best future. This refreshed image reflects our commitment to inclusivity, empowerment, and resilience as we strive for a society free from violence and discrimination.

Leading us through this time of expansion and our new vibrant presence, it is my great pleasure to formally welcome our new CEO, Melanie Noden, to the Justice Support Centre family. Melanie joins us with a wealth of experience as a CEO and director spanning not-for-profit, legal, corporate and banking sectors. Her expertise and passion for empowering vulnerable communities make her a valuable addition to our team. We look forward to working hand in hand with Melanie as we continue our mission of making a positive difference in the lives of people through equitable access to justice.

None of our accomplishments would have been possible without the dedication of the exceptional team and I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each team member for their hard work, compassion, and professionalism.

In the coming year, we will continue our efforts to address the root causes of domestic violence, enhance our legal support services, and provide holistic care to those in need. We remain committed to empowering survivors, fostering resilience, and working towards a future where every family can live without fear.

On behalf of Justice Support Centre, thank you. Your generous contributions and ongoing commitment have formed the foundation towards helping us create lasting impact.

Naushee Rahman

President, Justice Support Centre

Our new brand



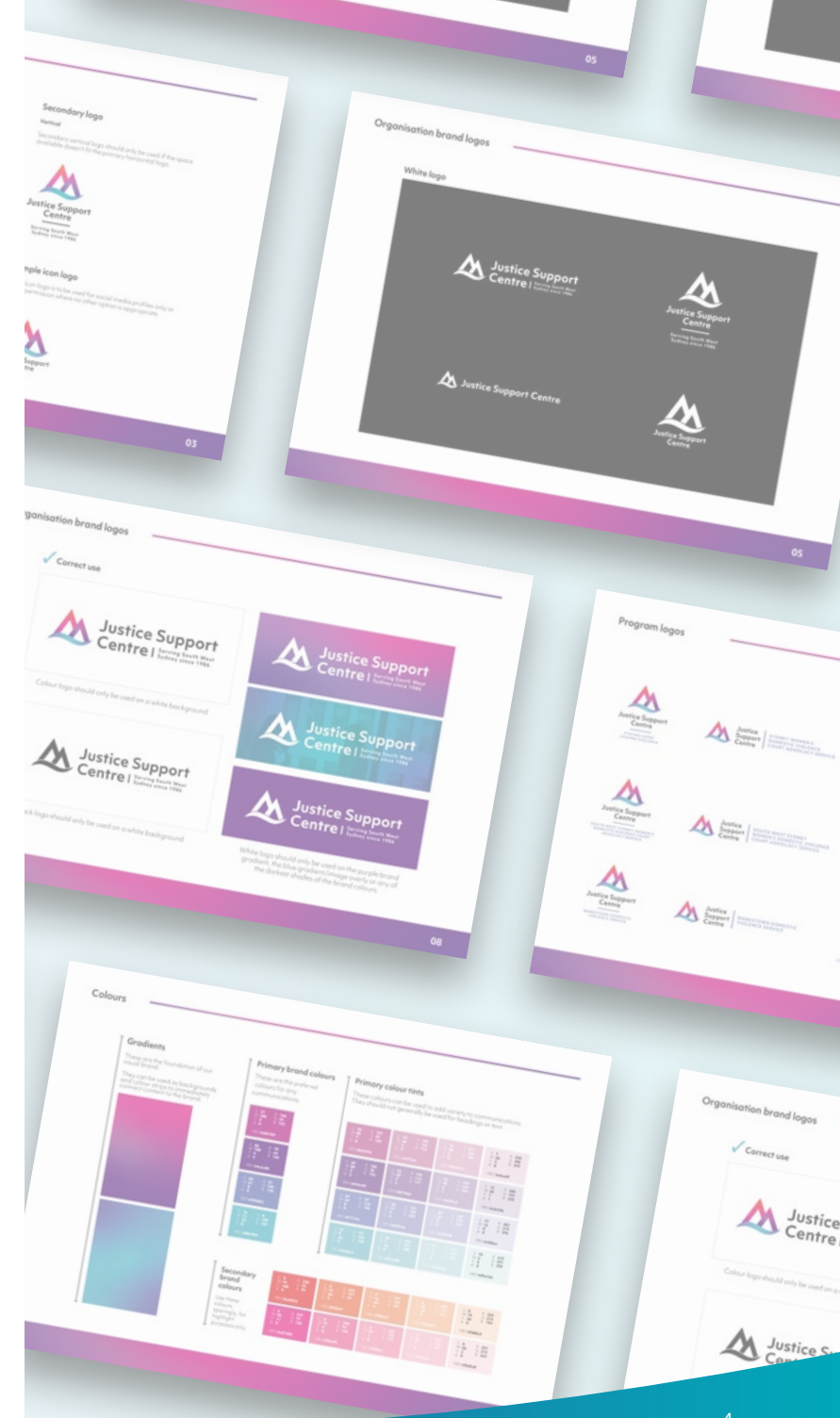
The meaning behind our logo

The Justice Support Centre logo icon was crafted to symbolise our heritage, the work we do and our ethos. The blue river symbol is a calming element. It references the Georges River, which runs through the areas where we were founded and have historically done much of our work.

The two mountain symbols continue the idea of a journey that has expanded over time together with our clients.

In 2022, it was time for change. Having been known as South West Sydney Legal Service, 2022 saw us re-branded to **Justice Support Centre** with a vibrant new brand and logo to support our new name.

The two peaks are side by side, one supporting the other. Our clients are not alone. The symbol of a peak recognises the uphill challenges facing many of our clients, the value we place in them choosing their own path and the strength and resilience we see in them. The gradients represent the light cast on mountain peaks as the sun rises. This evokes a hopeful, forward-looking emotional response. Light can follow dark and change is possible.



About Us

Our vision

A future in which there is equality of access to justice and women and children are free from Domestic and Family Violence (DFV).

Our purpose



To support women and children to break cycles of DFV.



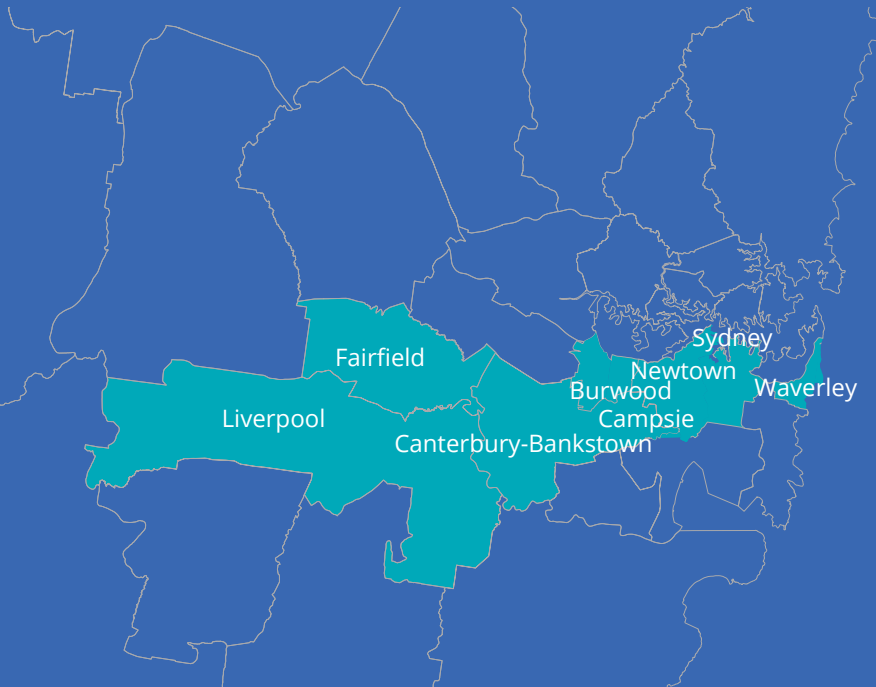
To provide equitable and accessible legal services to our community.

We provide people the guidance, support services and strength they need to claim their rights, know their options, and choose their next step.



Our community

The community we serve stretches from our traditional base in South Western Sydney (SWS) to the City and the East.



10,582

people were reached by our service



7,466

women & children supported by our DFV services – a 24% increase on last year



1,999

people supported by our free legal services – a 5.9% increase on last year



1,117

people attended our Community Legal Education (CLE) sessions

Clients



9,465

Clients accessed our services



4,149

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Clients (approx. 43.86%)



3,552

*Clients under 16yrs of age (approx. 37.55%)

*assisted directly or indirectly



606

Aboriginal Clients (approx. 6.40%)



1,323

Clients living with a Disability (approx. 13.98%)



100%

of the legal clients we surveyed said they would recommend our legal service

*assisted directly or indirectly

What we do

Legal Services

We make sure everyone has access to justice, by supporting people to navigate the legal system, know their rights and resolve a wide range of legal problems.

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Services

Women's Domestic Violence and Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS)

We support women and children to navigate the criminal justice system and gain protection through the courts.



Education & Advocacy

We provide free training workshops and information resources for community members and community workers. We advocate to government on the policy reform and law reform needed to address systemic issues.

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Services

DFV Casework Services

We support women and children who have experienced domestic violence to plan for their safety and rebuild their lives.



Legal Services

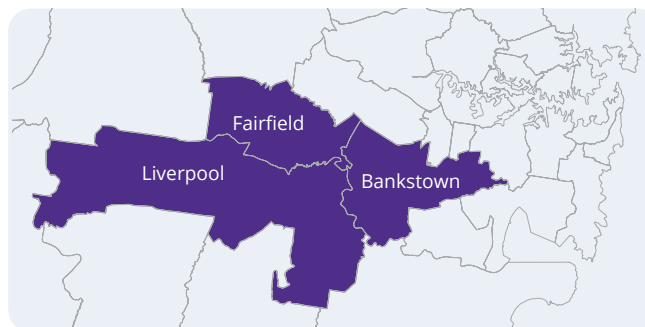
Overview

36 years: empowering justice always

Everyone deserves justice. We support vulnerable and disadvantaged clients to navigate the legal system, know their rights and resolve a wide range of legal problems.

We provide free or reduced-cost legal services to people in our local area who might not be able to access legal support. Our legal service is mainly funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments through the Community Legal Centres Program, administered by our partners at Legal Aid NSW.

The clients came from the following LGAs across SWS:



Who our clients are

Our Legal Service supported **1,999** clients, a **5.9% increase** on last year.



47%
Multicultural



54%
Female



2%
Aboriginal



25%
Living with a disability



31%
at risk of homelessness

Legal services



Civil Law

We acted for **1,314 people** to find justice and the acknowledgment of a wrongdoing.

Our legal team assists clients across an array of civil disputes. We prioritise advocacy and alternative dispute resolution to save our clients time, financial risk and the stress associated with litigation. However, we do not shy away from litigation if that is what is required for our clients.

- Motor Vehicle property damage accidents
- Consumer complaints
- Neighbour disputes
- Credit and debt
- Employment
- Discrimination



Criminal Law

We acted for **976 people** charged with a criminal offence, to ensure they received a fair hearing.

Our lawyers assist clients across a wide range of criminal charges. Our expert advice and legal representation are aimed at ensuring that the rights of the accused and a fair and just legal process are upheld and adhered to.

- Assault
- Theft
- Drug offences
- Traffic offences

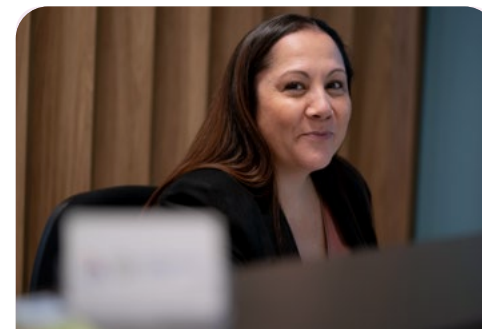


Victims Support

We supported **326 victims** of violent crimes in their recovery by applying for counselling, financial assistance, and a recognition payment through the Victims Support Scheme (VSS).

The impact of a traumatic event or exposure to violence is often emotionally challenging and disorientating. We offer legal advice and assistance tailored to the needs of victim-survivors. We employ a holistic approach, often working collaboratively with DV support workers, to guide our clients through processes like victims' compensation claims. We provide the necessary resources and support to help them regain control and direction to navigate a path to healing.

- Divorce & separation
- Property settlement
- Parenting arrangements
- Spousal maintenance



Testimonial

We phoned our client to let them know that VSS made a positive decision on their appeal by increasing the compensation previously awarded from \$1,500 to \$10,000. Our client was ecstatic saying:

"I am still speechless after your phone call this morning. It is such an overwhelming feeling and I have you and your team to thank for helping me with this journey. Thank you."

Legal services (ctd).



Employment Law

We assisted **226 people** to understand their rights at work and how to protect themselves and exercise their rights. Declining union membership continues to broaden the gap in affordable and timely legal assistance for vulnerable employees. Without our assistance, this power imbalance would have produced unjust and unfair outcomes for our clients.

- Unfair dismissal
- Employment problems
- Discrimination



Family Law

We helped **588 people** agree on family and property arrangements after their separation.

- Divorce & separation
- Property settlement
- Parenting arrangements
- Spousal maintenance



Planning Ahead

We helped **120 people** plan ahead for unforeseen decision making disability, and to provide for their family and loved ones for when they pass away.

We work closely with clients to understand their personal and financial situation to prepare the most appropriate documents for their needs and wishes.

- Wills
- Powers of attorney
- Enduring Guardianship



Driving and Traffic offences

We helped **482 people** overcome or reduce the impact of driving and traffic offence charges.

Our assistance involves guidance on gathering vital evidence for court, including character references, financial statements, medical reports, and mental health assessments for treatment programs instead of criminal convictions. Collecting such evidence is crucial for achieving a fair and favorable outcome.

- Driving under the influence (PCA/drug)
- Speeding offences
- Driving without a licence
- Negligent/reckless driving



Lander & Rogers Volunteer Program

Our newest pro-bono partner, Lander and Rogers, helped increase our capacity to assist clients with victims' compensation matters. These services primarily help women and children impacted by DFV. We extend our sincerest gratitude for their kind dedication and continuing partnership.

Legal Case Study

Traffic Offence *Sam

*Sam is a young First Nations man who recently got his licence. He is a talented sportsman and one evening after a match, some teammates didn't have a lift, so he drove them home. He breached his P-plate restrictions by speeding and having too many passengers in the car. His licence was suspended for nine months on the spot by police.

Sam needed to enter a plea and we originally helped as amicus curiae, meaning a friend of the Court. We offer this assistance to the Court every week.

Sam needed his licence to take his elderly Grandmother to appointments and to get to training. He had recently been selected for the Indigenous All Stars squad. Sam had excellent character references and acknowledged that he made a terrible mistake while driving. Sam had also completed a Traffic Offender Intervention Program (TOIP), where he took the time to learn how to be a better and safer driver in the community and learned how the effect of speeding affects not just himself but the community at large.

At Sam's sentence date, we represented him and made submissions to the Court seeking leniency, based on Sam's upstanding character in the community, his regret, and his need for the licence.

The Magistrate gave Sam a very stern warning, but ultimately did not record a conviction. Sam was given a Conditional Release Order, meaning he could not commit any further criminal or traffic offences, otherwise he would be re-sentenced for this matter.

This was an excellent outcome for Sam as he could continue to drive and did not have to pay the \$2,616 fine. Being in his Higher School Certificate (HSC) year, if he did not have a license, he would not have been able to drive to school to study his HSC.

This is just one example of how advocating for diversionary justice can benefit the offender, the community, and the criminal justice system. Having moved to Queensland to start a job there, Sam told his Justice Support Centre Solicitor that,

"I wouldn't have been able to do this if you hadn't represented me".

*Client name changed to respect privacy.

20-years of service in 2023

Peter Multari

2023 marked Peter Multari celebrating 20-years with Justice Support Centre. Peter is an inspiring and under-recognised hero in his community. Since 2003, Peter has led the legal service at Justice Support Centre providing free legal and DV services. Not many people stay in a challenging role like this for so long. Demand always outstrips supply in South Western Sydney (SWS), the fastest growing most diverse area in the country, but Peter has worked for years to connect our community to the limited public funding available for free legal services.

Importantly, Peter has led our team of lawyers to better support for victim-survivors of DFV. During his tenure, Peter has introduced training for all legal staff on trauma-informed practice and how to help women and children to access support from the VSS so they can recover from violence. He has also launched an outreach at the Liverpool Local Court so that more victim-survivors could access this kind of support. Designing countless innovative community programs, Peter is an inspiring role model, and we commend you, Peter.



There is something special about working for an organisation and a community of colleagues and stakeholders motivated and driven by an honourable vision for our society. I am so thankful to have been a part of the Justice Support Centre journey. It has afforded me many enriching and nourishing relationships and connections, which have fuelled and sustained my enthusiasm and commitment.

Peter Multari - Principal Solicitor

Dear Peter,

I hope this letter finds you well. I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your exceptional assistance and guidance throughout my recent legal matter. Your professionalism, expertise, and unwavering support were invaluable during a challenging time.

Your dedication to my case, from the initial consultation to its resolution, has not gone unnoticed. Your ability to explain complex legal concepts in a clear and understandable manner provided me with confidence and peace of mind throughout the process. Your timely responses to my inquiries, your attention to detail, and your commitment to achieving the best possible outcome for me are greatly appreciated. Your legal expertise truly made a difference in the outcome of my case, and I am deeply grateful for your efforts.

I would not hesitate to recommend your services to anyone in need of legal representation. Your professionalism and dedication set a standard that I believe all lawyers should aspire to. Once again, thank you for your exceptional service and support. I am grateful for the positive resolution of my case and for having you as my lawyer. Please consider this letter a small token of my appreciation for your outstanding work.





Our Domestic and Family Violence services

Our Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) services

We offer the following free support services for women and their children experiencing DFV:



Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS)

To support women and children to navigate the criminal justice system and gain protection through the courts.

South Western Sydney (SWS) WDVCAS
Sydney (SYD) WDVCAS



Domestic & Family Violence Casework Services

To support women and children who have experienced DV to plan for their safety and rebuild their lives



Clients feel heard and respected

Our services give clients a space to feel heard and respected. By providing emotional support and assistance to meet the immediate needs of the family, our DFV teams aim to give women and their children the support they need to focus on recovery and healing from the violence they have experienced.

...I am deeply grateful

"Thank you very much to Justice Support Centre caseworker, for the great effort you have made for me... when I first spoke with my caseworker, she made me feel very safe and assured me that she would go with me to the police station, hold my hand, and make me feel comfortable throughout the session with the police. Indeed, she went with me and stayed by my side the whole time."

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS)

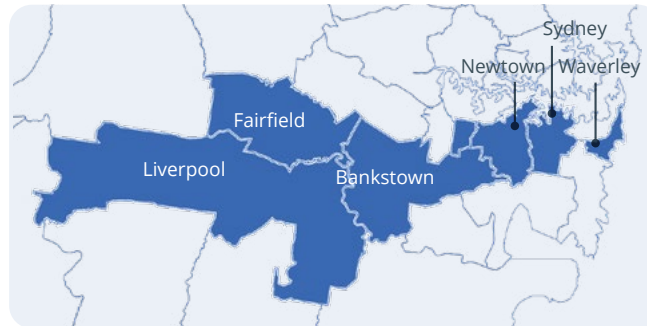
Our WDVCAS provide women and their children with information, advocacy and safety planning where appropriate.

We provide referrals to services including housing, counselling, financial assistance or health services. We work with solicitors from the DV Unit or Domestic Violence Duty Scheme, who can provide legal advice on matters including Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs), financial advice, family law, immigration and other issues.

Through these services, our WDVCAS teams aim to provide victims with:

- improved access to and understanding of the ADVO and criminal justice process
- effective legal protection through an ADVO
- appropriate AVO conditions to ensure their safety
- effective and appropriate legal representation
- access to a support system that can assist them with their other legal and social welfare needs
- improved experience of the justice system, for example, being able to obtain an appropriate final order as quickly and efficiently as possible.

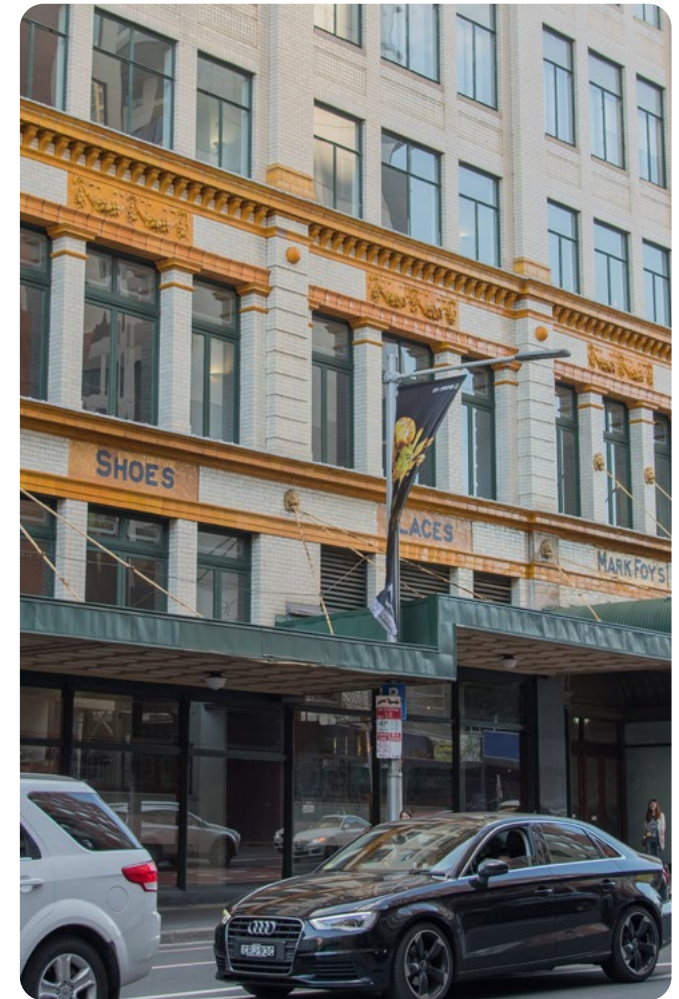
The local government areas (LGAs) we service:



We run two Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS):

South Western Sydney (SWS WDVCAS) Sydney CBD (SYD WDVCAS)

Our services cover the Courts at Bankstown, Liverpool, Fairfield, Downing Centre, Waverley and Newtown. WDVCAS is funded by the New South Wales (NSW) State Government and administered by our partners at Legal Aid NSW.



Funded by Legal Aid NSW | Artwork: © LaToya Kennedy

South Western Sydney Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (SWS WDVCAS)

SWS WDVCAS supported **3,582 clients** this year, a **36% increase** on last year.

In 2022/2023:



7655+
referrals



823+
referrals were people at serious threat



147+ clients
provided with direct financial support and other supports.

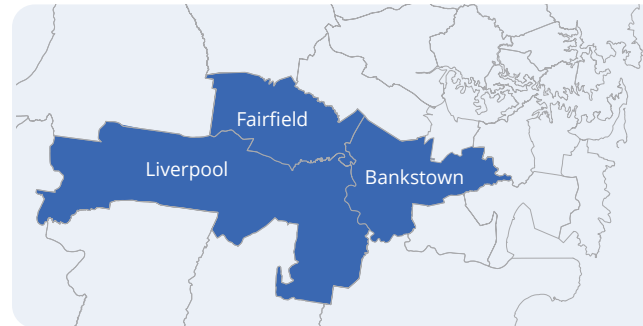


2037+ women supported face-to-face
at court for AVO list day and hearing support



24,985+ referrals to service providers
to further support women and children.

The clients came from the following LGAs across SWS:



Client feedback

"Thank you for taking the time to talk to me, to recognise what was happening for me and for listening. I appreciate it more than you'll ever know and am so grateful."



Writing this statement for the annual report is a privilege. Reflecting on the team's resilience, adaptability, empathy, and commitment towards advocating and supporting women impacted by the traumatising effects of DFV, as well as appreciating the women who decided to live safely with their children and who have displayed their trust and confidence in us to assist them at a very sensitive and challenging time in their lives.

I endeavour to continue growing our cultural responsiveness and to provide culturally appropriate support to First Nation women and to women from multicultural backgrounds.

Farah Assafiri - Manager SWS WDVCAS

Who our clients are



52%
Multicultural



4%
Aboriginal



10%
Living with a disability



50%
Children

SWS WDV CAS Case Study

Restoration of trust

An elderly client was referred to our service after a DV incident with her partner, against whom the Police had initiated an ADVO. The client informed us she had never had any interactions with police and had no previous history of DV.

The client shared that she had no other support but her partner. Evidence suggests that her partner had dementia, and he was also incredibly overwhelmed by the judicial process. According to the client, his potential medical condition, coupled with a language barrier, meant delays in the court process as he did not understand that he needed to be in court until the matter was heard.

The client informed us she could not support her partner as there was an ADVO restricting contact. Through advocacy with police, legal representatives and WDV CAS, the ADVO conditions were reduced to allow contact, and the client's partner also got the much-needed medical intervention. The client was so appreciative of the support we provided her.

In the initial stages, the client was terrified of the police and said she would never call them again; at the end of the court process, she had begun to rebuild her trust and faith in the process and said she would be confident to call the police if she ever felt she was in danger.

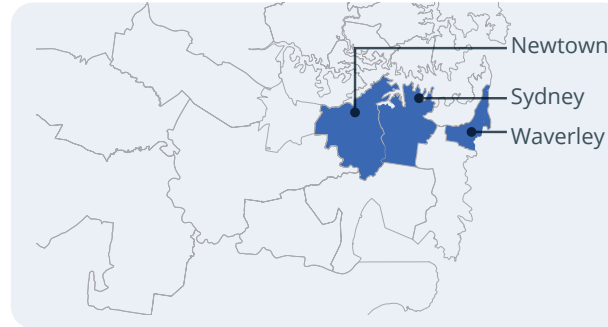


Sydney Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (SYD WDV CAS)

SYD WDV CAS supported **3,485 clients** this year, a **7% increase** on last year.

Our specialist workers ensure that our clients have all the information they need and experience as little stress as possible during the ADVO court process.

The clients came from the following LGAs across Sydney:



In 2022/2023:



50+ phones provided to clients as part of Safe Phones Program.



12,930 referrals made to other services such as Police, Victim Services NSW and Duty Solicitor Scheme.



70.16% of clients had English as their first language and the next largest group spoke Mandarin followed by Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic and Russian.



5.22% of clients required an interpreter.



I have worked for Justice Support Centre for five years and there have been many cases that have moved me. I guess the one thing that stands out all the time is the incredible resilience and strength of the women we work with, many of whom not only have a history of DV, but have also suffered other traumatic events in their lives which have often left them marginalised by society. This is particularly true of our Aboriginal clients, whose ability to withstand the added burdens of racism and the often culturally insensitive responses of others, constantly amazes and inspires me.

Janice Waring - Manager SYD WDV CAS

Who our clients are



32%
Multicultural



11%
Aboriginal



12%
Living with a disability



50%
Children

SYD WDVCS Case Study

From adversity to hope

For more than a decade, *Alina endured unrelenting DV. She was trapped in a cycle where she became the perennial victim, while her partner emerged as the persistent perpetrator. Their story was punctuated by numerous referrals, ADVOs, and a distressing number of court appearances.

One night, Alina's partner became verbally abusive. He demanded that she leave their home even though it was night-time. Alina responded in a manner uncharacteristic of her usual endurance. She threw a plate in his direction which didn't hit him but was classed as an act of intimidation, so she was charged. Like many women in this situation, Alina was unable to afford private counsel and marginally exceeded the financial cut-off for Legal Aid.

Unfortunately, Alina's young child had also witnessed the argument, so the police had to make a report to child services, and Alina was very worried that her child would be placed in care.

Throughout her ordeal, WDVCS consistently advocated for her cause. The police, too, acknowledged her as the primary victim.

With advocacy from our service and police's recognition that Alina was the primary victim in the relationship and a very protective mother, Alina's child was able to stay with her in the temporary accommodation our service arranged.

WDVCAS advocated for the police to reconsider the charge, but to no avail. Represented by our service's duty lawyer, Alina pled guilty at the first opportunity. As Alina had been excluded from her home by the ADVO conditions, WDVCS arranged for a property recovery order to be put before the court and she was able to get some of her essentials from the home.

Several individuals, privy to Alina's resilience and kindness, stepped forward with character references for her as well. Ultimately, Alina was granted a bond without any conviction recorded and she was able to keep her job.

With the assistance of the WDVCS Alina was also able to secure long term housing where she and her child could live peacefully without fear of her abusive ex-partner.

*Client's name changed to protect privacy

Case managers role in WDVCAS

A case worker's day

A case worker's responsibilities range from assisting a woman in furnishing her new home to applying for financial aid. They advocate with Housing NSW to ensure safer property transfers and even arrange checks on a woman's car for potential tracking devices. Additionally, they provide essential support like counselling referrals and food vouchers when needed.

We now have multiple caseworkers adding experience and depth to our team.

To date they have assisted approximately 110 women.

The service only accepts internal referrals prioritising those rated as serious threat.

They are usually in contact assisting a woman for approximately three months on average with six months being the maximum.

Family Advocacy and Social Support (FASS) Service

The FASS service is staffed by one of our social workers who is permanently located at an office at the Family court registry in Sydney. The role is a specialist one which often involves meeting with very distressed clients to assess their needs for safety plans when attending the court and assisting them to access other services such as counselling, case workers and housing.

The service aims to integrate social support services for women with matters in the family court who have experienced DFV with the legal advice service supplied through Legal Aid. It is estimated that about 70-80% of family court matters have allegations of DFV usually going both ways. The service, which began in 2017 is funded by the Commonwealth Government and administered in partnership with Legal Aid NSW.

Unlike the WDVAS service where contact with clients is mostly on the telephone, and short term, the work at the Family Court is mostly in person and can extend across the woman's whole Family Court matter which can sometimes take several years.

Our support worker can work with a woman's lawyer or can work with a self represented woman who is managing her own case in the court. These women very much appreciate the assistance of someone who is familiar with the court language and protocol.



Client feedback

"I can't thank you enough for your help and guidance in this process. I appreciate your kindness and support. Thank you beyond words for being so kind and caring, I wish there were more people in the world like you."

Pilot Projects – Hearing Support Pilot

In 2022, Justice Support Centre was asked to run Hearing Support Pilots in both SWS and Sydney.



165+ women

supported across Sydney and SWS

In October 2022 the NSW government provided funds for the Hearing Support Pilot to begin initially in 14 courts around NSW to support women attending court for a hearing.

The Pilot aims to help:

- improve victims' engagement with the court process
- reduce the stress and trauma associated with the court process
- reduce the likelihood that victims may disengage from the court process
- victims give accurate evidence when their matter goes to hearing
- victims obtain ADVOs with appropriate conditions to ensure their safety.

The Hearing Support Pilot provides intensive and physical support in person for women having to attend court to give evidence. Through the Hearing Support Pilot, Justice Support Centre has supported over 165 women since commencement.

Many of these women have told us that they would not have attended court if we were not there to support them. We have been able to advocate for clients with police and prosecutors to help them achieve the best outcome for their situation.

For some clients this has meant stronger ADVO conditions, and for others it has meant tailoring the conditions to make them more suitable for their situation or to have children listed as a Person in Need of Protection (PINOP).

We have also had great success reinstating the Prosecutor Hearing Clinics running at each of our courts.

Our attendance numbers are slowly rising, and women have provided positive feedback with a consensus that the clinics help them feel less overwhelmed about what to expect on the day.

As well as providing a vital service for the women, it's expected that the Pilot



will also assist the courts by increasing successful prosecutions of DV criminal offences, reduce the withdrawal rate of DV matters and reduce the negative impact on victims of current hearing backlog in the local courts. Some local courts can now only schedule hearings for dates well into 2024.

The pilot is being evaluated by academics from the University of Sydney and initial outcomes have been so positive that the pilot has been extended for another year and across all local courts in the state.

There has been great feedback for the prosecutor clinics running at each court.

Prosecutor Clinics are held once a month and women with hearings coming up are invited to the Clinic where a prosecutor takes them through the court hearing procedure and instructions about giving evidence. For many clients, it is the first time they have been inside a court room, and they are extremely appreciative to be able to ask questions and get a better understanding of the judicial process before they appear.

Justice Support Centre is advocating for the funding for hearing support to become permanent to allow this vital support of women to continue.

Pilot Projects – Fairfield Co-Location Pilot

Justice Support Centre was proud to be one of just five locations chosen to participate in a Co-Location Pilot.



100+ women
supported

A dedicated SWS WDV CAS worker presence is now ongoing at Fairfield Police station Monday to Friday. Their presence provides support and advocacy to women at the crucial moment when they attend the police station.

The Pilot aims to:

- enhance collaboration between the WDV CAS workers and the police to better support clients with their first time disclosure of violence to police
- share learnings between Justice Support Centre and the police
- improve victim experiences
- maximise the benefits of early intervention.

During the initial six months, over 100 women who have endured DFV, were assisted at our Fairfield location. Recognising this impact, the Premier has opted to increase funding for five additional sites throughout NSW.

The collaborative nature of the pilot project has helped build a stronger working relationship between NSW Police and SWS WDV CAS workers, which in turn has facilitated better outcomes for our clients.

Clients have reported that having a WDV CAS worker at the police station with them has been instrumental in their decision to make a report to police and secure the protection they desperately need. On many occasions we hear from clients,

"I couldn't have done this without you".



Domestic & Family Violence (DFV) Casework Services

Our caseworkers support women to plan for their safety and that of their children.

Bankstown Domestic Violence Service (BDVS)

provides support to women in Bankstown who have experienced DV from an intimate partner, whether or not they have left the relationship.

The Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) service

supports women who have left a violent relationship, to protect them from further DV and so they can pursue their long-term goals.

Keeping Women Safe In Their Homes (KWSITH)

To support and strengthen the SHLV Program to deliver services within the Liverpool/Fairfield LGAs, the Australian Government provided additional funding, with the aim of KWSITH.

Our **Financial Counselling Service** provides support for women affected by DFV to deal with money problems.



Above: Safe space for children at Justice Support Centre Head Office



For many years I have been working in this industry and I continually feel privileged to be working with our clients; witnessing their strength and resilience to rise above their current circumstances and working to change and heal their families. For the last three months I have been able to do this work as part of an incredible team at Justice Support Centre. The team approaches each day with empathy, passion, and resilience to assist keeping these women safe, in their own homes and free from the impact and trauma of DFV. I look forward to continuing my work with Justice Support Centre and the team, nurturing and growing the support that we provide the community.

Nicole Humphries - DFV Casework Services Manager

Our Bankstown Domestic Violence Service (BDVS)

Building a safer tomorrow

Our BDVS provides an integrated and coordinated response to DFV in the Bankstown area and aims to improve outcomes for adults and children. The service provides longer term case management and DV specialist services.

We provide support to both victims living through the violence and the victims who have escaped the perpetrator.

Our services are free to clients as the BDVS is predominately funded by the NSW State Government in partnership with the Department of Communities and Justice.

In 2022/2023:



178 clients
received information/advice



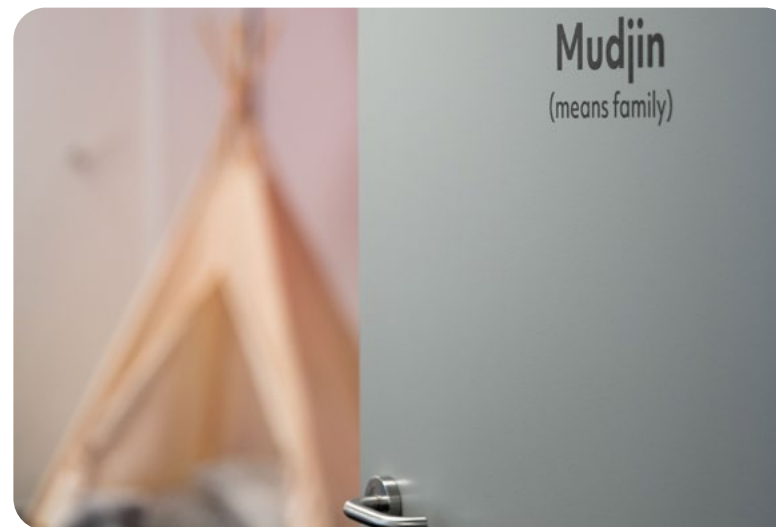
30 clients
received support via vouchers, mobile phones, laptops and other supports



96+ children
were supported together with their mothers and over 22 children were clients in their own rights.

We can support people with:

- identifying their needs and goals
- talking with them about a safety plan
- emotional support and a space to be heard and respected
- support through the court processes for family law matters, criminal matters and DV matters
- referring their partner to an appropriate support service
- information and referrals to services they need such as counselling, support groups, (VSS).



Above: Child friendly space in meeting room at Head Office

Who our clients are



32%
Multicultural



11%
Aboriginal



12%
Living with a disability



50%
Children



92%
Female clients

BDVS Case Study

"It's the first time we feel safe"

Our client, *Jennifer, was a survivor of over a decade of DV, having been in violent relationships not once, but twice.

During her first relationship, her partner had shockingly kidnapped their toddler daughter in South Africa before they relocated to Australia in 2001. A decade later, Jennifer met her second partner (now ex) during a crisis when she and her daughter were fleeing from the relentless DV inflicted by her first partner (now ex).

They were homeless, vulnerable, and desperate for safety.

The DV followed Jennifer into her second relationship. In 2019, she mustered the courage to leave him. For the next two years, she lived a nomadic life, alternating between her car, friends' homes, and women's shelters. She was so deeply terrified of her second ex-partner that she even cut ties with her adult daughter to protect her.

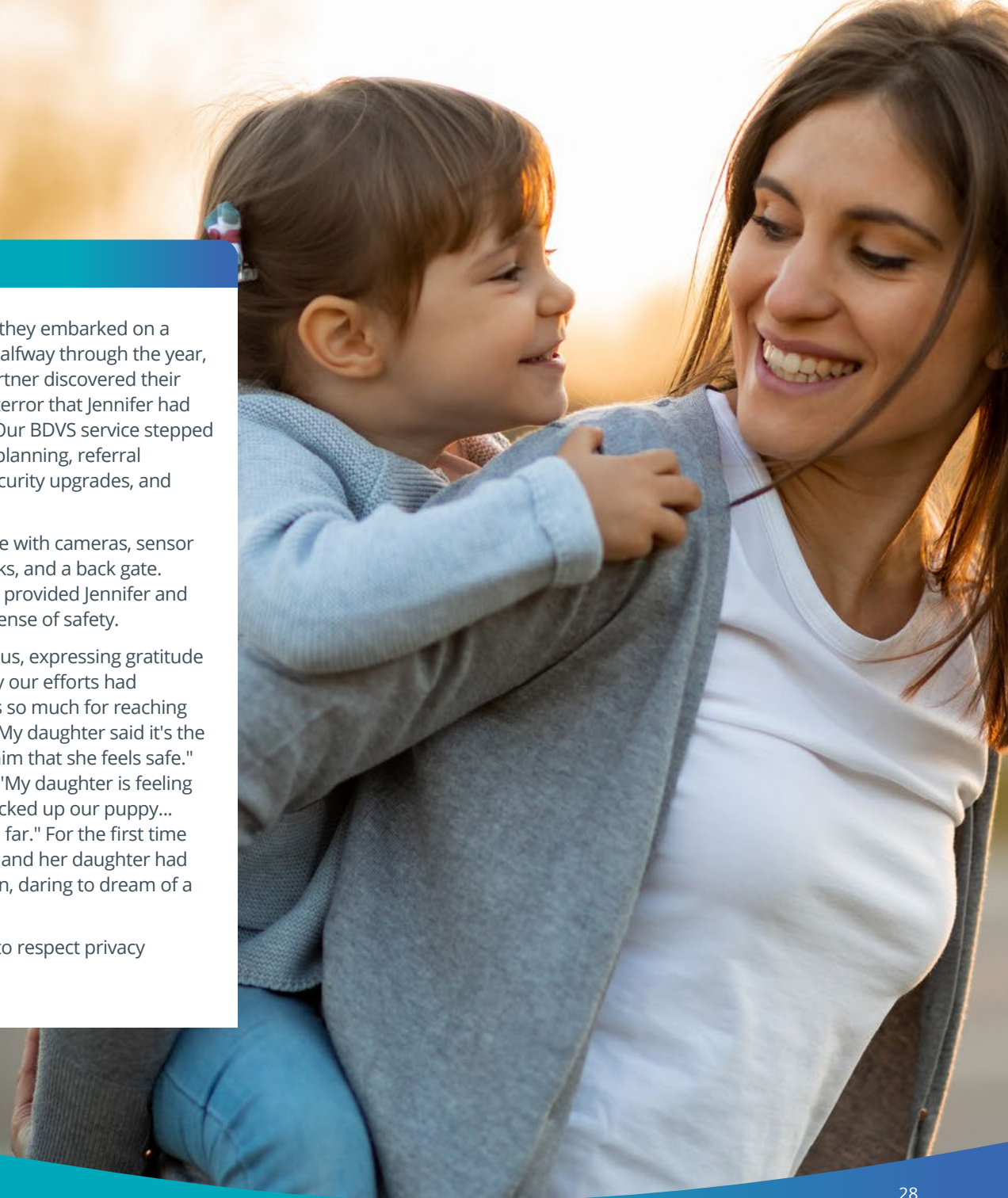
By 2022, the fragile arrangement was unsustainable. Jennifer reached out to her daughter, and they found a property they could call home.

Surrounded by nature, they embarked on a healing journey. Then halfway through the year, Jennifer's second ex-partner discovered their location, reigniting the terror that Jennifer had been trying to escape. Our BDVS service stepped in and provided safety planning, referral pathways, advocacy, security upgrades, and financial assistance.

We reinforced her home with cameras, sensor lights, fortified door locks, and a back gate. These tangible changes provided Jennifer and her daughter a better sense of safety.

Jennifer reached out to us, expressing gratitude for the sense of security our efforts had afforded them. "Thanks so much for reaching out again," she wrote, "My daughter said it's the first time since we left him that she feels safe." Later, she followed up, "My daughter is feeling safer now, so we just picked up our puppy... Thanks for your help so far." For the first time in a long while, Jennifer and her daughter had started to feel safe again, daring to dream of a peaceful future.

*Client name changed to respect privacy



Our Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) Service

Empowering voices, ensuring justice

Our SHLV Service works to prevent women and their children who have experienced DFV from becoming homeless or having to move away from their support system of family and friends, and the school and community where they live. We work in cooperation with the NSW Police to remove the perpetrator (the violent partner) from the family home so that women and their children stay safely where they are.

We provide a range of support such as safety planning, improved home security, help in managing finances, support for children, and helping women with the complicated legal process. Our SHLV Services support women in the Burwood, Canterbury-Bankstown, Fairfield and Liverpool areas.

In 2022/2023:



424 referrals received



277 clients



30 clients
provided with an interpreter



40 clients
received support safety devices



275 safety plans
provided over both programs (Liverpool / Fairfield and Canterbury-Bankstown).



Case Study

We had supported a client in the past, and she knew that she could call us back if she ever needed us. She had been recently diagnosed with a serious medical condition and due to this unexpected diagnosis, she became very depressed, anxious, and unable to pay her rent as she had to pay extra health expenses.

The client and her children had experienced a long history of DFV and had been attending counselling sessions to heal. They had relocated to a property a few months ago and they both felt safe and happy to call this new place 'home'.

They became at risk of becoming homeless and losing their 'safe place' after the real estate threatened to take them to the tribunal to vacate the property if they didn't pay the arrears that weekend.

Through our SHLV service, we were able to assist this family with financial support to address the rental arrears, so they could stay in their new home. The team also provided emotional support, support to discuss a safety plan and connected the family to other services they needed.

Who our clients are



32%
Multicultural



11%
Aboriginal



12%
Living with a disability



50%
Children



92%
Female clients

Keeping Women Safe In Their Homes (KWSITH) Service



From my whole heart

I would like to say thank you so much for your kindness, time, understanding and support. I will forever be grateful & thankful for what you have done for me and my son. Instead of sitting at home stressed and depressed not knowing what to do or where my children and I would go and the thought of having to let them down and put them in this situation has been killing me inside. Also having my operation and nowhere to come home to. You have just taken all this emotion away from me and put a happy smile on my face and emotional tears. I hope you know how much of an impact you have on me and other women like me. You are truly a blessing and credit to your workplace. Thank you again. Take care and I wish the best for you. I am happy and excited that everyone can read my testimony on how amazing you truly are and that should be shared and acknowledged and with the love and compassion you have for your work position and your clients.

Thank you again.

Keeping Women Safe In Their Homes (KWSITH)

To support and strengthen the SHLV Program to deliver services within the Liverpool/Fairfield LGAs, the Australian Government provided additional funding, with the aim of KWSITH.

Funding is provided by the Australian Government as part of the key initiative of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2023. The program is an additional supplement provided to:



strengthen and support the existing SHLV Program to deliver services within the Liverpool/Fairfield LGAs



improve the safety of women and children who have experienced or are currently experiencing DFV.

The initiative aims to empower women to be able to stay in their own home or a home of their choosing and to be and feel safe. KWSITH allows women to maintain access to service supports, workplaces, schools, family and friends.

The program provides the women access to a caseworker that can support them with thorough risk assessments, safety planning and home security audits and upgrades. These may include installations of alarms, security screens and lock changes, personal safety devices, cameras (both at home and in the car) and access to electronic sweeping and de-bugging of vehicles and homes.

SHLV Case Study

Putting our clients safety first

Our client self-referred to our SHLV service after talking with a friend who had also experienced recent DFV.

Our client was allocated a caseworker who conducted a safety audit and completed safety assessment and plans. The client had experienced extensive physical, verbal, emotional, social and financial abuse by her current partner from the beginning of their relationship 15 years ago.

The partner's behaviour increased once our client returned to the workforce after having sustained full time employment. He began to stalk her and question her relationships with other work colleagues and friends. Over a short period of time her partner became more erratic with his behaviour and was monitoring the family through electronic devices.

The caseworker worked with the client for over nine months in supporting her emotionally on those bad days to practically keep her and her children safe. Support for the client included applications to Victim Services, provision of a new phone, personal security device and assistance with relocation and referrals for property and family law advice.

The children were referred to counsellors to support them through the trauma that they had witnessed and heard. Safety upgrades were also completed at the new property to ensure that the family remained safe.



Our Financial Counselling Service

Advocating for financial freedom

Our financial counsellor supports women recovering from DV, so that they are better able to overcome debt, manage a budget and work toward financial goals. In the face of increasing mortgage stress and cost of living pressures, this service is particularly crucial and we thank the Financial Counselling Foundation for fully funding this program since inception and for committing to a further two years of funding.

Our Financial Counsellor can help women who are affected by DFV to deal with money problems. Our commitment to supporting the community has yielded positive outcomes and transformative experiences for those we have served.

In 2022/2023 we:



proudly assisted 90+ women

by providing essential services such as debt management, budgeting, and negotiation with creditors



successfully secured \$78,947.78

in debt waivers, partial debt waivers, and repayment plans, resulting in tangible financial relief for our clients



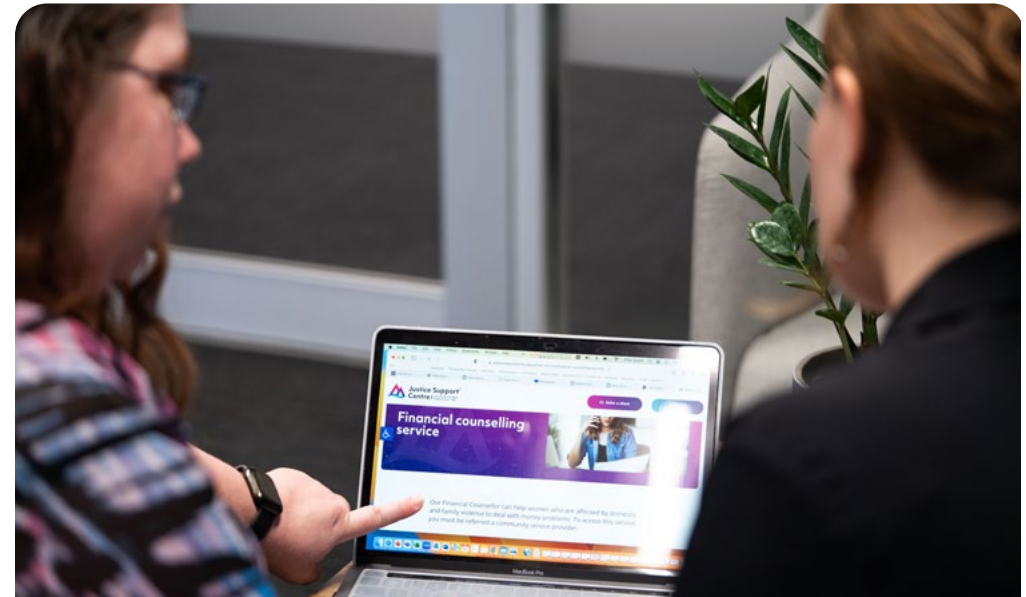
expanded our service

to accept referrals from various organisations throughout SWS and central Sydney specifically targeting individuals who have experienced DV.

Clients have expressed heartfelt gratitude, stating:

"Financial Counsellors should be called wizards," and "Thank you so much, I can get a fresh start."

These testimonials demonstrate how our services empower women to regain control of their finances and embark on a new journey towards financial security and stability.



Financial breathing space

After experiencing DV and a sporadic child support system, *Samantha faced a financial state that left her grappling with a multitude of debts. Our response was to secure a moratorium on all her debts, offering a respite over the holiday season.

We then advocated for and succeeded in obtaining debt waivers, acceptance for rental income for the mortgage and a reduced repayment plan, providing Samantha with breathing space until her property settlement was finalised.

*Client's name changed to respect privacy

Email us to find out if the Financial Counselling Service is right for your client.

Email: FCreferral@justicesupportcentre.org.au



Education & Advocacy

Empowering Our Community Through Education

We believe in empowering our community through educating them on a range of legal topics. We do this by providing free training, workshops, and information resources for community members and community workers at multiple events.

Many of our topics relate to issues surrounding DV because we believe that to change the underlying social drivers of DFV, we need to address attitudes and systems that drive violence against women and children to stop it before it starts.

Partnerships



Community Legal Education (CLE)

In 2022-2023 we provided:

29 CLE sessions to
1,117 attendees
(approx.)

Topics included DV, Employment Law, Family Law, Planning Ahead/Elder Abuse, Criminal and traffic law and CALD training.

Of these sessions:

16
were face-to-face

13
were online

7
were centred on DV.

What our clients said:

98%
learned something new

97%
thought the presenter was "very good" or "good"

"The best workshop / presentation the branch has ever had".

Success with the SkillMe Program

For the last three years we have partnered with the SkillMe Program. This is a workshop for skilled migrants who have just come to Australia and are looking for work. We upskill them about their working rights and include warning signs of exploitation to combat migrant worker exploitation.

Workplace Assistance Service

We have partnered with the Workplace Assistance Service to take state-wide referrals, filling an access to justice gap.

Family Relationship Centres (FRCs)

We partner with the FRCs to ensure that both parties to a family law mediation have access to legal representation. This model has been so successful that it has been replicated in the Mid-North Coast regions. One FRC said that,

"Justice Support Centre is a valuable partner to our organisation, providing critical legal advice, Legally Assisted Mediations (LAMs) and representation to our mutual clients."

Highlights for 2022-2023

1. We adopted a train the 'service provider' model

We have learned that a powerful way of reaching more people with our education programs is to upskill community workers to identify legal problems for their clients, so that they can best support the client and triage them to the most appropriate referral avenue.

Examples:

- Law for Health Professionals – Victims Services Training
- Law for Community Workers – Learn how to identify a legal problem and get help for your client.

2. We tailored training for Seniors

With the support of our valued partners at Canterbury-Bankstown Council we ran education sessions aimed at issues relevant to seniors.

We had 3 CLE events for 330 seniors held in partnership with the council for the third year in a row:

- Planning Ahead - 44 attendees
- Legal tips for seniors – 35 attendees
- Senior's Safety and Wellbeing Seminar – 250 attendees (all seniors).

3. We developed new partnerships

Strengthening the relationship with New South Wales (NSW) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI+) Domestic Family Violence (DFV) Interagency

In NSW, our legal team has been actively engaging with the NSW LGBTQI+ DFV Interagency in a collaborative effort to address DFV issues within the LGBTQI+ community and to suggest a partnership between various organisations. During the Sydney World Pride Fair day we manned a stall for SWS, aiming to enlighten the public about local, safe services for the LGBTQI+ community in their jurisdiction.

Women's Day event with Canterbury-Bankstown Multicultural Interagency

In March 2023, our team helped organise the Bankstown International Women's Day event, where we discussed our legal services and DV support. The day was filled with dancing, stalls, prizes, and a vibrant atmosphere of celebration and community. A heartfelt thanks to all organisations, including Metro Assist, Asian Women at Work, and many others who gathered at Bankstown Sports Club on 8 March, 2023 to celebrate.

Macarthur Legal

We also conducted a joint CLE event for 150 TAFE students, with two solicitors talking about working with diverse clients. Both Community Legal Centres were able to share their practice experiences.



Legal Training session with Indonesian Women Islamic Network

Indonesian Women Islamic Network of Australia

The Indonesian Women Islamic Network of Australia took a keen interest in addressing DV when members of their community were directly impacted. Responding to their outreach, we conducted two training sessions. The initial session focused on offering legal aid, introducing local services for victim-survivors, and guiding participants on further training opportunities. This included highlighting potential training needs, connecting with inter-agency groups, networks, and partner organisations.

Our subsequent session delved deeper into the nuances of DV and the support available for victims. Symbolically, all attendees donned purple during the event, standing united with victim-survivors. This initiative exemplifies the power of community-driven education and the collective fight against DV.

"Exceptional. [I liked] the proficiency and complete, wonderful, understandable knowledge. I learned a lot. Clear English, easy to understand, polite and courteous staff. "

Advocacy

We advocate to government on the policy reform and law reform needed to address systemic issues.

Continued use of expertise to advocate for practical change

In the recent fiscal year, our Legal team sustained its commitment to supporting individuals challenged by the complexities of the legal system. We notably contributed to two pivotal documents:

- a set of proposed questions for the Acting Commissioner of Victims' Rights aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability within the VSS.
- a letter to the same commissioner offering expertise to refine the Victim Support form submission process for a more user-friendly experience.

We also continued advocacy for improvement of the VSS through our active engagement with the Victims of Crime Interagency (VOCI). This included contributing to questions given to the Commissioner on notice and working with the Community Legal Centres New South Wales Domestic Violence Victims of Crime (CLCNSW DV VC) network and Women's Legal to provide feedback through open letters and other avenues of advocacy.

Read more about our submission to the statutory review ([available here](#)).

Four open letters were signed:

26.7.2022



26.8.2022



5.9.2022



10.11.2022

Open letter to The Hon. Natalie Ward, Minister for Women's Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence.

[link here](#)

Open letter to Attorney General regarding consultation period for coercive control legislation.

[link here](#)

Open letter regarding Jobs Summit to consider what is stopping full employment and examine the existing laws and systems that lead to insecure work and the exploitation of workers.

[link here](#)

Joint response to The Law Reform and Sentencing Council Secretariat regarding consultation paper on fraud (coercive control).

[link here](#)



Justice Support Centre Solicitor providing a legal workshop.



Governance & Finance

Empowering Financial Excellence.

FY2022-2023 Income and expenses

We received \$8.54 million income in FY2023 (19.4% higher than last year).

Our total FY2023 expenses were \$8.188 million.

93% of our funding was applied to our Services/Education & Advocacy.



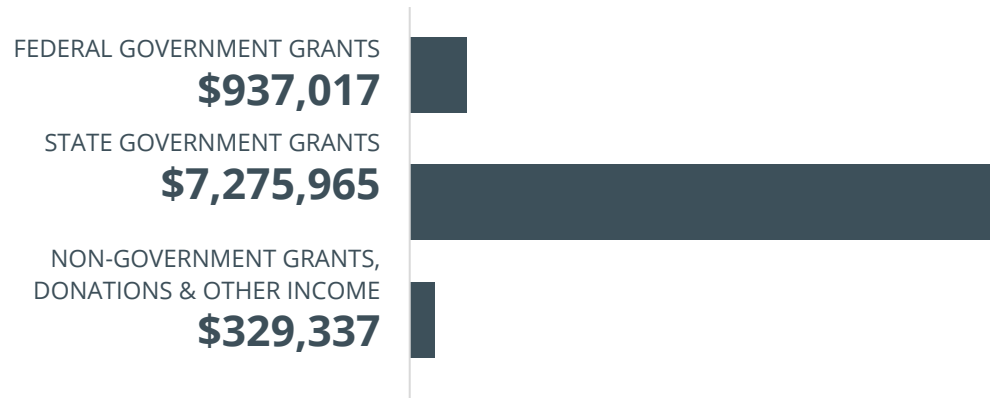
As FY 2023 concludes, my sincere thanks to everyone who supported Justice Support Centre this year. Managing the core functions of Finance, IT, HR, Operations and Governance has deepened my appreciation for our team's dedication and the community's trust. The numbers in this report symbolise our collective effort and the spirit of our mission. Guided by our vision for equal access to justice and a world free from DFV every decision reflects this core belief. As we move forward with your continued support, we are resolute in maximising our resources and upholding our vision.

Marc Haynes - Chief Operating Officer



Our Funding

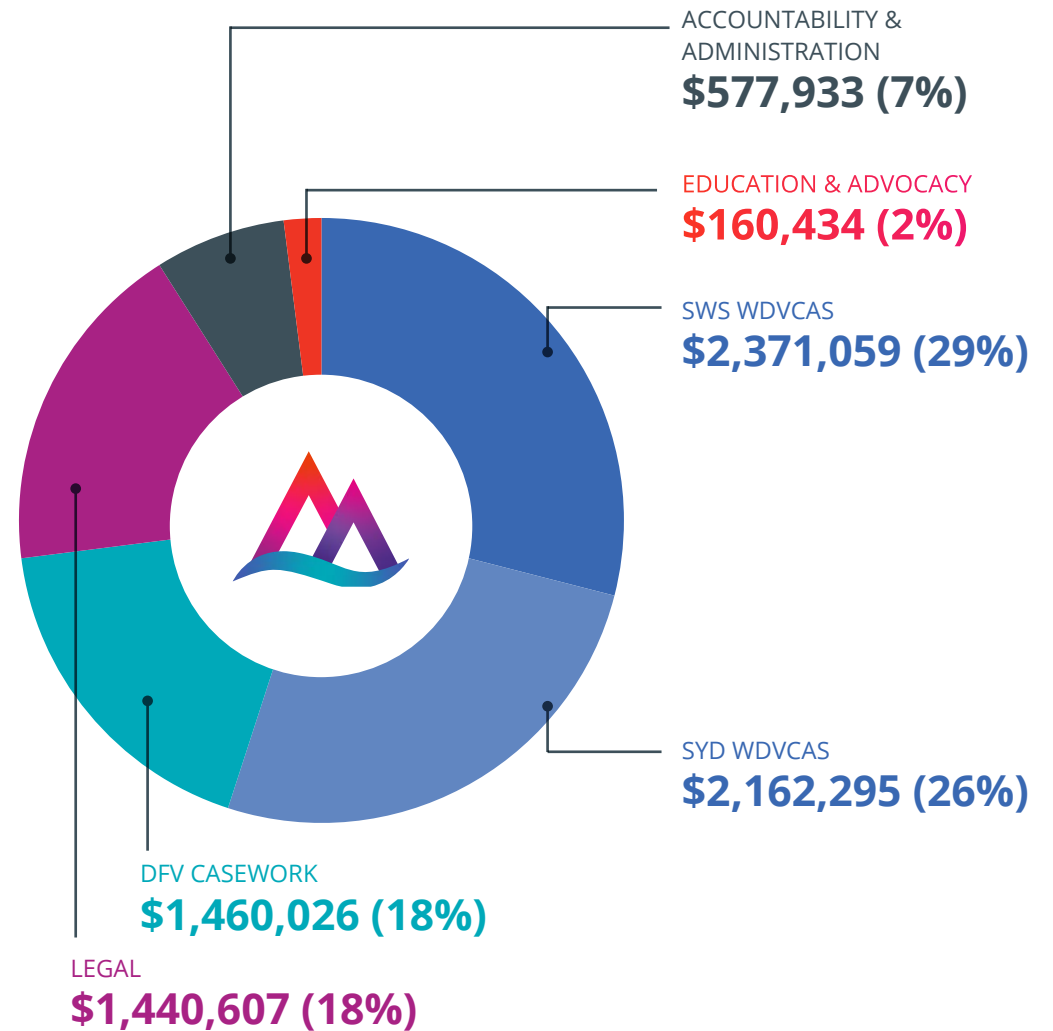
Funding Sources



Audited financial report

The full audited financial report is available [here](#) on our website.

Funding Usage by Service





Our Leadership Team

L-R: **Marc Haynes**, Chief Operating Officer, **Farah Assafiri**, SWS WDV CAS Manager, **Peter Multari**, Principal Solicitor, **Angela Wang**, Finance Manager, **Nicole Humphries**, DFV Casework Services Manager, **Janice Waring**, SYD WDV CAS Manager, **Melanie Noden**, Chief Executive Officer.

Our Leadership Team



Melanie Noden
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
BEd., LLB, GDLP, GDGIA, GAICD



Marc Haynes
Chief Operating Officer (COO)
BSc., C.A., MPA, MSc.



Peter Multari
Principal Solicitor
BEd., Dip Law



Farah Assafiri
Manager SWS WDVAS
LL.B., Ph.D. International Arbitration



Janice Waring
Manager SYD WDVAS
BA Psych., M.Arts (Asian Studies), Juris Doctor



Nicole Humphries
Manager DFV Casework Services
B.Soc.Sci. (Soc. Welfare)



Angela Wang
Finance Manager
BA., BCom, CPA



Our Management Committee

L-R: **Nana Sylprany**, Member, B.Com. (Econ. & Fin.), LLB, **Carmela Tassone**, Member, BEd, LLB, MA, **Joanna Abraham**, Member, LLB, BSocSci, GradDipLegalPrac, GradCertMgt, LLM. **Rakesh Raj**, Treasurer, B.Bus, MBA, CPA, FIPA, **Diana Chang**, Vice President | Secretary, BA LLB (Hons), GAICD, **Naushee Rahman**, President, M Ag. (Ag Ec.) and B. Res Ec. (Hons). Back Left: **Melanie Noden**, CEO, Justice Support Centre, Back Right: **Marc Haynes**, COO, Justice Support Centre.

Absent from photo: Rivkah Nissim, Member, BA (Politics), Grad. Cert (Social Impact)

Our Management Committee



Naushee Rahman
President

M Ag. (Ag Ec.) and B. Res Ec. (Hons).



Diana Chang
Vice President | Secretary

BA LLB (Hons), GAICD



Rakesh Raj
Treasurer

B.Bus, MBA, CPA, FIPA



Nana Sylapranay
Member

B.Com. (Econ. & Fin.), LLB



Joanna Abraham
Member

LLB, BSocSci, GradDipLegalPrac,
GradCertMgt, LLM.



Carmela Tassone
Member

BEd, LLB, MA



Rivkah Nissim
Member

BA (Politics), Grad. Cert (Social Impact)

Acknowledgements

Justice Support Centre gives thanks to our valued donors, pro bono partners, funding bodies, peak bodies, and numerous community partners, who support our work and our clients.

We acknowledge and thank the NSW State and Commonwealth Governments for providing significant funding to Justice Support Centre.

We also thank the following partners who administer this funding:

- Legal Aid who administers the funding for our Legal Service and Sydney and SWS WDVCS.
- Department of Communities & Justice who administer funding for our SHLV, BDVS and KWSITH services.

We also acknowledge our largest private funder, the Financial Counselling Foundation, that fully funds our financial counselling service.

Thank you to all our private donors for their commitment to ensuring that Justice Support Centre can continue to meet the increasing demand for our services not otherwise met by government funding.

[Click to view](#) the full list of acknowledged partners and supporters to whom we are grateful.

Justice Support Centre respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate, the Cabrogal people of the Darug nation, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, as well as the Tharawal and Gandangara nations. We acknowledge their continuing connection to the land, waters and community and pay our respects to their elders past and present. We extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



Contact Us | Follow Us | Subscribe

We offer multiple services for people to contact for free support with legal problems and breaking cycles of DV. Our head office is listed below, and all other contact details can be accessed via our website depending on the specific need.

Contact Us

Head Office

Phone: (02) 9601 7777

Email: info@justicesupportcentre.org.au

Level 4, 2-14 Meredith St,

Bankstown NSW 2200

Darug + Eora Land

Please make an appointment before visiting our office.

Postal address:

PO Box 3558

Bankstown Square NSW 2200

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This is the annual report of Justice Support Centre. Justice Support Centre is a member of Community Legal Centres NSW and is accredited as a community legal centre by Community Legal Centres Australia. The organisation is a registered charity with DGR1 status and meets core governance standards provided by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.



[Acronyms Glossary](#)



NEW SOUTH WALES
POLICE



Justice Support[®]
Centre | Serving South West
Sydney since 1986

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