



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23



**TOP END WOMEN'S
LEGAL SERVICE INC.**

FREE LEGAL ADVICE FOR WOMEN

Advice | Information | Referral | Advocacy



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

TEWLS acknowledges that we work on Aboriginal land, including the lands of the Larrakia people, who are the traditional owners of the land where our office is located.

We acknowledge the Larrakia people as the Traditional Owners of the Darwin region and pay deep respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We are committed to a positive future for the Aboriginal community. Always was, always will be.



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ABOUT US

OUR VISION

A community in which women enjoy and are entitled to legal and social justice.

OUR PURPOSE

TEWLS is a not-for-profit, specialist women's legal service focused on the advancement of women's rights.

We work to advocate to achieve justice for women, to promote women's human rights, and to redress inequalities experienced by women.

We do this by:

- Supporting women to gain equitable access to integrated, holistic, trauma-informed, and culturally secure free legal and support services in the Top End of the Northern Territory.
- Empowering women to make informed legal choices and assisting women to achieve fair outcomes.
- Advocating for laws and policies that respect and promote women's rights.
- Educating women to know their legal rights.
- Building the capacity of our community to identify, and respond to women's legal needs.



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

This year has been another remarkable period of growth and success for TEWLS, and it has been an honour for me to continue in my role as Chairperson.

This year, our central focus has been championing the growth of our specialized and holistic legal services to meet the ever-growing demand, with impact that we have again increased our outputs (this year, in respect of our ongoing representation services).

Highlights for FY22-23 have included the commencement of our front-line workplace sexual harassment and discrimination legal practice, the opening of our expanded office space (doubling the service's size to house our ever-growing team!), and ongoing advocacy to both Territory and Commonwealth Governments regarding the need for gender-specialist women's legal services, particularly across the Top End of the Northern Territory ('NT'). Our team has been relentless in their efforts to respond to increasing domestic, family and sexual violence ('DFSV') demand and are to be commended for their dedication to the service's vision and purpose.

While we celebrate our accomplishments this year, we acknowledge that there is still a significant amount of work ahead; unfortunately, both the Territory and Commonwealth 2023 budgets held no love for TEWLS, save for a seven-month extension of our migration law practice, and the service has been forced to make the difficult decisions in respect of capacity and staffing as a consequence of indexation gaps. The future of all funding streams of the service are also in balance, with decisions anticipated in 2024 in respect of the National Legal Assistance Partnership ('NLAP'), as well as our migration practice and Indigenous community outreach program, respectively.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, volunteers, committee members and esteemed partner organisations for their invaluable contributions to TEWLS this year. It is an honour to work alongside you all in this feminist, inclusive and progressive organisation, and I look forward to our year ahead.



Chris Osborne
Chairperson

CEO'S REPORT

2022-23 has again showed us that our understandings of "busy" are relative and that unfortunately, things can get much worse before they get better...

While not typically a morose service, this past year has shown us that the media frenzy about DFSV in the NT is not misplaced - in the same year that the Federal Senate both turned their mind to and seemingly forgot about an inquiry into missing and murdered First Nations women, the NT continued to wear the unenviable crowns of highest proportion of DFSV per capita in the country, as well as most women impacted by DFSV. In amongst it all, our service experienced our highest levels of demand in recent history - books were closed to ensure that our service was providing trauma-informed and high-quality services to both our clients, as well as our staff, and the Top End reeled from the impacts of service stoppages and gaps.

But to the positive - with another year whipping by, there was myriads of joy to be found, from office expansion grand openings, and increasing staff levels to provide more and more services to the women in our community. We were successful in our first major philanthropic funding pitch, with the scaling up of our specialist and integrated legal and support services to commence in July 2023 over a two-year period.

Our staff were innovative, responsive and proactive all at once, delivering client-facing services while working to change the system from within via first-of-kind workshops to front-line service responders, as well as creating new and sorely needed community education resources.

Our management committee generously provided their time, expertise and guidance to our service - how lucky we are to be strategically led by such a force.

Within our practice, we were delighted to commence services under the workplace sexual harassment and discrimination NLAP stream, as recommended in the Respect@Work Report, with this additional stream aiding our ongoing efforts to provide assistance to vulnerable clients in intersecting and concurrent legal matters, ensuring that legal services are delivered within a client-centred model.

Similarly, we welcomed additional legal and social support staff into the service, with impact that our non-legal support services have never been higher.

For our clients, life is unfortunately only becoming more difficult - in the last financial year, the number of TEWLS' ongoing clients experiencing DFSV has again increased (from 73% in FY21-22 to 76% in FY22-23), and the number of average legal issues faced by our clients within a single advice appointment is four (4), well above the national average of 2.4.

Nationally, the release of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 brought DFSV, and the critical role of women's legal services and our gender and DFSV specialisation, to the fore. Alongside our 12 sister services across the country, TEWLS aided in efforts to reinvigorate the Women's Legal Services Australia ('WLSA') peak.



FY22-23 brought multiple Canberra advocacy trips, both as part of WLSA as well as together with our sister women's legal service in Katherine/Big Rivers, KWILS, advocating for and seeking meaningful and longstanding investment in the Top End and Katherine/Big Rivers regions experiencing unprecedented DFSV demand and overarching gender disparity.

Advocacy also continued on the ground, with the service again contributing to numerous and wide-ranging law and policy reform pieces, including long-awaited reforms to NT DFSV legislation, as well as heightened protections for victim-survivors of sexual violence.

We also flexed our event planning muscles in ongoing efforts to provide preventative and proactive legal assistance - from International Women's Day to an event alongside five (5) CALD communities and consulates, TEWLS was out and about like never before.

It's fair to say that it's been a big year - and times ahead are equally, if not more so, with the NLAP Review looming and the future of our sector along with it. As Chair of the NT Association of Community Legal Centres, TEWLS will be at the forefront of advocacy for access to justice in the NT, and we look forward to ongoing engagement in and contributions to the process.

To our community and clients, thank you for your trust - to our volunteers, thank you for your dedication and energy - and to our staff, thank you for being the light that shines in the Top End.



Caitlin Weatherby-Fell
Chief Executive Officer



SERVICE SNAPSHOT

2,268

services provided
to clients

46

community legal
education sessions

130+

law and policy
reforms

607

ongoing court and
representation
services

139

external legal
clinics

OUR CLIENTS

WHO ARE OUR CLIENTS?

565
total clients

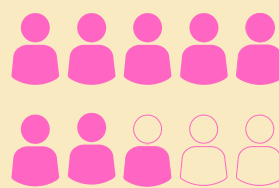
43%
of all clients were aged
between 35-49

31%
of all clients identified as
Aboriginal or Torres
Strait Islander

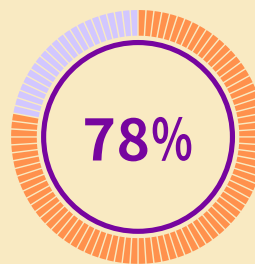
28%
of all clients speak a
main language other
than English at home

26%
of all clients identified as
having a disability or
mental ill health

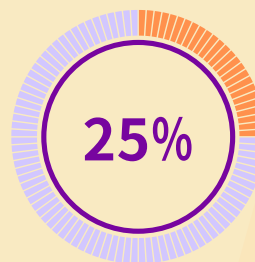
ISSUES OUR CLIENTS ARE EXPERIENCING



76% of our
ongoing clients
were affected by
DFSV



78% of our
ongoing clients
experienced
financial
disadvantage



25% of all clients
identified they
were affected by
homelessness

HOW DO OUR CLIENTS FIND US?



As a key DFSV service provider, our clients reached us for help in **four (4)** key ways:

1

Have received
our services
before

2

Referred by a
service partner
or NT Police

3

Referred by
another legal
service

4

Searched on the
internet or word
of mouth

In FY22-23, our key service partners (where we deliver on-site legal services) remained the four (4) women's shelters in the Greater Darwin region. Other referral pathways included via private legal practitioners, community groups and organisations (including migrant and multicultural groups), and family service providers.

Notably, between January-March 2023 and April-June 2023, we experienced a **1,100+% increase** in SupportLink referrals from Northern Territory Police.

FURTHER, AND IMPORTANT, CONTEXT

10x

women who have
experienced DFSV are 10x
more likely to have legal
problems

1 in 3

women have experienced
physical violence since the
age of 15

\$606.1 million **117%**

conservative estimate of
DFSV costs to the NT per
year

increase in DFSV reports
in the NT over the past
decade



TEWLS' service areas cover **13 clinic locations** throughout the Greater Darwin region

OUR SERVICES

1,659

total legal and support
services provided
(not including information and referral)

717

legal advices

238

legal tasks

97

social support matters
(discrete and ongoing non-legal
services)

607

ongoing representation
matters throughout FY2022-
23, including **164 court or
tribunal matters**



152% increase in
dispute resolution
(incl FDR) matters



On average, **four
(4) legal matter
types** covered
per legal advice



52% of open
matters at the end
of FY22-23 have
been open for
>12 months

WHAT DOES 'ONGOING REPRESENTATION' MEAN?

Ongoing representation means providing clients dedicated and intensive legal and case management support to work with them to address their legal needs.

Ongoing representation is generally needed for legally and emotionally complex matters where clients have multiple vulnerabilities and/or barriers to accessing systems, as well as multiple and intersecting legal needs.

Currently in the NT, matters such as victims of crime compensation can take up to six (6) years to resolve, and matters such as complex parenting and DFSV, as well as migration matters, can take two (2) to three (3) years to resolve. All likely involve hundreds of emails and phone calls, multiple court and/or dispute resolution events (if applicable), time-consuming drafting of documents, and managing relationships with multiple stakeholders to reach the best possible outcomes for clients.

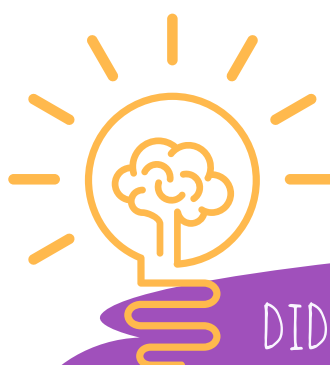
OUR SERVICE MODEL – A POINT OF DIFFERENCE

TEWLS' service model means that a client can access legal assistance from a single point of contact in multiple areas of law, reducing trauma and increasing efficiency and cost-savings for the community. Our service prioritises ongoing work for clients with intersectional vulnerabilities, such as those experiencing DFSV, financial disadvantage, identification as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (including migrants), people at risk of homelessness, and people living with disability or mental ill health.

MOST COMMON LAW TYPES

(all service types)

- 1 Parenting arrangements
- 2 Domestic/Family violence
- 3 Domestic violence protection orders
- 4 Family law property
- 5 Divorce, de-facto separations and/or annulment
- 6 Injury compensation



DID YOU KNOW?

Our volunteer lawyers provided over \$48,000 worth of legal advice in FY22-23

**based on the NT Supreme Courts costs schedule*



OUR IMPACT

As a specialist women's legal service, TEWLS has three (3) core components to our service delivery model - direct client services (legal practice), community legal education, and law and policy reform.

In FY22-23, we were proud to continue providing integrated, holistic, trauma-informed and culturally secure free legal and support services to people identifying as women and non-binary persons living in the Top End of the NT. TEWLS provided services in the areas of family, migration and civil law, with specific expertise held in respect of DFSV. TEWLS also provided community legal education and input on law and policy development to redress power imbalances and address violence and gender inequality.





LEGAL PRACTICE REPORT

SPECIALIST WOMEN'S PRACTICE (NLAP)

BACKGROUND

The specialist women's funding stream, funded through the NLAP under the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department, is the core funding stream under which TEWLS operates. This funding stream enables us to deliver services at our Darwin office, as well as at outreach locations including all four (4) women's shelters in the Greater Darwin region, services at the Palmerston Community Care Centre as well as at the Darwin Correctional Centre (non-Indigenous clients) in an ongoing effort to prioritise in-person service delivery.

In FY2022-23, our NLAP practice expanded to incorporate two new funding streams; **Vulnerable Women** and **Workplace Sexual Harassment and Discrimination**. While the former strengthens and expands core service provision, the latter commenced in January 2023 as a new specialist offering for the service - a front-line legal advice and representation service for women experiencing workplace sexual harassment and/or discrimination at the workplace. In line with the Respect@Work recommendations (Rec 53), TEWLS' new practice provides wrap-around and trauma-informed workplace advice and representation services from start to end, enabling women to pursue remedies that have not previously been available.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

In FY22-23, TEWLS' has adjusted our specialist women's practice to respond to and reflect client-centred and sustainable service design through the creation of the Paralegal & Intake team. Our skilled Paralegal & Intake Officers work in tandem with our Administration team to provide best-practice and accessible front-line services to new clients, stakeholders and service providers, and the community at large.

Throughout the year, our practice experienced new heights of service demand, particularly for DFSV services - **in the first half of 2023, referrals from NT Police alone increased by over 1,100%** (average referrals between Jan-Mar 2023 cf Apr-Jun 2023). Our practitioners rose to the challenge while maintaining key sustainability boundaries to preserve high quality and client-focussed service provision.

TRENDS

As reported in FY2021-22, requests for assistance in pre-action and alternate dispute resolution procedures continue to increase; **in FY22-23, dispute resolution services undertaken by the practice increased by 152% (and the year prior, 317%)**. Court representation services similarly increased, with notably increased requests for assistance in both domestic violence order ('DVO') and personal violence restraining order ('PVRO') proceedings.



For two (2) month-long periods, the practice closed books in an effort to manage unsustainable sector need.

FUTURE NEEDS AND DIRECTION

With incoming funding to support TEWLS' service delivery, our next phase will be enhancing and deepening trauma-informed practice for our service as a whole, not simply our clients.

We will continue to prioritise services requiring our specialist and holistic service model - clients with intersectional vulnerabilities and intersecting legal need - while working to increase capacity to respond to increasing service demand.

We will also continue to support the development of our legal practitioners to take on and carry through increasingly complex matters in our ongoing effort to travel alongside our clients to resolution.

462 clients

556 advices

167 tasks

417 ongoing legal matters*

*matters opened at the start of and during FY2022-23

WHERE CLIENTS CAN FIND US

TEWLS' specialist women's practice provides on-site clinics at the following locations:

- TEWLS office, Darwin
- Palmerston Community Care Centre
- Catherine Booth House
- Darwin Aboriginal Islander Women's Shelter ('DAIWS')
- Darwin Correctional Centre
- Dawn House
- YWCA Domestic and Family Violence Centre

65

on-site legal clinics
across the Greater
Darwin region

97

appointments for
clients at on-site
legal clinics

Are you experiencing sexual harassment and/or discrimination in your workplace?

Do you need **free legal help, including advice and representation?**

Specialist workplace sexual harassment and discrimination legal practice

Contact Top End Women's Legal Service (TEWLS) for a free and confidential appointment by phone on (08) 8982 3000, email to admin@tewls.org.au or via our website www.tewls.org.au



TOP END WOMEN'S
LEGAL SERVICE INC.
WARRI LIRRIKAL AKUPURRI KICH URRABAY
Aboriginal | Torres Strait | Women | Community



STACEY'S* STORY

Stacey* is a single parent residing in Darwin. Stacey was first referred to TEWLS through her local community care centre where, during an appointment about her young child, the nurse identified DFSV within Stacey's relationship.

Following advice, and with TEWLS' support and assistance, Stacey made safety plan and fled her home with her child to a local women's shelter. After more than 12 months of acting for Stacey, including parenting and property proposals and dispute resolution events, as well as warnings to the other party in respect of DFSV, TEWLS commenced proceedings in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia for parenting orders.

In providing integrated and holistic services to Stacey, TEWLS has provided legal and support assistance in respect of more than 10 matters across family law, DFSV, and civil law issues. During the Court process, Stacey has instructed feeling "so thankful" that she has been able to navigate her identification of DFSV within her relationship, safety planning and separation, and ongoing legal issues, with one practitioner.

JAMIE'S* STORY

Jamie* is a CALD student working in a local Top End business. During an opportunity to travel interstate for training, Jamie was unfortunately sexually assaulted by a work colleague, and upon her return to Darwin, was "slut-shamed" by her partner and wider community as a result of cultural norms.

Jamie attended TEWLS for advice and assistance under our newly established and specialist workplace sexual harassment and discrimination practice. Following an appointment with TEWLS' lawyer and the provision of advice in respect of options to empower Jamie, she elected to proceed with Federal discrimination, as well as local criminal processes. TEWLS commenced to act on behalf of Jamie, assisting her to concurrently navigate local and federal legal systems for remedy.

TEWLS continues to act for Jamie, with her matter expected to meaningfully progress 12-months after commencing relevant processes. In the interim, TEWLS continues to provide Jamie with social supports, as well as warm referral for counselling.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY OUTREACH (NIAA)

BACKGROUND

TEWLS' Indigenous Community Outreach program continued into its 14th year of operation, providing gender-specialist and consistent on-site clinics to six (6) Indigenous communities in the Greater Darwin region and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women incarcerated at the Darwin Correctional Centre. Funded by the National Indigenous Advancement Agency ('NIAA'), this stream critically enables TEWLS to employ an identified Indigenous Community and Project Officer to provide program leadership and non-legal service supports, including critical relationship maintenance with the communities that we serve.

In FY22-23, demand for legal help and support continued to outstrip capacity, particularly outside of funded locations.

86

clients

74

community outreach visits

98%

clients experiencing financial disadvantage

40%

clients who speak a main language other than English at home

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Since November 2022, TEWLS experienced significantly increased and ongoing requests/demands for service provision across the Top End from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in remote locations, including outside of our current funded locations. A product of our connection with communities, TEWLS actioned as many referrals as possible within our specialist women's legal service stream, with impacts for service capacity.

In mid-2023, TEWLS was grateful to expand our capacity to engage a time-limited and specialist staff member in a CLE Project Officer position, with successful recruitment commencing in July 2023. This position will assist the TEWLS Indigenous Community Project team to increase capacity for legal services in an effort to capture ongoing unmet legal need, as well as to develop plain English community legal education ('CLE') materials at service locations.

In January 2023, TEWLS partnered with Belyuen Community Government Council to deliver a first-of-kind community event in celebration of Aboriginal culture - a day for community to participate in a swathe of activities, including spear throwing and Iwoa (damper) competition, and to come together to celebrate "Citizens of the year" for the first time. Through TEWLS' ongoing relationship and connection with Belyuen, we were able to collaborate and successfully deliver the event, with warm feedback received

TRENDS

In FY22-23, TEWLS noted continuing increases in old and new client attendance (particularly noting an increased uptake in legal services at Darwin Correctional Centre).

Similarly, we also noted a **significant increase in non-legal support services (47%)** in addition to an increase in legal services, demonstrating the knowledge and trust in TEWLS Project staff (including our identified Indigenous Community and Project Officer position).

Unfortunately, issues/restrictions at the Correctional Centre significantly impacted service delivery. We have again noted an increase in both the volume of women presenting for legal help, as well as the number of legal issues for each client, with additional concerns of unmet legal need.

FUTURE NEEDS AND DIRECTION

With the engagement of our CLE Project Officer position, we are energised and importantly, now able to focus on proactive/preventative service provision with aims to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with information and supports ahead of crisis.

We will also continue to advocate to both the Territory and Commonwealth Governments in respect of critical service pressures and gaps across the Top End, as well as the need for gender-specialist service provision in line with self-determination principles.



KILLARA'S* STORY

Killara* first attended a TEWLS Legal Clinic at Darwin Correctional Centre (DCC) in 2015. During her time at DCC, Killara was assisted with a range of legal services including sensitive DFSV matters, injuries and compensation matters, as well as social support.

Killara, along with all women supported by TEWLS at DCC, are encouraged to stay connected with the service and to reach out for support if needed once released. Upon her release, Killara faced multiple challenges to re-establish her life 'on the outside', including experiencing homelessness, and began using alcohol and other drugs to manage her increasingly vulnerable situation.

Killara arrived at TEWLS seeking support from TEWLS' Indigenous Community Project Officer, with whom she'd formed a trusting relationship with at DCC. To aid Killara's recovery, TEWLS supported Killara to self-refer and attend rehabilitation, including transportation. Throughout Killara's recovery, TEWLS provided regular support and connection with her by phone and following her completion, Killara transitioned back to community. Killara presented to TEWLS in 2023, more than 12 months following her release, to thank staff and to acknowledge their ongoing and consistent support.



MIGRATION LAW PRACTICE (DSS)

Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot (TVHEVP)

BACKGROUND

In September 2021, TEWLS opened the Top End's first permanent free migration law practice: the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot (the Pilot), funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services ('DSS'). Initially funded for a 12-month period to provide wraparound migration and family law/DFSV assistance, the November 2022 Federal Budget brought a further extension of the Pilot to June 2024, and shortly after, the May 2023 Federal Budget brought an announcement of a further seven (7) month extension to January 2025, which we are yet to receive.

While warmly welcomed, and testament to the Pilot's success, TEWLS continues to advocate for the future of the Pilot to move from 'pilot status to a permanent fixture of each specialist women's legal service across the country.

KEY ACHEIVEMENTS

FY22-23 brought the recruitment of two Client Support Officers to Pilot team with aim to work alongside our magnificent Migration Law to provide wraparound support to vulnerable Pilot clients, as well as to promote the Pilot's services to the culturally and linguistically diverse ('CALD') community and stakeholders.

86 advices

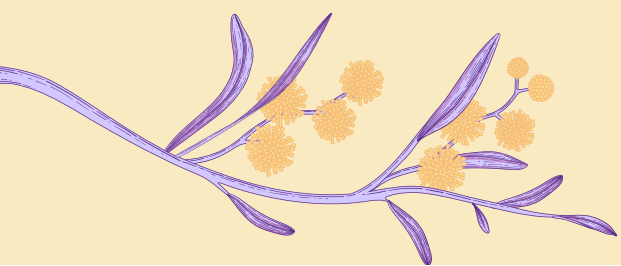
86% culturally and linguistically diverse (main language other than English)

61 ongoing legal matters*

*matters opened at the start of and during FY22-23

This year, we successfully expanded the Pilot's footprint and community understandings of migration law services in the NT with attendance at a broad variety of community events, including fortnightly cooking classes coordinated by our partner Pilot service provider, the Red Cross, as well as community legal education workshops and presentations to migrants and stakeholders alike.

We also experienced increased referrals from outside of Darwin region, which, while welcome, exacerbated the tension between our current funding levels and demand for services. To date, TEWLS remains the only community led, and free service in the whole of the NT that provides migration assistance.



In positive achievements, client success stories abounded within the Pilot, with four (4) grants of permanent visas while also receiving assistance in intersecting areas of law, including DFSV, family law (particularly parenting and property matters), victims of crime compensation, and tenancy.

Our Migration Lawyer was also recognised as a finalist in two (2) categories of the national Lawyers Weekly 30 Under 30 Awards 2023; a fitting recognition and celebration of her expertise and dedication.

Congratulations, Alyce!

TRENDS

Numbers of clients seeking visas through the Family Violence Provisions have increased this year, with the sense of relief experienced by clients upon their visa being granted not able to be overstated. As a member of the WLSA Migration sub-committee, TEWLS continues to advocate to the Department of Home Affairs in respect of trauma-informed service and information provision requirements, particularly within the visa application process.

A standing feature of our quarterly reporting, we have also noted increasing numbers of return clients to the Pilot who may not still meet eligibility criteria, i.e. where TEWLS has assisted a client to seek permanent residency and following same, the client returns for new DFSV, family and/or civil law advice. We have noted ongoing requests for migration advice and supports for permanent visa holders, which is unfortunately not included in the Pilot's parameters.

FUTURE NEEDS AND DIRECTION

With the future of the Pilot currently secure until June 2024, the next 12-months stand as a critical juncture for the future of our now essential and expert migration law services. While working to recruit a second lawyer to the Pilot, we remain on notice in respect of the Pilot's future, and will continue working with and advocating to the DSS and Federal Government's regarding the need for the Pilot in the NT, as well as dramatically increased funding for TEWLS, and our sister women's legal services, migration law services across the Territory.



CALD GAME DAY EVENT

In June 2023, TEWLS held a first-of-its-kind CALD games day event - the 'Be Different, Be Together' Game Day. Made possible by the City of Darwin and TEWLS' connectivity and relationships via the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot, TEWLS partnered with five (5) CALD community groups and consulates to bring an afternoon of culture and diversity to the Dry Season, with attendees participating in community games and sharing food from their respective cultures. The event also presented the perfect opportunity to launch our new Civil Law Factsheet suite in five (5) CALD languages.

With sincere thanks to our CALD community partners:

- Indonesian Consulate, Darwin
- Australian Vietnamese Family Association
- Nusantara Foundation NT
- Russian Speaking Community NT
- NT Thai Association

TEWLS also extends sincere thanks to **Larrakia Nation** for welcoming us to country with song and spirit - a fantastic celebration of rich diversity and affirmation of all that we have in common.



PHILOMENIA* and GWENDA'S* STORIES



We have two clients who we have assisted under the Pilot who have now obtained permanent residency, Philomenia* and Gwenda*.

TEWLS assisted Philomenia to obtain her permanent partner visa under the Family Violence Provisions. However, Philomenia's family law matters, including parenting and property, are complex and are continuing long after Philomenia received her permanent visa, which we are continuing to assist Philomenia in respect of. With our client-centred and trauma-informed approach having impact that clients work only with one lawyer for all matters (notably consistent with recommendations arising out of the National Plan), our Pilot lawyer continues to work with Philomenia on new and ongoing legal issues.

Recently, Philomenia has needed assistance with a new family law matter. Notably, now that Philomenia holds permanent visa, we have had to absorb this matter into our specialist women's legal service funding to ensure that Philomenia receives timely and trauma-informed legal help.

Similarly, Gwenda is a previous Pilot client who TEWLS assisted with a family dispute resolution (mediation) process to obtain a parenting plan. Recently, changes in the father of the children's behaviour means that the parenting arrangements need to be amended. Even though Gwenda is no longer eligible for assistance under the Pilot, our Pilot lawyer has taken this matter on in accordance with our client-centric model. The cost of this has again been absorbed by our specialist women's legal service funding.

The nature of family law matters where there has been DFSV, particularly those involving children, means it is highly likely that the matters will again flare up in the future and the client will need regular legal help with same. The limited funding of the Pilot and restricted eligibility means that once a client has obtained their permanent visa, they are no longer eligible for assistance under the Pilot for their future matters. At this point our only options are to either refer the client to a new lawyer, which is not trauma-informed nor consistent with the purpose of the Pilot in providing consistency and continuity for vulnerable women, or for TEWLS to assist these clients under alternate funding streams.

Both Philomenia and Gwenda's stories demonstrate the need for expanded and extended funding of the Pilot so we can continue to provide holistic, wrap around and ongoing assistance to clients.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In FY22-23, we continued to assist women and the wider community to better understand their legal rights and pathways to access legal services through community legal education and participation and coordination of community events. Community engagement is a critical part of TEWLS' early intervention and prevention activities, with our activities the result of our experience and expertise.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

TEWLS had a strong presence at community events, including coordination of a number of major events around International Women's Day ('IWD'), as well as targeted events for one of our Aboriginal community partners as well as the CALD community.

Community event highlights for the year included:

- TEWLS' IWD 'Art for Equality' event', made possible by the NTG
- TEWLS' Belyuen Community Event in partnership with Belyuen Community Government Council, made possible by the NTG
- TEWLS' 'Be Together, Be Different' CALD Game Day event, made possible by the City of Darwin

In January 2023, we were thrilled to be announced as the recipient of a Community Benefit Fund vehicle from the NT Government. Our new AWD has allowed us to attend to all facets of service provision, including community engagement - thank you, NTG!

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION (CLE)

We continued our work in CLE, with workshops and presentations to communities, parenting groups, as well as training to stakeholders. In mid-2023, we proudly embarked on innovative training with NT Police (both recruits and general duty officers) aimed at increasing first responder awareness of the intersections between visas and DFSV/DVOs, as well as parenting and DFSV/DVOs. This training was delivered by our Legal Practice team in two five (5) week sessional blocks onsite at the NT Police Command Training Centre.

46

CLE sessions

+150

stakeholder and
community
activities

3

TEWLS-led
community events



LAW AND POLICY REFORM

Integral to our work to ensure better outcomes for women in the Top End is our contribution to law reform and systems change. TEWLS welcomes the opportunity to make submissions and express our views on a wide scale on matters of importance to our clients and our areas of service, both as an individual service, and/or as part of a relevant collective or peak, such as a member of Northern Territory Women's Legal Services (a collective of the three (3) specialist women's legal services providing services across the Top End).

Law and Policy Reform - submissions

Our submissions this FY22-23 covered a vast range of matters captured by and/or influencing our legal and social practices, with core focus areas of client-centred service provision and the strengthening of sector capability and sustainability.

- NTWLS - NT Review of Legislation and the Justice Response to DFV in the NT submissions (Systemic and Legislative Responses)
- NTWLS - NT Draft Sentencing and Other Legislation Amendment Bil 2022 (Mandatory Sentencing) submission
- TEWLS - Incarcerated tenants' policy paper - DTFHC Legal Services Group
- NTWLS - NT DFSV Action Plan 2 & MEAP submission
- TEWLS - Northern Territory Legal Assistance Strategy and Action Plan - consultations
- TEWLS - Stealthing legislative amendments (tied to sexual offences drafting)
- NTWLS - Exposure Draft Criminal Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offence) Bill 2023
- NTWLS - Exposure Draft Domestic and Family Violence Amendment Bill 2023

Law and Policy Reform - advocacy

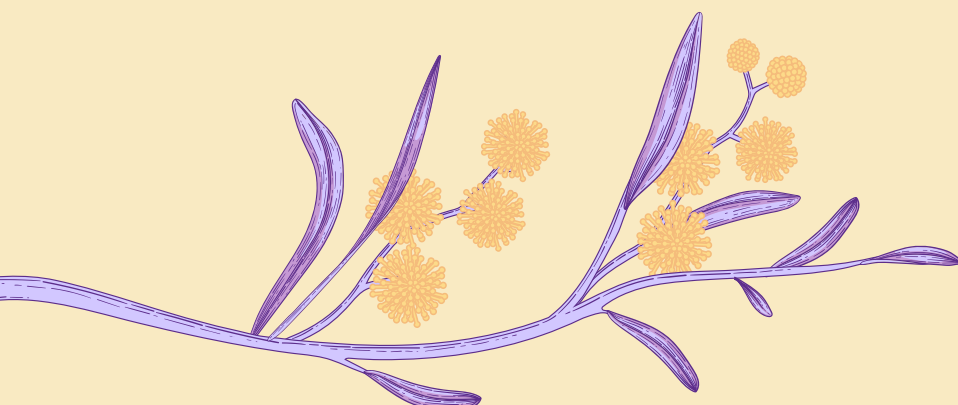
In FY22-23, and in response to a storm of urgent and growing DFSV legal need and imminent funding cliffs, TEWLS turned our focus to the influence of and connection with government and media. In raising our service profile and the unique stories and needs of the clients that we serve, TEWLS were successful in securing funding for a number of streams over the coming two (2) years, as well as providing expertise to influence the development of new policies and strategies.

Law and Policy Reform - networks and committees

TEWLS is committed to ongoing system improvement and engagement on behalf of our clients, using our experience and expertise to influence law and justice development to achieve our vision.

In FY22-23, we participated in the following committees, networks and law and policy reform working groups:

- Community Legal Centres Australia (CLCA)
- CLCA - NT Representative, Members Advisory Group (MAG)
- CLCA - RRRR Network
- Criminal Court User's Forum (Darwin Local Court)
- Darwin Correctional Centre Service Providers Group
- Domestic and Family Violence Court User's Forum (NT Local Court)
- Domestic and Family Violence Network (DVFN)
- Economic Justice Australia (EJA)
- Housing Legal Services Group
- National Advisory Group (NAG) - Temporary Visa Holders
- Northern Territory Association of Community Legal Centres (NTACLC)
- Northern Territory Community Legal Education Network (CLE Network)
- Northern Territory Child Protection Network
- Northern Territory Family Law Pathways Network
- Northern Territory Legal Assistance Forum (NTLAF)
- Northern Territory Women's Legal Services (NTWLS)
- NTCOSS Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Network
- Palmerston Indigenous Network (PIN)
- PARt Technical Advisory Group
- Settlement Support Network (SSN)
- Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA)
- WLSA Child Protection sub-committee
- WLSA Employment Law sub-committee
- WLSA Family Law and DFSV sub-committee
- WLSA Migration sub-committee
- WLSA Social Services sub-committee





Network spotlight: Women’s Legal Services Australia (WLSA)

This year, TEWLS has been proud to be apart of the reinvigoration, strengthening and growth of WLSA, the peak of all 13 women’s legal services across the country. Together, the WLSA collective have made significant inroads to influencing and impacting law reform and policy, supporting individual WLS’ staff via newly established communities of practice, and supporting the growth of our service models via shared learning and resources.



WHY WOMEN’S LEGAL SERVICES



Women continue to encounter disproportionate and significant barriers to justice, safety and equality



Violence is gendered, driven by gender inequalities. Women have less income, opportunities, and power than men.



Women have a range of legal, social, economic and cultural needs that requires a holistic approach.



Women’s legal services have specialist experience in providing assistance across intersecting areas of law, such as family law and DFSV.



We are person-centred and provide tailored, integrated and trauma-informed services to the unique needs of each woman.

OUR PEOPLE

OUR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

TEWLS is fortunate to have a dedicated, skilled and diverse Management Committee who guide the services strategic direction and ensure we meet our obligations as an accountable community organisation and accredited community legal centre.

Chairperson - Chris Osborne

Treasurer - Rose Mills

Secretary - Sim O'Callaghan

Board Members

Carol Cummins

Danielle Eveleigh

Emma Farnell

Sizol Fuyana (until February 2023)

Veronica Matipira (from May 2023)

OUR STAFF

TEWLS' multi-disciplinary and experienced team act at the front-line, with integrated legal and support services a hallmark of our service provision.

Executive

Chief Executive Officer Caitlin Weatherby-Fell

Legal Practice

Senior Lawyers Kathryn Baumeister (resigned September 2022)

Brittany Carmody

Lawyers Giselle Hutchins

Alyce Boemia

Georgia King

Eleanor Connop (from January 2023)

Lawyer & Project Officer Yardená Lankri (limited contract; July - October 2022)

**Paralegal and
Intake Officers** Piper Horner (resigned December 2022)

Suki Dorrás-Walker (from January 2023)

Kira Hussein-Liddell (from April 2023)

Client Support Team

**Indigenous Community
and Project Officer** Pamela Lasker

Client Support Officers Sophia Hauter (August 2022 - April 2023)

Kate Waiyraphutra (August 2022 - June 2023)

Administration Officer Kara Mills



Gems in the Top End

Surpassing the silver anniversary of volunteers at the Top End Women's Legal Service

By Caitlin
Weatherby-Fell

In 1995, the Top End Women's Legal Service (TEWLS) was established as one of a network of specialist women's legal services, the key recommendation of a series of reports by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) to address "the failure of justice for women in Australia". Following the ALRC reports' release, a group of women in Darwin met and agreed to work together, establishing a structure that would allow different communities to participate and contribute to an organisation in ways appropriate and accessible to them, while sitting within the one women's legal service.

Volunteers and pro bono partners extending access to justice

Around six months after its establishment, TEWLS commenced the now mainstay Wednesday evening advice clinic, a clinic staffed by TEWLS staff and volunteers. The after-hours clinic continues more than 25 years later (a silver anniversary), facilitating increased access to justice for women and persons identifying as women in the Top End of the Northern Territory (TNT). Every week, local, remote lawyers volunteer their time, expertise, and compassion to deliver one arm of TEWLS' essential services, which includes the provision

TEWLS Women's Legal Management Committee, and staff and volunteers pose for the TEWLS 25th anniversary photo in December 2021.



* Australian Law Reform Commission, Equity, Defining the law women's access to the legal system (January 2001).

AUSTRALIAN PRO BONO CENTRE

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Supervising Lawyers

Cathy Spurr
Chris Osborne
Julie Franz
Peggy Cheong
Michelle Duggan
Amy Williams
Annette Murray

Lawyers

Anne Chin
Bahareh Jaber
Bettina Kobelt
Bridgette Vanderwolf
Candance Gordon
Claire Bourke
Elanor Fenge
Elena Zola
Elizabeth McAulay
Elisabeth Storer
Georgia Hagias
Georgie Jeans
Georgina Kelly
Harita Sridhar
Harriet Murphy
Hiliary Thornberry

Kendra Frew
Kerrie-Ann Selwyn
Laura Davis
Madeline Nagel
Melanie Ralph
Monica Thompson
Nicola Leach
Nicole Sabamba
Ruby Rayner
Sarah Strzelecki
Stella Ajani
Stella Noor
Talia Slonim
Tisha Tejada
Winnie Chen
Yasmine Osbourne
Zarah Ramoso
Zarah Tenorio

Did you know?

TEWLS volunteers featured in Dec 2022's *Pro Bono Voco* - a bi-annual publication of the Australian Pro Bono Centre

OFFICE EXPANSION

In 2022, the TEWLS Darwin office expanded, doubling in size!

To house our growing team and provide a safe, accessible and warm environment for our clients, we literally knocked down walls to move into the office space next door - and in September 2022, we were thrilled to host over 50 stakeholders, colleagues and well-wishers to the official grand opening of our new space.

With sincere thanks to Joel Bowden MLA, who assisted in essential ribbon-cutting duties on behalf of Northern Territory Attorney-General, Chansey Paech MLA, as well as to our philanthropic funder for their donation that made our expansion possible, we have delighted in using our newly improved space throughout FY22-23, which will be able to house TEWLS for many years to come.



NEW TEWLS FACTSHEETS



In June 2023, we were delighted to launch our newest suite of community education resources - the Civil Law Factsheet suite. A product of TEWLS' COVID-19 response, TEWLS' newest factsheet suite covers our four (4) most common civil areas of law;

- Domestic Violence Orders (DVOs)
- Personal Violence Restraining Orders (PVROs)
- Victims of Crime Compensation (VOCC)
- Visas and domestic and family violence

At the time of funding being received, CALD clients accounted for 31% of TEWLS' clients and 23% of the NT population; and today, CALD women remain demonstrably vulnerable to systemic disadvantage, including racial, cultural and gender discrimination, DFSV, social isolation and economic insecurity.

As a result, and in tandem with TEWLS' carriage of the NT's Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot, the suite includes translations into the five (5) most common CALD languages in the Top End following stakeholder consultations, as well as ABS and TEWLS data;

- Filipino
- Greek
- Mandarin
- Swahili
- Vietnamese

We were delighted to launch the factsheets at our *Be Different, Be Together* CALD Game Day event alongside partner CALD communities, and are thrilled to have these resources available for our clients and wider community.

OUR THANKS

We extend heart-felt thanks to our key partners and supporters. You are invaluable in working towards our vision of a community in which women enjoy and are entitled to legal and social justice.

In particular, we would like to thank our dedicated team of volunteer lawyers, who helped us to deliver **an additional 139 legal advice appointments** to women across the Top End this year.

OUR DONORS

Thank you to all those who generously supported us through donations. In particular, we acknowledge the private donations made by members of our community, which allowed us to undertake our office expansion.

OUR FUNDERS

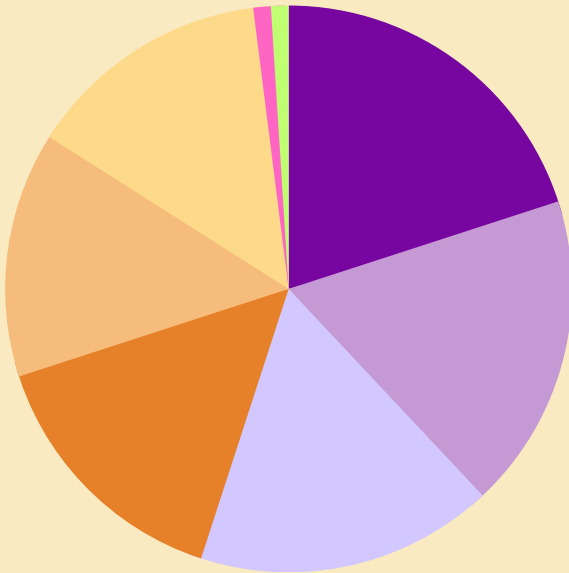
TEWLS gratefully acknowledges our funding partners in respect of both major and minor funding streams, without whom we could not provide essential legal services to women across the Top End.





FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Total revenue for the year ended 30 June 2023 is \$1,749,034



Aboriginal Womens Community Outreach (NIAA)	20%
NLAP Baseline	18%
NLAP Workplace Sexual Harassment	17%
NLAP Vulnerable Women	15%
Temporary Visa Holders Pilot (DSS)	14%
Paul Ramsay Foundation (for 2023-2025)	14%
Legal Practitioners Fidelity Fund	1%
Other	1%

Total expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2023 is \$1,321,415



Employee
expenses
(78%)



Premises
costs
(8%)



IT &
communications
(3%)



Office
management
(4%)



Other
expenses
(7%)

ANNUAL POSITION

As at 30 June 2023, our member's funds balance is \$1,192,643



Assets
\$1,976,643



Liabilities
\$748,000



Equity
\$1,192,643

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Increased and diversified funding sources have allowed for service expansion.

Monies received in advance of operations commencement ensures security for future years.



TOP END WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE INC.

FREE LEGAL ADVICE FOR WOMEN

Advice | Information | Referral | Advocacy