



ANNUAL REPORT

2024 / 2025

Bermagui, New South Wales, Australia



South Coast | Snowy | Queanbeyan

1800 229 529
scclaw.org.au
info@scclaw.org.au

Contents

Acknowledgement, Mission and Values	Page 3
Our Impact for 2024/25	Page 4 - 7
SC&CCL Team	Page 8
SC&CCL Management Committee, Strategic Objectives and Acknowledgement of Funding	Page 9
Rebrand Report	Page 10
Reconciliation Action Plan Report	Page 11
Principal Solicitor's Report	Page 12 - 13
SC&CCL Report	Page 14 - 15
President's Report	Page 16
Treasurer's Report	Page 17 - 18
Pro Bono Partnerships and Legal Assistance Sector Support Report	Page 19
Law Reform Report	Page 20 - 21
Outreach Report	Page 23
Case Studies for 2024/25	Page 24 - 28
Community Legal Education (CLE) Report	Page 29

Acknowledgement of Country

South Coast & Country Community Law would like to Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to the Ancestors, Elders past and present, the future generations, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We Acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People will always hold a spiritual belonging and connection with this country, and remain the Traditional Owners and First Peoples of this land.

Mission

To provide free, easily accessible and professional legal services that support vulnerable members of our communities when they need it most.

Vision

To live in an inclusive and equitable society that embraces social justice, where professional legal services and support are available to all, regardless of social or economic status.

Values

One for all

We offer respect and support, not judgement or bias. Our professional legal services are genuinely inclusive and available to all. We truly care.

Community to the core

We are about fostering a more informed, empowered and stronger community where everyone is respected, supported and heard.

Time worth taking

We provide high levels of professional legal services, delivered with empathy, patience and compassion. We take the time to truly understand our clients and their unique situations, before explaining the best ways forward using plain English.

Big picture focus

Every client's legal situation is unique. We go further to see the complete picture, so we can offer the right combination of options, information and support. We provide a holistic service and link to other experts when required.

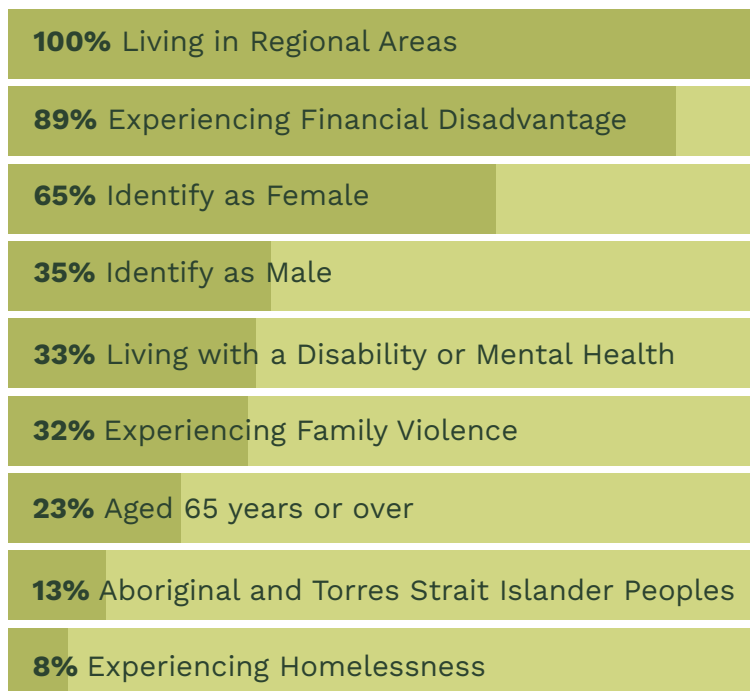
Our Impact for 2024/25

Priority Clients

Under our National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) funding we have continued this year to work to provide strategic support to our priority client groups. Many clients will represent more than one category of priority, showing that we are consistently reaching those that need our services the most.

- Clients living in rural or remote areas
- Single parents
- Older people
- Young people (18-24yrs)
- Clients living with a disability
- Clients who have experienced family and domestic violence
- Clients who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Clients who are at risk of homelessness or currently living homeless
- Clients experiencing mental ill health
- Clients in financial disadvantage

In 2024/25 year we have delivered services to the following priority clients overall:



1,442
clients received
legal services

3,665
legal services
delivered to clients

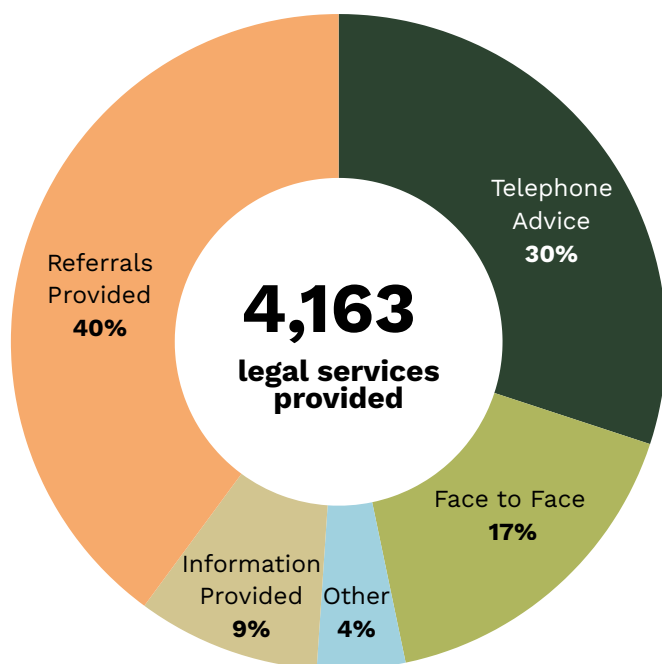
Clients by Age



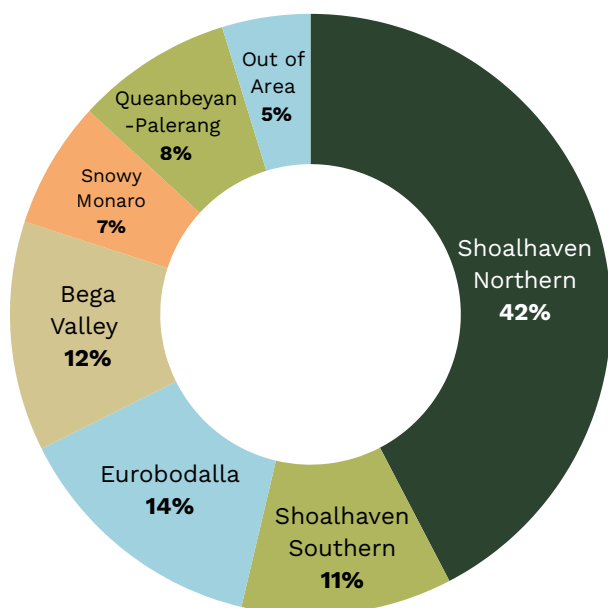
Our Impact for 2024/25

National Legal Assistance Partnership Funding

How Legal Services were delivered:



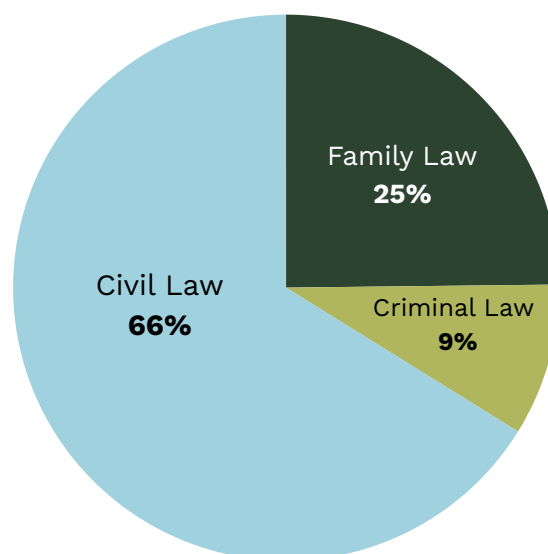
Services by Area



Top 5 Legal Problems

- 1 Parenting - Family Law
- 2 Wills & Estates - Civil Law
- 3 Credit and Debt - Civil Law
- 4 Divorce/Separations - Family Law
- 5 Property - Family Law

Primary Law Type



677 people attended
26 Community
Legal Education sessions

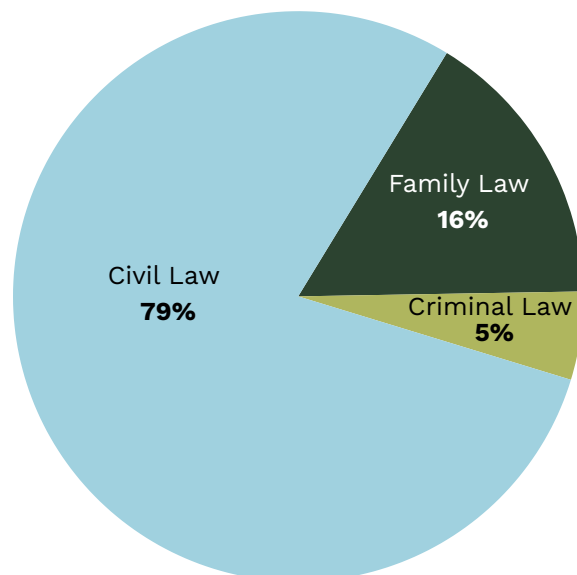
Our Impact for 2024/25

Commonwealth Flood and Disaster Related Legal Assistance Funding

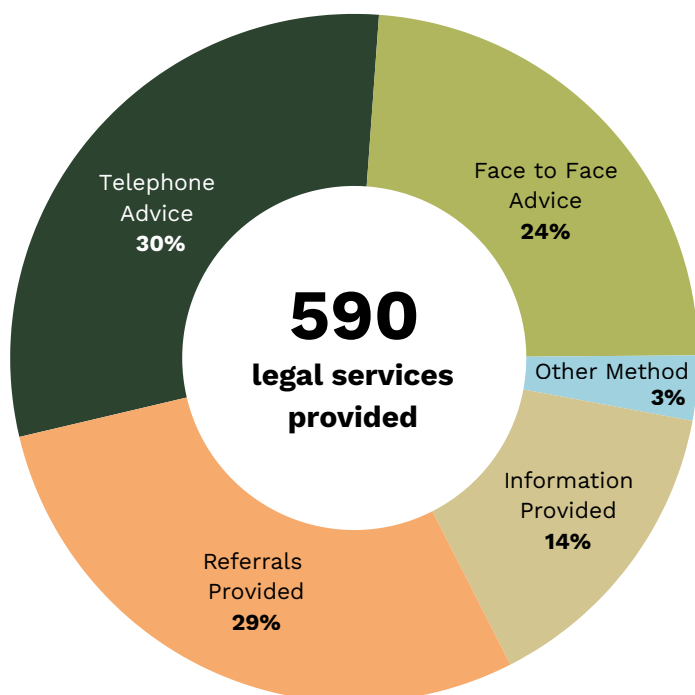
Top 5 Legal Problems

- 1 Credit and Debt - Civil Law
- 2 Housing - Civil Law
- 3 Parenting - Family Law
- 4 Property - Family Law
- 5 Domestic Violence Orders - Civil Law

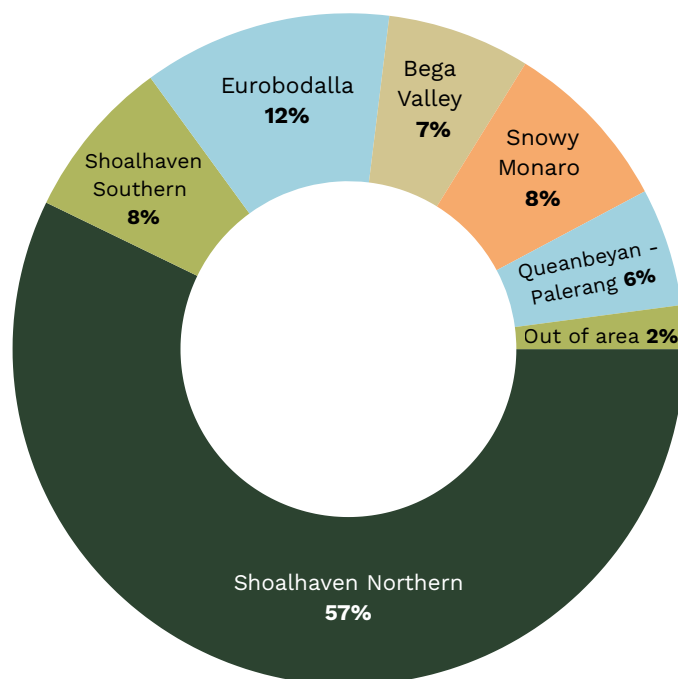
Primary Law Type



How Legal Services were delivered:



Services by Area



98 services were provided by our Financial Counsellor

Our Impact for 2024/25

Total Services provided for 2024/25

Total Number of Clients	1,442
-------------------------	-------

Services	NLAP	Disaster & Flood
Information and referrals	2,037	265
No of legal advices	1,616	200
No of legal tasks	397	24
No of OR (Closed)	60	0
Court/tribunal	1	0
DRRS	9	1
Ongoing Legal Support	7	0
Duty Lawyer	0	0
Discrete Non-Legal Support	0	45
Ongoing Non-Legal Support	0	53
CLE Activities	26	2
CLE Resources	10	2
Stakeholder Engagement	230	21
Law Reform	80	3
Total Services provided for 2024/25	4,401	607

Services by Area

(not including referrals and information)

	NLAP	Disaster & Flood
2541 Postcode	575	141
Bay and Basin & 2540 Postcode	314	49
Wreck Bay	11	1
Southern Shoalhaven	241	26
Eurobodalla	296	40
Bega Valley	263	23
Snowy Monaro	145	28
Queanbeyan-Palerang	179	19
Out of Area	101	7
Total	1,135	137

South Coast & Country Community Law Team

ADMINISTRATION TEAM

Manager	Emma Wood
Administration Officer	Rebecca Butler
Administration Officer	Amanda Sellin
Community Support Worker	Caryn Carpenter
Bookkeeper & Administration Officer	Shiree Gehlhaar
CLE & Events Planner	Jasmine Huang

LEGAL TEAM

Principal Solicitor	Louisa Stewart
Generalist Solicitor	Len Brown
Generalist Solicitor	Johanna Reid
Generalist Solicitor	Nikki Boyages
Generalist Solicitor	Marion Berriman
Generalist Solicitor	Grant Hodgson
Generalist Solicitor	Lisa Woodgate

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING TEAM

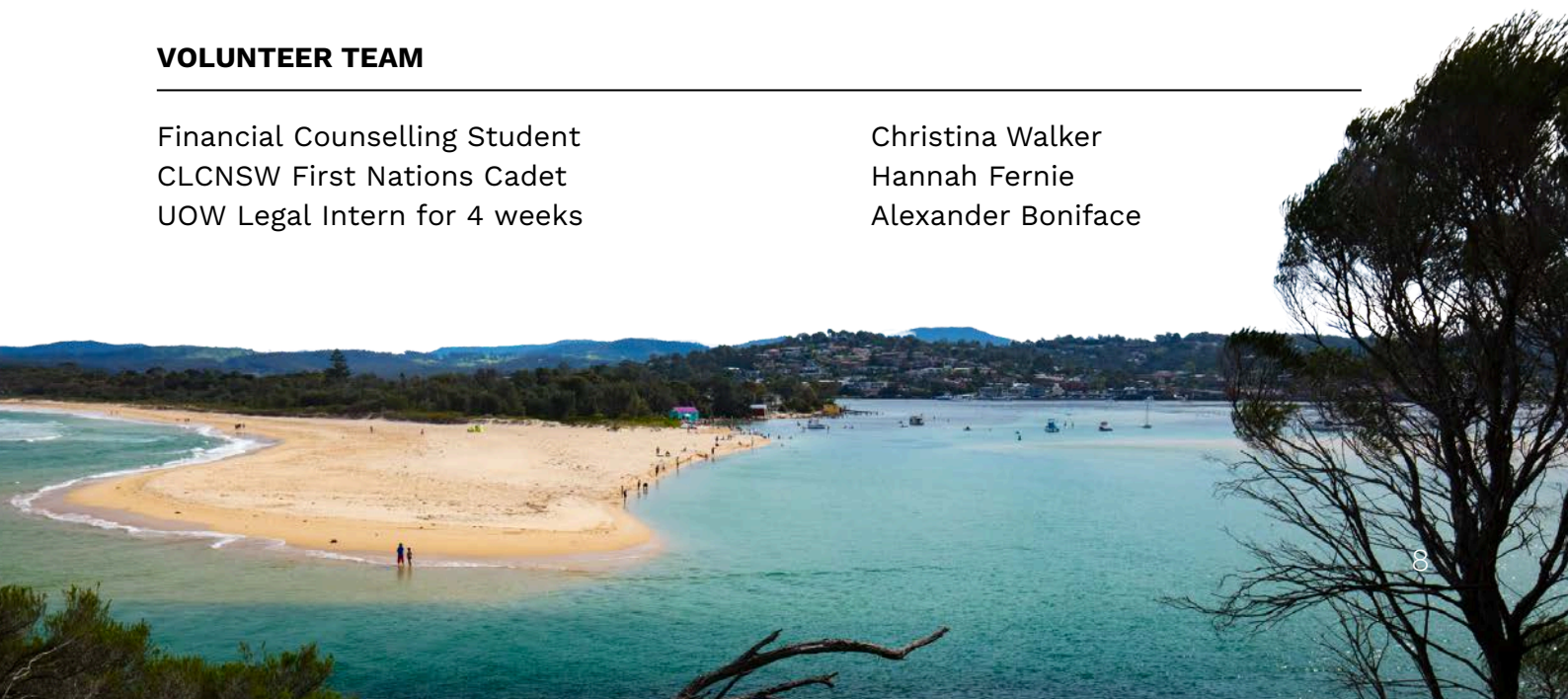
Financial Counsellor	Geoff Cornwall
----------------------	----------------

OFFICE JUNIORS (SCHOOL HOLIDAYS)

Social Media & Office Junior	Harrison Wood (to July 2024)
Office Junior	Evie Stewart

VOLUNTEER TEAM

Financial Counselling Student	Christina Walker
CLCNSW First Nations Cadet	Hannah Fernie
UOW Legal Intern for 4 weeks	Alexander Boniface



Volunteer Management Committee

President	Meredith McLaine
Vice President	Chloe Wyatt (to 9 January 2025)
Treasurer	Emily Hoerlein
Secretary	Jane Mussett
Committee Member	Luke Elliott
Committee Member	Jane Hughes
Committee Member	Rebecca Keys (from 5 February 2025)
Committee Member	Stephanie Young
Committee Member	Margaret Crothers (from 5 February 2025)
Committee Member	Henry Austin-Stone (From 5 February 2025 to 6 June 2025)

Strategic Objectives

1. Provide an efficient generalist legal service offering discrete and ongoing legal assistance to those who are disadvantaged.
2. Promote South Coast & Country Community Law's services to our communities.
3. Identify and contribute to law reform issues that promote systemic change to the advantage of our communities.
4. Identify and implement strategy to manage the long-term sustainability of the service.
5. Ensure that South Coast & Country Community Law is a culturally safe place for our staff and communities.
6. Identify and respond to the needs in our catchment areas in relation to Family Law/Family Violence.
7. Continue to build and maintain our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through our services.

Acknowledgement of Funding

South Coast & Country Community Law received funding from the following sources in 2024/25:

- **NLAP Generalist Funding and Additional Funding** – State and Commonwealth Governments through the Community Legal Centre Program (CLC Program) managed by Legal Aid NSW.
- **Flood and Disaster Related Legal Assistance Funding** – Commonwealth Government through the Community Legal Centre Program (CLC Program) managed by Legal Aid NSW.

South Coast & Country Community Law acknowledges the ongoing support provided by the New South Wales State and Commonwealth Government.

Rebrand Report

During the 2024/25, Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre rebranded to become South Coast & Country Community Law. The name Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre has been used since we began in 1999. For over 25 years, the name and branding of the dolphin has served the organisation well, however, as our areas of service have grown, it became clear a re-name and rebrand was needed.

The rebrand change was the subject of extensive consultation with members with a majority agreeing to the name and contributing to it before being chosen.

All were pleased that the rebrand and name change better reflected the catchment areas that we service.

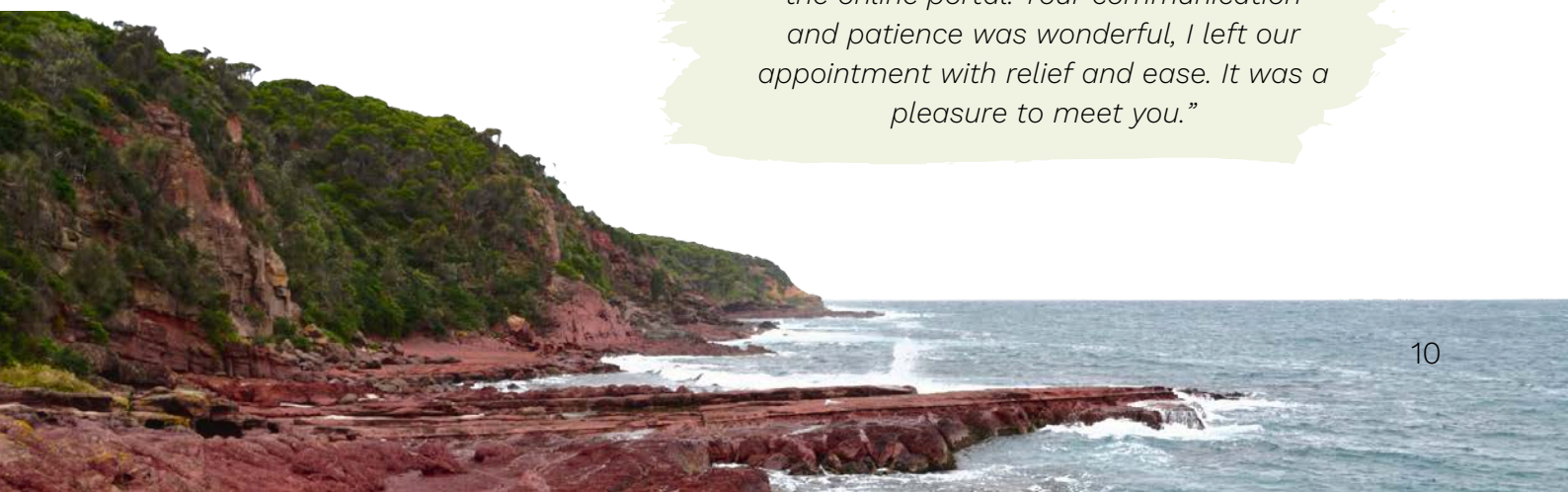
We continue to be a Community Legal Centre and our Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals also continue unchanged. The structure and governance of the Association will also remain unchanged.

A special general meeting was held on 5 February 2025 and the resolution of *“Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre Incorporated be changed to South Coast and Country Community Law Incorporated”* was passed.

The name change was submitted to the NSW Department of Fair Trading and was updated on 11 February 2025 with an issued Certificate of Incorporation.

The task then was to update all signs, systems, equipment, internal and external documents and promotional items to the new name and branding. It has been a beneficial and productive process to move through updating the name and branding for all involved. It was pleasing that there has been a positive response to the name change from service providers, clients and staff. We look forward to another 25 years with this name and brand!

“Thank you for meeting with me and for sharing your time yesterday. I appreciate your thorough explanation of my situation, the documents and for introducing me to the online portal. Your communication and patience was wonderful, I left our appointment with relief and ease. It was a pleasure to meet you.”



Reconciliation Action Plan Report

South Coast & Country Community Law continues to be guided by the Innovate Reconciliation Plan (RAP) which began on 1 January 2024 and concludes on 31 December 2026.

The South Coast & Country Community Law (SC&CCL) Innovate RAP focuses on 4 key pillars for reconciliation:

Relationships - The SC&CCL Innovate RAP will support our organisation's commitment for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures and a broader community understanding. We will focus on building new relationships and gain further trust from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and service providers in our catchment area by our demonstrated commitment to understanding and respect of culture.

Respect – SC&CCL ensures that our written policies and the practices that follow enshrine our values and achievable goals. Our policies and procedures and actions should ensure that respect is symbolic as well as practical.

Opportunities - SC&CCL is committed to providing real and meaningful employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at all levels of service delivery, and to progress and achieve individual and community goals. SC&CCL aims to contribute to law reform that advocates for changes in laws, policies and procedures that contribute to the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the justice system.

Governance – Ensure that we establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group to drive governance and build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally

A RAP Working Group (RWG) meets quarterly to review the requirements of the RAP. These meetings are an important time to come together to focus on and review the quarter's progress for the requirements of the RAP. At the meeting we are committed to reporting on the progress of the RAP against measurable performance targets. The RWG group consists of staff, volunteers and management committee members.

In the 2024/25 year, SC&CCL proudly participated in the following events:

- NAIDOC Events – Nowra
- Sorry Day walk in Nowra (to Bomaderry Homes)
- National Reconciliation Week – we held an internal lunch event at our office watching the Reconciliation NSW event

Principal Solicitor's Report

This year we have delivered legal services to over 1,400 clients and we have assisted many more with information and referrals where we were unable to meet their needs.

Over all funding areas we delivered more than 5,000 services to people living in our catchments.

This includes 2,314 legal services by our 7 lawyers. It also includes 98 services by our 1 part-time Financial Counsellor. It also represents many hours of work from our Intake team members, making 2,293 referral and information services, assisting clients to get the right service for their needs where we are not the best options or could not assist them. It is an unbelievable amount of work for a team of 14 people, many of whom work part-time. We are so grateful for our amazing team, the supportive work environment they create, and their ongoing commitment to social justice that really benefits our clients and community.

We consistently helped those most in need, and many clients will return when they need help again. This is both a complement and an achievement as we are seeing increased capability for our clients to recognise their legal needs and address them with confidence that they can walk in, call or email us for help. We are their neighbourhood lawyers and we walk together with them through hard times in their lives. It is a privilege to provide this assistance.

In 2024/25 we have achieved several important milestones.

The re-branding of Shoalcoast CLC to become **South Coast & Country Community Law** has been integral to ensuring our clients and communities feel valued and that we are part of their local community.

We have continued to deliver place-based services to assist access to justice, offering in person appointments at 12 locations. Through technology and support services from our stakeholders our clients can further access legal assistance and obtain timely legal advice to deal with their issues but we continue to prioritise being in our RRR areas on a regular basis to support our clients.

This year marks 5 years since our catchment areas were seriously impacted by the 2019/20 Bushfires. Cascading disasters, including record numbers of Floods since then, as well as the Covid years, left many clients we meet still struggling with their legal and non-legal issues that arose during that time. We can meet some of the increased demand since those disasters due to the four-year Commonwealth Disaster funds we received in June 2023. We acknowledge the great work we have been able to do with these funds including our Financial Counselling co-advice model that has been a great success in its first two full years, giving us the opportunity to offer our clients a model of integrated legal and non-legal services that allows more impact.

Financial Disadvantage for our clients overall is at 89% this year. Clients who were homeless made up 8% of our total clients for the year. The continued harsh economic conditions have affected clients who have other vulnerabilities most. We have seen a year of difficult housing issues for many clients.

Family Violence continues to impact 33% of our clients. We provide trauma informed legal and non-legal services to assist many to move on from family violence. We have had another successful year working with our clients and colleagues in First Nations communities. 13% of our total clients this year were First Nations people. We were able to increase our stakeholder engagement in both the Snowy Monaro and Queanbeyan-Palerang areas with the Koori Interagencies we have attended.

Continued work with communities on the Yuin lands (South Coast) and Ngunnawal (Queanbeyan-Palerang) and Ngarigo (Snowy Monaro) Country helps us make lasting impact in addressing legal and non-legal needs. Making connections and partnerships to improve the whole community's access to justice is a priority for SC&CCL. We have made some great connections with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), and we hope to see some further initiatives to collaborate with these organisations in the near future.

In 2025/26 we hope to continue all the great work and much more.

Thank you to all the team and the Management Committee for your work this year.

Louisa Stewart
Principal Solicitor

I did not expect any results so quickly! It's difficult to express my gratitude. Thanks for your efforts, it's much appreciated. I am over the moon, it's a huge relief and I just want to say again thank for all your trouble.



SC&CCL Report

July 2024

- We welcomed Marion Berriman (Generalist Solicitor) to the team
- We said farewell to Harrison Wood (Casual Office Junior/Social Media)
- We said farewell to Christina Walker (Financial Counselling Student placement)
- We held our quarterly RWG meeting
- We attended the NAIDOC event at Nowra
- We attended the NSW Fair Trading Community Workers Forum at Bomaderry TAFE
- We attended the South Coast Police District DV Awareness Cup.

August 2024

- We commenced planning and research for the rebranding
- We commenced our monthly Community Legal Education (CLE) webinar series presented on MS Teams. Our first webinar had over 100 attendees.

September 2024

- We passed our annual Cross Check for the legal practice
- We said farewell to our CLCNSW First Nations Cadet, Hannah Fernie
- We prepared for the return of the Annual Koori Touch Football Day in October 2024.

October 2024

- We celebrated 25 years of service to the community
- We held our Annual Koori Touch Football day on Wednesday 2 October 2024 at Lyrebird Sports Park
- We received additional funding for a contribution towards pay parity and indexation supplement
- Our new name was selected for the rebrand - South Coast & Country Community Law with the by-line underneath of South Coast | Snowy | Queanbeyan.

November 2024

- We commenced planning on the renovations to the reception area at 80 Bridge Road, to ensure the safety of our staff and to provide a more professional reception area for visitors
- We held our quarterly RWG meeting
- We continued our consultation for the rebrand – for the logo and colours
- Len completed the Legal Practice Management Course with the College of Law and is now appointed as a nominated person for the delegation of Principal Solicitor duties when needed
- We reviewed our trial outreach location at Jindabyne and based on low numbers, will cease this outreach and commence a new outreach at Sussex Inlet in 2025.

December 2024

- We all enjoyed a well-deserved break with our annual shutdown period of 23 December 2024 to 3 January 2025.
- Final selections were made on the rebrand for the logo and the colours and they went The Marketing Clan for final preparation and a style guide.

January 2025

- The office reopened on Monday 6 January 2025
- Intakes for legal advice appointments commenced on 6 January 2025
- Phone advice appointments commenced on 13 January 2025
- The renovation on the reception area of 80 Bridge Road commenced
- We did our annual tidy and clean out of the office at 80 Bridge Road
- We sent out notice for the special meeting of members on 5 February 2025 to vote on the name change to South Coast & Country Community Law
- We completed our annual file destruction of paper records over 7 years old.

February 2025

- The work on the renovation of the reception area at 80 Bridge Road continued
- We moved to MYOBTeam App for leave applications for the team
- We held the Special General Meeting and the new name was approved by members
- Our name was officially changed with the NSW Department of Fair Trading
- Rebranding work commenced!

March 2025

- We completed the renovation of the reception area
- More rebranding work was completed – a new flyer was created and we changed our domain name to be @scclaw.org.au and updated our social media.

April 2025

- We attended information sessions about the Portable Long Service Leave for our sector
- We held our quarterly RWG meeting
- More rebranding work was completed – we update the signs in the office, both external and internal and the name details with suppliers
- The conference room at 80 Bridge Road was painted and the information flyers from reception were moved into the conference room for easier viewing.

May 2025

- The location of our outreach in Moruya moved from The Family Place to the Moruya Library
- For Law Week we hosted two additional CLE Webinars for service providers in our areas.

June 2025

- We welcomed Alexander Boniface as a UOW Law Student Intern for 4 weeks
- We prepared for the end of financial year and reporting for the 2024/25 year.

Emma Wood

Manager

President's Report

It's been another busy, hard-working and successful year for the Centre. A landmark year as well. We celebrated a quarter century of Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre, and ushered in a new era with the name change to South Coast & Country Community Law (SC&CCL). For such an auspicious year, it is apt that the strength, longevity and reputation of the service has been reflected in exceptional stability of recent staffing arrangements, with no staff turnover occurring at all this year.

The Committee applauds Emma and the team for managing the laborious administrative work associated with the 're-branding'. A name change of itself may sound straightforward, but then there are the flow-on tasks in applying the new name and logo to all business documents, promotional materials, memberships, policies, bank accounts and ad infinite. This huge process was somehow managed seamlessly, or so it appeared to those looking on. This year also saw significant renovations to the reception and administration area of the Nowra building, enhancing security for staff and providing a fresh new feel to the premises.

Legal services to clients met and largely exceeded targets this year, providing critical advice and representation for vulnerable people in the community who would otherwise have nowhere to turn for the equivalent of SC&CCL's effective and high quality legal help. Our financial counselling service has continued to complement and enhance legal service delivery.

I also want to emphasise the extraordinary work the service does, throughout our catchment areas, in stakeholder engagement, partnerships and community development. This includes, for example, membership of inter-agency committees dealing with crucial issues such as domestic violence and homelessness; provision of community legal education; and the triumphant return this year of the Shoalhaven Annual Koori Touch Football Day. These activities perhaps 'fly under the radar', in comparison to the more obvious role of a Community Legal Centre in delivering legal advice and legal casework but are no less important. Without SC&CCL's participation and leadership in the not-for-profit sector and wider community, clients would be less likely find their way to the service, or to have their diverse needs holistically met.

I thank all the Management Committee members for their dedication throughout the year. As for me, although this might prove to be a case of famous last words, I expect to be standing down from the Committee at the forthcoming AGM. After around 5 years on the Committee, and a previous 15 years on staff, it's time to make way for new members and fresh ideas. But I will certainly be keeping in touch and keen to see what SC&CCL does next! I wish members, management, staff and clients the very best.

Meredith McLaine

President

Treasurer's Report

South Coast & Country Community Law Inc.

For the year ended 30 June 2025.

It is my pleasure to present the Treasurer's Report for South Coast & Country Community Law Inc. for the financial year ending 30 June 2025.

Financial Overview

The audited financial statements show that South Coast & Country Community Law remains financially sustainable, with adequate reserves to meet its ongoing commitments and to continue delivering services to our communities.

The independent auditor, Norwood Accounting Pty Ltd, has issued an unqualified opinion on our accounts. This means the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Association's financial position and performance, in compliance with Australian Accounting Standards and the Associations Incorporation Act (NSW) 2009.

Financial Performance

Please see below for a brief summary of our financial statements and position for the year ended 30 June 2025. A full comprehensive report is available upon request:

Item	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Revenue	1,759,358	1,573,470
Finance income	15,793	14,136
Other income	62,279	39,425
Total income	1,837,430	1,627,031
Depreciation & amortisation	(9,776)	(12,553)
Employee benefits expense	(1,503,151)	(1,295,858)
Other expenses	(300,114)	(320,780)
Total expenses	(1,813,041)	(1,629,191)
Surplus / (Deficit)	24,389	(2,160)

Treasurer's Report

Item	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Current assets	980,201	939,816
Non-current assets	49,038	44,154
Total assets	1,029,239	983,970
Current liabilities	558,908	555,933
Non-current liabilities	38,869	20,801
Total liabilities	597,777	576,734
Net assets	431,462	407,236
Equity (retained earnings)	431,462	407,236

The Association remains in a healthy financial position with sufficient current assets to cover its short-term obligations. There were no significant changes to the structure of assets or liabilities during the reporting period. Importantly, no matters or circumstances have arisen since year-end that would significantly affect our operations or financial stability going forward.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Emma Wood for her diligence in financial planning and reporting, and the Committee for their oversight and guidance. Her commitment ensures that South Coast & Country Community Law continues to operate with transparency, accountability, and financial responsibility.

Conclusion

In conclusion, South Coast & Country Community Law Inc. is in a sound financial position at 30 June 2025. With careful stewardship of funds and continued support from our funding bodies and community, South Coast & Country Community Law Inc. is well placed to sustain its services into the coming year.

Emily Hoerlein

Treasurer

Pro Bono Partnerships and Legal Assistance Sector Support in 2024/25

We want to thank and acknowledge the following firms that have helped our clients and our CLC with support in the form of casework, advice and development of resources in 2024/25:

- Clayton Utz (Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Perth)
- Hall and Wilcox
- Wotton Kearney
- Maddocks
- DLA Piper
- Lee-May Saw, Barrister, Frederick Jordan Chambers
- Justin Pen, Barrister, Greenway Chambers

We also want to thank our colleagues across the Legal Assistance sector, without this network of support we would not be able help our clients with complex and specialised issues without them needing to travel to metropolitan centres.

- Employment Rights Legal Service (Redfern, Kingsford and Inner City Legal Centres) for their ongoing support in continued development of our legal team in Employment Law issues and support and resourcing to assist our clients.
- Tenants Union, Grant Arbuthnot for constant support in Tenancy law issues.
- Legal Aid Nowra for continued collaborative work and support for our clients.
- Illawarra Legal Centre for being a great neighbour and helping our clients access support.
- Macarthur Legal Centre for also being a great neighbour and sharing the border areas with their Western Region team as well as being great partners in our FRC partnerships.
- Justice Connect for the Pro Bono Portal helping us connect with assistance in complex matters.

It is indeed a huge relief and only made possible with your expertise and intervention. Thank you for all your help, my family and I are eternally grateful.

Law Reform Report

We have made the following contributions to law reform in 2024/25:

- Member of Community Reference Group, Research into Intimate Partner Violence within Veterans and Defence Communities. A research project with RSL Life Care, ANROWS, DVA and Monash University. Johanna Reid has been attending on behalf of our service.
- Collaborative work from our Financial Counsellor, Geoff Cornwall with his committee from Financial Counselling NSW and Financial Rights Legal Service on the proposed changes to Bankruptcy. Submissions and advocacy from this group is aimed at increasing the amount of debt required to be made bankrupt and having a simplified, shorter bankruptcy term option for seriously financially disadvantaged persons.
- Participated in Empirical Research on Unbundled Legal Services for Family Law Disputants, Macquarie University Law School, we participated in their two-part study of services such as ours that provide legal assistance services to Family Law clients at different stages of the process. Our experience assisting clients before, during and after court proceedings ended allowed us to contribute information about how this affects the clients' experience of the family court system, the challenges it adds to their complex matters. It highlighted the need for increased access to representation services for many clients.



- Participated in Access to Justice in RRR, Law and Justice Foundation NSW, study and research into identifying legal needs and barriers to access to justice in RRR areas. Given our work in RRR locations on a weekly basis throughout the year we are able to give insight into the way clients experience issues accessing justice. The difficulties for community members in RRR only being able to access services through online services or phone lines in areas where technology is not always available and in person services can be hours away leads to many people finding the process too difficult. The delays this can cause are detrimental to the clients ongoing life and often can lead to further legal issues when left unresolved. We are hopeful participating in these types of studies will effect changes to policy and funding of services in RRR areas. Further work is needed to adequately recognise the implications of RRR locations on the justice experience.
- Participated in How is technology used in Australia's legal assistance sector, UNSW's Centre for the Future of the Legal Profession. We were able to feedback the challenges for small centres in outer Regional areas. This work again should assist in supporting advocacy for adequate funding to provide legal assistance services.
- Participated in Barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families Accessing Legal Supports - Scoping Study, SNAICC and NATSILS. Contributing to this survey was important to reflect on the barriers that continue to impact First Nations clients and communities. Increased awareness and work to break down these barriers need to continue to achieve better access to justice for all.



Outreach Report 2024/25

In 2024/25 our legal team has completed regular outreaches in the following locations:

Shoalhaven:

- Nowra
- Bay and Basin (Sanctuary Point)
- Wreck Bay
- Sussex Inlet (from February 2025)
- Ulladulla

Eurobodalla:

- Batemans Bay
- Moruya

Bega Valley:

- Cobargo
- Bega
- Eden

Snowy Monaro:

- Jindabyne (until December 2024)
- Cooma

Queanbeyan-Palerang

- Queanbeyan



This outreach work has been a priority for our service delivery as we place immense value on being able to meet with our most vulnerable clients in areas where they live. Most of our clients can see a solicitor at our outreach locations within an hour of their home. This is important to complement our phone and online services as we know that many clients need assistance with technology, may experience difficulties with telephone and NBN connection is inconsistent throughout Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) areas in NSW. Communication with older clients, or clients living with disabilities can also be much clearer in person, which reduces client stress and can help immensely with faster resolution of matters.

SC&CCL's regular schedule means we can meet more than one time where needed with a client and once we have established communication, we are more easily able to continue to assist clients remotely.

Our Legal Team works really hard to overcome the barriers clients are facing too. We can connect clients with other services that are unable to provide in-person services, connecting our clients to the vast network of legal assistance services.

With so many of our government services being remotely offered through phone and internet contact, this in-person presence has become even more important over time. We are committed to continuing to meet the needs of our RRR clients.

We are passionate about ensuring access to justice in all areas of our catchment. There are many inequities between RRR life and metropolitan life, but we are constantly looking for ways to improve this gap and address the flow-on effect to our clients lived experience of the law, to increase their capacity to address their own issues and to ensure better outcomes.

With all this travel comes costs and as we move forward with our services it will continue to be a challenge to provide this great service to the vast geographical catchment we cover. We are embracing technology and continuing to work hard to connect with other services in our areas to ensure we keep reaching those clients that need us most. We hope to continue to offer this excellent aspect of our service in the future.



Case Studies

Debt Recovery after a Motor Vehicle Accident

Our client was an older Aboriginal woman with Disabilities, in receipt of an income support payment. Client required advice on how to respond to an Insurer alleging she was liable for a Motor Vehicle Accident (MVA) and claiming an excessive amount for MVA property damage.

Our solicitor assisted our Client to resolve their own dispute by drafting letter to the Insurer, denying liability and raising a red flag about the amount claimed for damage to the other vehicle in these circumstances. Client's vehicle only sustained very minor damage.

The Insurer responded by confirming that it was ceasing recovery actions against our client. The matter settled with each party agreeing to bear their own costs.

Outcome: *Reduced time in the justice system, decreased stress and anxiety for client, improved financial wellbeing for client.*

Employment and Tenancy

Our Client was a migrant employed under a temporary work visa who lived/rented from their employer in work owned premises. Alleged breaches of the Fair Work Act occurred during the employment and the employment relationship ended abruptly. Our Client was given an invalid 7-day notice to vacate the work accommodation.

SC&CCL Solicitor was able to assist the Client by drafting a letter to Employer clarifying that our client was a tenant under the Residential Tenancies and the correct termination notice for an employee which would give our client several more weeks to find alternate accommodation.

We then assisted Client with warm referrals to a Specialist Employment CLC Service for representation in the Fair Work Commission and support with applying for a Workplace Justice Visa which is specialised work that only some CLCs can assist with. This client faced imminent homelessness in an unfamiliar country. With the loss of their job and the cancellation of work visa, our client faced the possibility of deportation if they did not receive legal advice and assistance in a timely manner.

Our assistance has saved local services resources as our efforts kept the client housed for the time being. The Client has been able to get timely advice and help with their employment visa and save costs to the government. The Client may now be able to remain and obtain other employment in the rural community where their skills are needed.

Outcome: *Decreased social isolation, decreased stress and anxiety, increased collaboration between services, improved ability to effectively service priority clients, fairer outcomes for clients.*

NCAT Review of Financial Management Order

Our client had a Financial Management order appointing a relative as their financial decision-maker since 2020 following a mental ill health episode. The client was wanting to seek a review of it after making great progress with their mental health and finding the appointed Decision Maker's decisions were also impacting on the client's financial wellbeing.

Our solicitor assisted the client by first attempting to resolve issues with the decision-maker, we then assisted client to apply and supported her application for Review by NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal – Guardianship Division. We assisted the client to submit evidence of her improved abilities. Client was entitled to Separate Legal Representative at the hearing so our solicitor worked with them to send on prepared statements from our client and supported her in the hearing.

Orders were revoked. The client was able to manage their own finances after 5 years. The client was very happy to be able to move on. The client described this as being “the last form of control over me has now been removed”, a powerful testimony from a long-term family violence victim-survivor.

Outcome: *Client experienced decreased stress and anxiety, improved financial wellbeing, decreased in resources for administration of financial management by Government services.*

Advocacy and Review of Fines (Revenue NSW)

Client has a permanent disability that impacts his ability to correctly wear a seatbelt in a car. They had received 2 camera detected fines for failing to correctly wear his seatbelt. Due to numerous barriers, such as communication and access to technology, his own request for a review of these fines was unsuccessful and the fines of over \$800 were overdue when he sought our assistance.

We assisted the Client by advocating to Revenue NSW Advocacy Hotline to have a subsequent review conducted of the fines.

The fines were withdrawn. The client received a caution. He was given advice about the ongoing need for medical certificates to be registered with NSW Transport to avoid future issues and fines for the same issue. This will hopefully result in a long-term savings to Revenue and legal services as there should be less need to legal intervention for this client.

Outcome: *Improved financial wellbeing for client, client is better informed of his rights and responsibilities, decreased expenditure by Government departments will be needed.*

Credit and Debt owed (Risk of Bankruptcy)

Our Client and their partner initially sought legal advice on bankruptcy to extinguish unsecured debts totalling approximately \$61k.

Our Client resides in a retirement villa and their only income was the Aged Pension. There was a real risk that their home could be sold to repay the debt and they had been struggling to move ahead in any way with repayments, the cost of living making progress impossible on their limited incomes.

After having free Legal Advice about their options and the risks they faced of losing their only asset, the villa, our legal team was able to refer them to our Financial Counsellor for some urgent advocacy and assistance.

The Financial Counsellor was able to approach the two Creditors and presented the Client's situation and requested debt waivers. Both Creditors agreed to full debt waivers on all accounts.

Removal of \$61k of debt will alleviate financial stress for the Client and their partner. This was a life-changing result for these clients who were otherwise facing the real prospect of the sale of their retirement home, in the current economic and housing environment this debt-waiver was the difference between two older persons potentially facing homelessness and soon becoming reliant on Aged Care far sooner than they otherwise may need. Bankruptcy proceedings and administration, particularly with need for sale of a home under Land-lease retirement village, would have been significantly costly to both the Clients and the Justice system also.

Outcome: *Improved financial wellbeing, improved personal relationships, increased individual and community wellbeing, decreased resources expended by Justice system.*



Family Law – Property

Our client was a single parent with disabilities, carer to two children with significant disabilities also, client was on a low income. The client had separated from their partner and parent of the children with no property settlement. The other parent had ended up re-locating overseas. The client had negotiated to settle the property for a share of the Superannuation held by their partner, as this was the only significant asset accumulated during the relationship.

We assisted our client to draft and file the Consent Orders reached by the parties, assisting with the process and supporting the client to finalise the financial relationship with their spouse. In assisting priority clients with final property orders we can then offer them advice and assistance to make a clean break from their past relationships, moving forward and securing their own financial wellbeing.

Outcome: *Improved financial wellbeing, increased individual and community wellbeing, fairer outcomes for client, decrease in resources expended by court.*

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support and all your work behind the scenes! You'll always have my gratitude. Thank you for fighting for me! A massive weight has been lifted off my shoulders. Thanks to you! Forever grateful.



Family Law – Parenting and Child Protection

Our client was a young parent, living in an outer regional area, a First Nations person, and on a low income and a single parent. The child was living with a Grandparent and spending time with our client regularly. The child's other parent had been struggling with drug dependency but had recently taken great steps to improve their own wellbeing and ability to spend time with the child was much improved. Child Protection services in NSW were involved for the past few years as the child had been at risk of significant harm.

Our client was referred to us by Child Protection services to assist our client with keeping this from needing to go to Children's Court. This was in everyone's interests as all the parties were happy to make Consent orders reflecting an agreement for the child to live with and spend time with the Grandparent and both parents in an arrangement based on their best interests.

We assisted the client to understand proposed orders, advised on the process and facilitated signing and filing of the documents in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to ensure they were finalised. The family were all able to continue to care for the child and there was no need for them to go to the Children's Court. This was the collaborative work of the Child Protection legal team, the representatives for the other parent and grandparent as well as our solicitor from SC&CCL.

Outcome: *Improved personal relationships, Decreased stress and anxiety, Increased collaboration between services, Improved ability to effectively service priority clients.*



Community Legal Education (CLE) Report

CLE activities this year were delivered as a mixture of online and in person sessions. We made a change to delivery of CLE to include a monthly Webinar session for service providers. The webinar format has helped us achieve a much greater engagement with our RRR providers and those unable to attend in person events due to limited staffing. We continue to tailor these for our catchments to make them full of local knowledge and practical help. We have seen an increase of 57% for participants reached for CLEs run this year which shows the efficiency the webinar model is providing us.

Significant updates and improvements of many of our CLE materials, presentations and handouts was completed to assist in our CLE delivery this year. Our Planning Ahead CLEs continue to be popular with both community and stakeholders, this has been given an update and focus on more issues we see our clients facing daily. We now cover not only Wills, Appointments of Enduring Guardians, Powers of Attorney but we also deal with the common instance of where there is no Will and we have aligned content with our *After Someone Dies* resource.

We have continued to find significant demand for CLE on all topics relating to assisting victim-survivors of Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence. We have trained stakeholders who work in frontline roles to assist in their better recognition of legal issues, increase their ability to make timely referrals for legal assistance and to increase their capacity to do non-legal work for clients in the community where possible. We are so grateful for the work of our supportive stakeholders that continue to engage with our sessions and develop their team's knowledge and skills. In 2024/2025 we also added several completely new topics to our CLE resources including Dealing with Debt and Disability and Decision-Making. We continue to plan new topics in response to the issues we are seeing in our local communities.

Thank you very much you have been able to get such a great outcome for us where we had been hitting a brick wall with the other party.

It is indeed a huge relief and only made possible with your expertise and intervention. Thank you for all your help, my family and I are eternally grateful.

Thank you for reading our annual report.

South Coast & Country Community Law looks forward to the 2025/26 year and continuing our services to the Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla, Bega Valley, Snowy Monaro and Queanbeyan-Palerang Local Government Areas.



South Coast & Country

COMMUNITY LAW

South Coast | Snowy | Queanbeyan