



Annual Report

2023-24

jsc.org.au



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

Foreword from our CEO, **Melanie**



Melanie Noden, CEO

Dear clients, partners, supporters, and stakeholders,

It has been an amazing year at Justice Support Centre (JSC), and as CEO, it has been rewarding to watch our team grow and enhance the support we provide to our clients. Our dedicated team through commitment to justice and the well-being of our community and also sheer hard work, have reached an incredible 16,608 people this year – a 57% increase on the previous year.

Looking to the future, in February, we held a Team Strategy Day, which led to the refinement of our vision and team values. This day was instrumental in shaping our direction and reinforcing the core principles that guide our work.

Our team-led values of Accountability, Teamwork, Respect, and Transparency are now the foundation of our culture and are proudly displayed throughout our locations. These values not only strengthen our internal bonds but also uplift our overarching vision: a future in which there is equality of access to justice, and women and children are free from domestic and family violence.

Our commitment to reconciliation and inclusivity is another cornerstone of our mission. This 2024 Annual Report showcases the many moving testimonials and success stories from our teams, highlighting our dedication to these principles. The efforts of our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RAP WG) during National Reconciliation Week (NRW) and National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) exemplify our ongoing work towards reconciliation and support for Indigenous communities.

Throughout the year, we have also engaged in significant community work and advocacy. Our outreach and programs have touched many lives, and the statistics provided will highlight the breadth of our impact. We remain steadfast in our commitment to justice and will continue to advocate for those in need, ensuring that our community is a place where everyone has access to support and protection.

All that we have achieved this year was only possible because of the support of you – our donors, pro bono partners, funding bodies, peak bodies and numerous community partners. Thank you for your continued partnership and support.

Sincerely,

Melanie Noden
CEO, Justice Support Centre (JSC)

" Thank you for your continued partnership and support"

Foreword from our president, **Naushee**



Naushee Rahman, President

To our valued partners, clients, stakeholders and supporters,

I invite you to delve into the 2024 Annual Report and revel in the remarkable achievements of our teams in supporting clients and transforming lives. This report is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our team, whose efforts have made a tangible difference in our community.

It has been a privilege to witness our CEO Melanie become grounded in her role with remarkable ease. Her collaborative approach to the team Strategic Planning Day has fostered a positive team culture, resulting in the successful buy-in and rollout of our JSC values and the development of our five-year strategic plan. The plan includes a focus on five pillars namely; people and work, advocacy, integration, holistic service and justice.

Externally, Melanie has strengthened relationships with clients, investors, and stakeholders, securing additional funding for JSC of just under \$50,000 through her networking efforts to go towards funding a much-needed additional lawyer in our Legal Team.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our new Board and JSC team members, Wendy Zhu and Nana Sylapranay. Wendy brings 18 years' experience in professional services and the public sector and currently works for the ATO, and Nana has an extensive background in risk and compliance, including extensive experience in financial crime, anti-money launder and counter terrorist financing, bribery, sanctions, regulatory compliance, corporate governance and accountability. It is wonderful to have such an engaged and passionate team dedicated to making a difference.

I also want to express my heartfelt thanks to our JSC staff for their hard work and to our stakeholders for their ongoing support.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do.

Naushee Rahman
President, Justice Support Centre (JSC)

"Revel in the remarkable achievements of our teams"

Our vision and team values

Our Vision

Together, we work towards a shared vision of a future where justice is accessible to all, and women and children live free from the threat of violence.

Our team values

At Justice Support Centre, our team values form the foundation of our work and guide us in our mission to provide equitable access to justice and support for women and children affected by domestic and family violence.



Teamwork

We believe in teamwork, understanding that we achieve more when we collaborate, fostering a sense of pride and ownership in our collective achievements.



Transparency

Our commitment to transparency ensures that we remain open and authentic, creating an environment where everyone feels respected and heard.



Accountability

We embrace accountability, empowering our people by supporting and caring for one another, which enhances our resilience and helps us achieve our goals.



Respect

Above all, we uphold respect, valuing each individual and promoting a workplace built on trust, camaraderie, and partnership.



Our reach



16,608

A 57% increase from FY2023 (comprising the detailed breakdown provided below).



5,846

People supported by our SWSWDVCAS



4,550

People supported by our SYDWDVCAS



771

People supported by our DFV Casework services



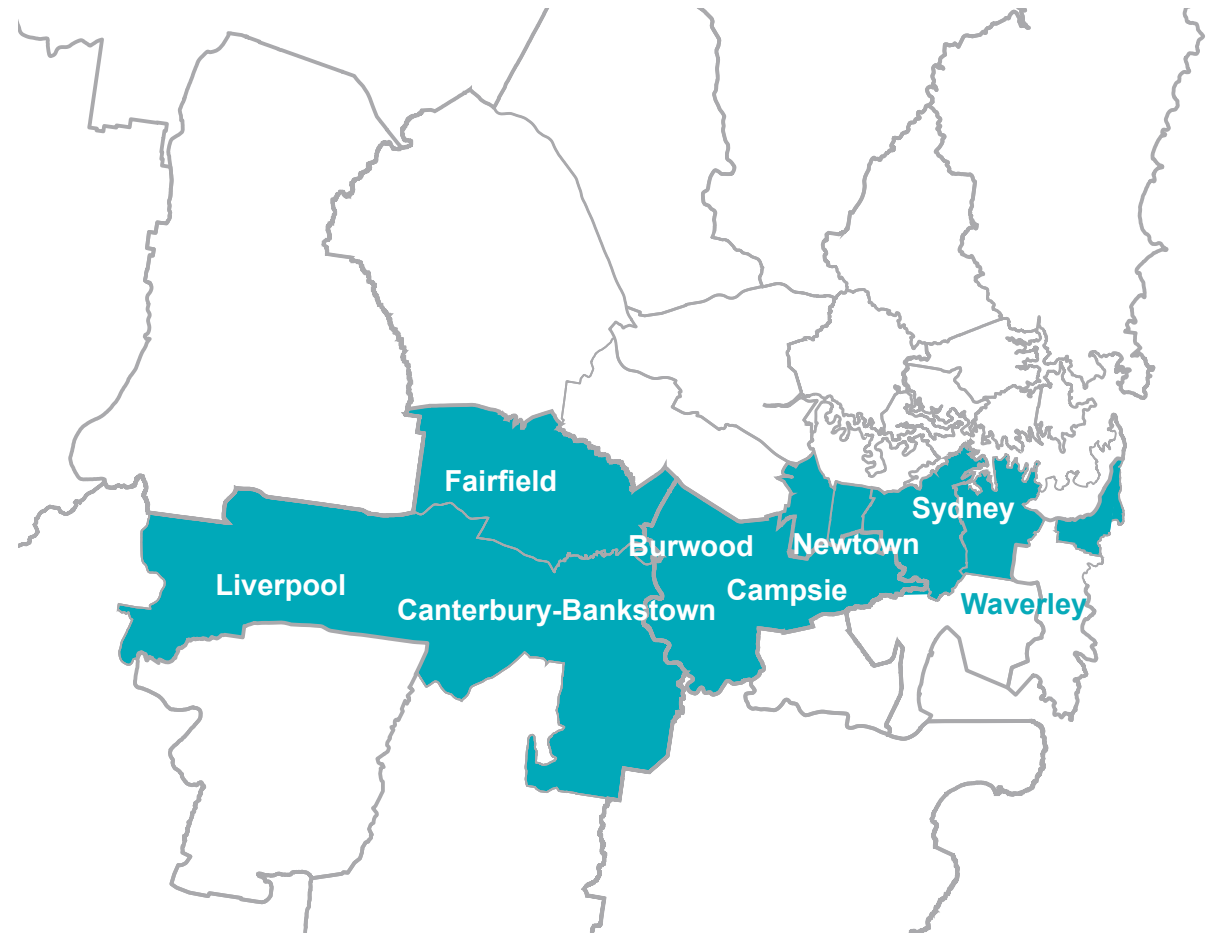
1,657

People supported by our legal services



3,784

People supported through community education and advocacy



Our clients



12,824

Clients comprised of the demographics below



11,992 - 94%

Women and children
(*supported directly or indirectly*)



5,935 - 46%

Multicultural



1,599 - 12%

Living with a disability



843 - 7%

First Nations



Team strategic planning day



The team strategic planning day was a pivotal event for us at Justice Support Centre. It was wonderful to see all staff making the time to attend, demonstrating their commitment to our shared mission. By the end, the energy in the room was palpable, with everyone rating their engagement as very high.



Special thanks to Doug Binns for donating his expert facilitation, which created a wonderful opportunity for collaboration, sharing of ideas, and making plans for working more efficiently as teams moving forward.



The result of this productive day was the establishment of our core team values: Accountability, Respect, Transparency, and Teamwork and then our 5-year Strategic Plan encompassing five pillars namely; people and work, advocacy, integration, holistic service and justice.



These values and strategic plan now form the foundation of many interactions, both internally and externally, guiding our actions and decisions as we strive to make a difference to the lives of those we serve.

Strategic Plan Pillars

People and work

Promote a trauma informed practice in the workplace by creating a safe and supportive environment

Advocacy

Elevate our presence and advocate for our clients' rights

Integration

Streamline systems and enable greater efficiencies, sharing of information and collaboration

Holistic Service

Provide a holistic service that meets the highest priority needs for clients

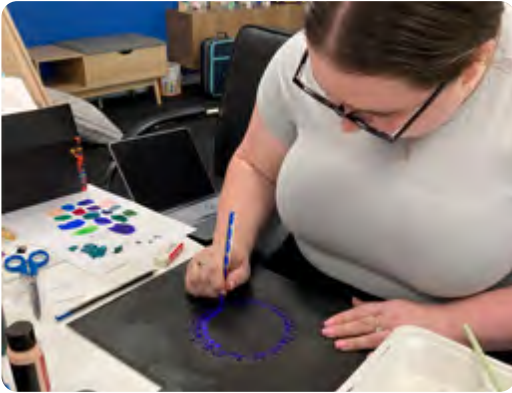
Justice

Resource and empower the Legal Team to meet the demand for justice

OBJECTIVE: Increase the number of people reached from 10,000 to 15,000 by 2029

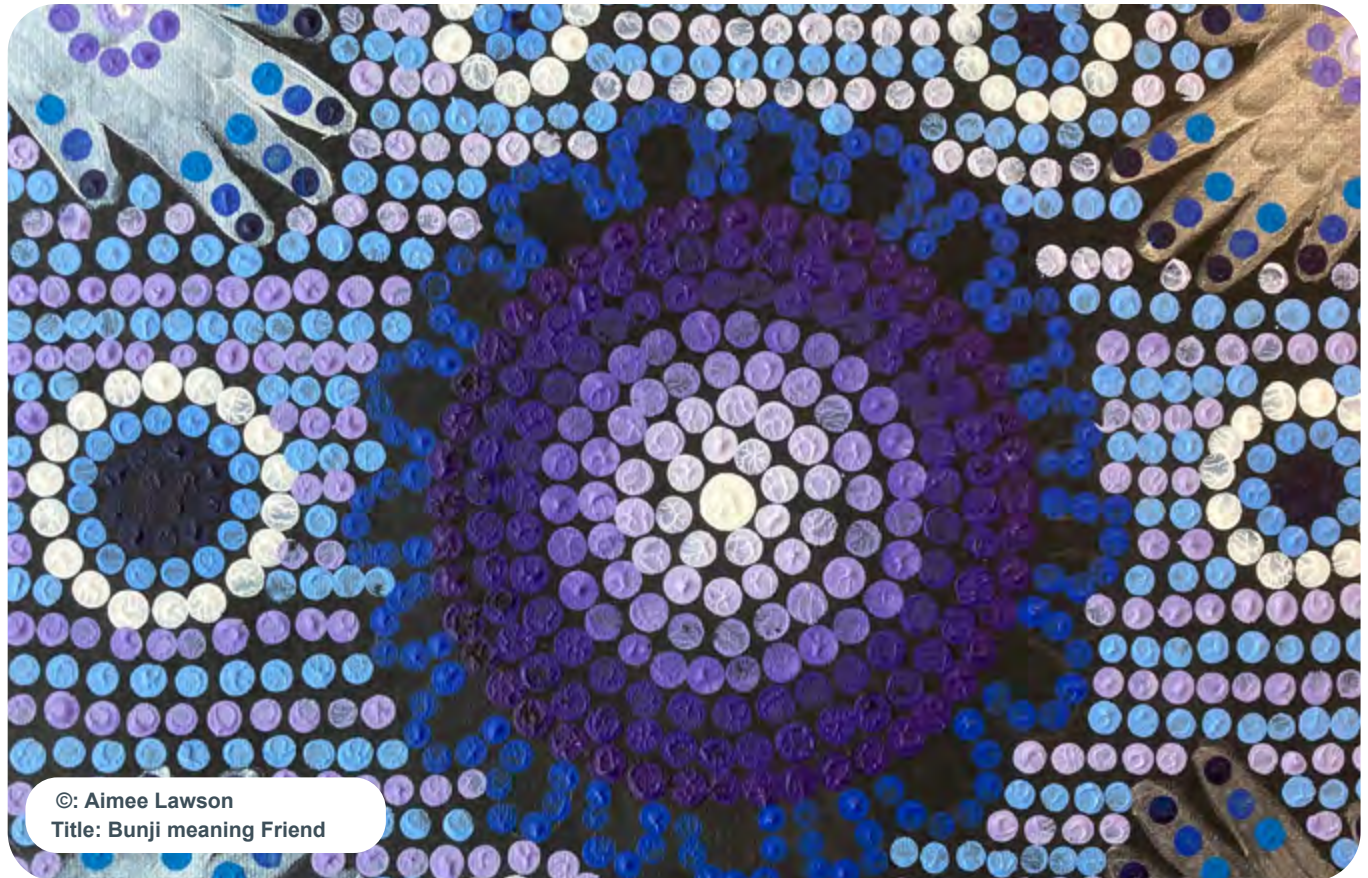
[Link to strategic plan](#)

Our commitment to inclusivity and reconciliation



In 2023, we celebrated a remarkable partnership with Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW) and our Justice Support Centre Legal team, resulting in the six-month development of a CADET. This initiative allowed the CADET, Aimee, to engage in diverse roles, from assisting the Legal Team in various tasks, collaborating with the Communications Manager to enhance our social media platforms, to working with our Financial Counsellor to design Aboriginal Office signage for our Bankstown office meeting rooms. Aimee's tenure wasn't just limited to these; she also supported our Local Court duty service, participated in a mediation, and enriched our Community Legal Education program. Her involvement enabled us to tackle long-standing tasks like compiling a central database of local stakeholders. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to CLCNSW for facilitating such a rewarding program.

Throughout 2023-2024, Justice Support Centre has demonstrated ongoing commitment to inclusivity and reconciliation, reinforcing our vision of equitable access to justice for all. Our dedication was reflected in several key initiatives and achievements over the past year.



©: Aimee Lawson
Title: Bunji meaning Friend

Our commitment to inclusivity and reconciliation ctd.



First Nations Lunch and Learn

We hosted a meaningful Lunch and Learn event in June 2024 to acknowledge National Reconciliation Week (NRW), fostering teamwork, awareness and dialogue within our team. Thank you to Uncle John for providing a Welcome to Country and Historical Fact Sharing, and to Auntie Liz for the bush tea, scones and jam. A wonderful team collage of our handprints was also created during the event.



Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Our efforts to formalise our commitment are further evidenced by the development of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which has been meticulously fine-tuned and submitted to Reconciliation Australia for approval having been conditionally endorsed.



What we do

Legal services

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

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) services

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS)

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



Education and advocacy

We provide free training workshops and information resources for community members and community workers.

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

DFV Casework services

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



Bankstown Court House



Legal services

Legal services

The Legal services section of our annual report marks a year of dynamic change and remarkable achievements. We have embraced a fresh strategic vision that aims to enhance our services and expand our reach. Additionally, we are proud to share numerous success stories from across our services, showcasing the profound impact our dedicated legal team has made in the lives of our clients.

Our clients



825 – 50%
Female



44 – 3%
First Nations



778 – 47%
Multicultural



357 – 22%
Living with a disability



62 – 4%
At risk of homelessness

Total number of clients assisted: 1,657

Our practice areas



Criminal/driving and traffic – 35%



Family law – 31%



Victim services – 7%



Civil law – 21%



Employment law – 6%



Meet our Principal Solicitor, Liz Simpson



Liz Simpson, Principal Solicitor

We hear from our Principal Solicitor, Liz Simpson who shares a bit about herself, her experience and her vision for the JSC Legal team...

Please share a bit about yourself/your career/why you went into Law

From the age of seven, I wanted to be a lawyer so I could make a difference. My passion for social justice continues to drive my career. I was brought up by a single mum who had mental health issues and what has always stayed with me is that people we know, and love could be our clients depending on what was happening in their lives.

Tell us a bit about your career

I have over 20 years legal experience across the community sector, government and private practice. Some highlights of my legal career include the establishment of a new wraparound legal service for newly arrived migrants, running test case litigation and most recently working as a senior lawyer in a dedicated legal service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

What do you envision as your future legal strategy for Justice Support Community Legal Centre

As a small team servicing the high legal needs of the South West Sydney community a key focus is upskilling our new team to build on their existing strengths and expertise and empower them as leaders to develop new projects, partnerships and services.

A second priority is to map the legal needs of South West Sydney and undertake an environmental scan of local community and legal providers in the area to identify how our team can most strategically work to address the community's unmet legal needs.

What have you achieved so far in re-building the team?

Since I joined in April I have been getting to know the team, staff across the organisation and our key stakeholders. We have recruited four new lawyers and promoted one of our senior lawyers to Assistant Principal Solicitor after over eight years of loyal service. I'm excited to be leading a team of passionate, diverse and experienced lawyers.

Importantly, we have already secured a new pro bono partnership with HWL Ebsworth Lawyers that delivers a fortnightly Victim Services (VS) telephone advice clinic to JSC DV casework clients. We have started exploring other partnerships and opportunities for collaboration to improve our reach and impact.

What do you do in your spare time?

I have three boys and a big dog. Our house is always noisy, busy and sandy. My passions are dancing, singing, travel and the beach (hence the sand in our home).

Legal highlights of the year



Ongoing relationship with Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) including Uniting Care & Catholic Care as their legal provider of choice for advice and representation as well as an ongoing community legal education (CLE) program. During this year we provided more than 90 staff, counsellors and clients (in community languages) from the local FRCs with training on the Family Law (FL) amendments.



JSC has a long-standing arrangement with Metro Assist to deliver multiple CLEs each year on "Your rights at work" as part of their Skilled Migrant Employment Program. These CLE sessions inform people who have recently arrived in Australia of their rights at work to reduce the risk of exploitation in the workplace. There has also been increased interest from local TAFEs and Wise employment in our employment CLEs.



Continued success of our outreaches at Local Courts (Driving Offence Legal Services at Bankstown and Liverpool) and The Hub Miller (in collaboration with Legal Aid Fairfield).



Client centred model of service delivery particularly for DV survivors – working collaboratively with our DV teams to provide a wrap-around service.





Victim Services (VS)

Impacting the lives of over 100 people this year

Our Victim Services assistance has profoundly impacted the lives of over 100 people this year, offering them critical assistance and advocacy during challenging times. This support has empowered clients to navigate the legal system with confidence, ensuring they receive the justice and protection they deserve.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our generous donors; your contributions to our fundraising campaign have significantly enhanced our capacity to serve our clients next year. Your support contributed to the salary of an additional lawyer, enabling our legal team to focus more on this vital area, making a real difference in the lives of those we help.

Isla's* journey to safety

Isla, a single mother endured years of harrowing abuse from her ex-partner including sexual assaults, severe physical violence and being coerced into performing sexual acts to pay off her ex-partner's debt.

Isla was supported by our Domestic Violence (DV) teams and referred to our lawyer to assist her in making a VS claim. Our lawyer assisted Isla with her application arguing that Isla had experienced three distinct acts of violence. As a result of our lawyer's advocacy Isla was awarded \$25,000 compensation.

Isla's VS compensation was lifechanging and enabled her to achieve safety and security for herself and her child. The compensation was sufficient that Isla could relocate away from her ex-partner and his family and start a new life without fear.

"Names changed to protect privacy"

Isla gave our lawyer a plant as a gift and wrote: "Just because there are no words, flowers eventually pass however, I wanted something to keep flourishing beside you, to see it flourish and to nurture like you have nurtured. Love always"

JSC lawyer advocates successful VS claim of \$30,000 for client's rehabilitation

Beth* endured over thirteen years of escalating domestic violence in her marriage to Brian*. At first Brian verbally abused her and Beth thought she could overcome her situation on her own and was embarrassed to tell anyone about the domestic violence. However, the violence escalated and one day Brian kicked her knee so violently that he left her unable to walk. She needed help paying for her medical expenses and rehabilitation. She was also worried how she was going to look after her eight-year-old daughter because of her injuries.

Overcoming her reluctance to seek help, Beth turned to JSC, and we assisted her to make a successful VS claim for \$30,000 for medical expenses. This compensation paid for the specialist surgery and rehabilitation that led to Beth walking again.

"Names changed to protect privacy"



Family law

In the past financial year, our legal team has helped over 520 people as they faced some of the most difficult moments in their lives.

Whether helping parents negotiate parenting or property arrangements or guiding families through separation and divorce, we have been a constant source of expertise and assistance.

Thanks to our Family Relationship Centre's (FRC) for their ongoing support in ensuring people's access to justice by facilitating mediations and referring vulnerable clients to our legal service for advice and assistance.

JSC supports father of three facing homelessness

One of our FRC partners referred Mark* to JSC for representation at his family law mediation. Our client Mark, a single father of three, was facing homelessness while his ex-partner stayed in the family home with her new partner. Our lawyer represented him at not one but three highly contentious mediations. Through the lawyer's efforts to bring the parties to a fair agreement, Mark and his ex-wife agreed on property orders that ensured a fair outcome and improved Mark's financial situation.

Testimonial from Mark*:

"I just wanted to say thanks heaps for everything, we would like to send you something. I feel like I really do need to send you something. You helped me out so much... I wouldn't have gotten anywhere without you. You helped me with how far I got, and I know I wouldn't have gotten anywhere. I really appreciate it. I've said it 100 times."

**Name changed to protect privacy*



Civil and Employment Law

This year once again we have played an important role in empowering vulnerable workers to understand and assert their workplace rights.

We advised 102 people to address issues of unfair dismissal, underpayment of wages and workplace discrimination helping people negotiate the often-daunting legal landscape of employment law, fostering fair and just workplaces for all.

We provided legal advice and assistance to more than 348 people about a broad range of civil issues from consumer rights to outstanding debts and loans to motor vehicle accidents. For clients facing additional barriers accessing our legal system we have supported them through the stressful and difficult process of going to Court to assert their rights.



Comprehensive advice for a car accident

John's* wife, Jess* called him in a panic after a car accident in their apartment parking lot as she didn't speak English and needed John to come and speak to the other driver. They initially sorted out an agreement with the other driver, but later, he took John to court to pressure them for more money.

John, feeling lost in the legal process, called our office for help. Our solicitor gave him comprehensive advice and prepared defence documents for John explaining that he wasn't the driver or owner as claimed. John filed these with the court, and subsequently the case was dropped. John was relieved and grateful for our help because he could then focus on supporting his wife through negotiations to resolve the issue with the other driver.

****Names changed to respect privacy***



Criminal/driving and traffic law

From minor infractions to more serious charges, we have provided expert legal advice and representation, **helping 584 clients achieve fair outcomes**, and, in many cases, avoid life-altering penalties. Our commitment is to ensure that every person we support receives the guidance they need to move forward with confidence and clarity.

We have a long standing and well respected Driving Offences Legal Services (DOLS) at Bankstown and Liverpool Local Court. Our DOLS lawyers give people on the spot advice about their driving and traffic offences, enter pleadings on their behalf and represent them in contested hearings.

Legal team representation supports single mother of three

Marla*, a survivor of domestic violence and sexual abuse was bringing up two young children as a single mother with no family support and reliant on Centrelink benefits. Marla was stopped by police for speeding, where it was also discovered that she was driving while suspended. She had no idea about the suspension but was charged for both offences. Marla didn't get any legal advice before going to Court and was overwhelmed at the hearing that she suffered an anxiety attack. She was found guilty of both offences, received a criminal conviction and was disqualified for driving for three months.

Struggling with the prospect of not being able to drive her children to their childcare or medical appointments, Marla sought help from JSC. After receiving our advice, she undertook the Driver Knowledge Test, and which led to her suspension being lifted by NSW Transport for NSW. However, her legal journey was far from over.

When we represented Marla in her criminal appeal the odds seemed stacked as the Judge was sceptical given Marla's first hearing and her driving history. However, our lawyer persuaded the Judge to consider her history of abuse and her ongoing treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. Despite finding the charge proven, the Judge did not record a criminal conviction and instead made a Conditional Release Order. This meant that our client no longer had a criminal conviction and could continue to drive and look after her children. Marla was extremely grateful to JSC for our support.

**Names changed to respect privacy*



Community education and advocacy

Empowering through knowledge, advocating for justice

A key focus for the Legal Service is community engagement and education. Through various outreach programs, partnerships and events our legal team continues its strong relationships with local community organisations and service providers to respond to the legal needs of our diverse community.

Community legal education is a powerful way of increasing access to justice as it enables us to educate people about their legal rights before their problems escalate and they need more intensive legal assistance to resolve their problems.

Highlights of our community engagement:

436 people reached through our community legal education sessions



Sessions provided: 27



Face-to-face: 13



Online: 14

As part of our established partnership with local Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) we provided more than 90 staff and counsellors with training about the recent amendments to the Family Law Act highlighting how these changes would affect their clients and changes to their obligations as counsellors.

Justice Support Centre and Metro Assist have a long-standing arrangement to deliver multiple CLE sessions each year on "Your rights at work" as part of their Skilled Migrant Employment Program. These CLE sessions inform people who have recently arrived in Australia of their rights at work to reduce the risk of exploitation in the workplace. During the length of the arrangement between the two organisations over 30 sessions have been delivered.

Hi JSC,

Thank you for taking your time to present to the class. Given most are newly arrived migrants, the vital information discussed during the session will provide them with the much-needed confidence in knowing their work rights once they commence employment.

Metro Assist Caseworker



Community education and advocacy ctd.

NLAP Review Report - advocating for more funding

The independent review by Dr Mundy of the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) report, publicly released in June found that the **current funding levels for community legal centres like JSC are inadequate to meet the legal needs of the Australian community.**

The review highlighted the fragmentation, inefficiencies and a lack of evidence-based allocation under the existing model which it concluded was “broken”. The review recommends renaming the new agreement “Access to Justice Partnership” with an increased focus on improved collaboration, holistic and sustainable services and an immediate increase in funding across the sector.

The Commonwealth government has confirmed its contribution to the National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP) and confirmed its contribution including additional funding for indexation, pay parity adjustments and funding uplift.

Building on the need for funding, **it’s essential that resources be allocated to areas experiencing the highest demand, like South-West Sydney.** This region is one of the fastest-growing areas in New South Wales, and the community faces significant socioeconomic challenges, including high rates of unemployment, housing stress, and an overrepresentation of disadvantaged groups. These factors contribute to a heightened demand for legal services, particularly in family, employment, and civil law.

Despite this, the uncertainty surrounding the funding of legal services remains a concern. Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW) have long advocated for stable and sustained funding, as the current ad-hoc approach leaves critical services under-resourced, especially in areas of high need like South-West Sydney. Without dedicated funding, the region’s most vulnerable populations will continue to face barriers in accessing justice.

SWS Priority areas

South Western Sydney high priority areas:

- + Population- 1,081,070 or 14.5% of the NSW population
- + Disadvantage - on SEIFA Index measuring disadvantage Fairfield ranks 1st and Canterbury Bankstown and Liverpool 3rd and 4th in metro areas
- + Need for Legal Assistance Services Capability Count - Canterbury Bankstown ranks 1st, Fairfield 2nd and Liverpool 6th.

Population

Disadvantage

Need for Legal Assistance Services Capability Count

Community education and advocacy ctd.

Submissions



Draft Family Law Amendment Bill (No.2)

On 18 September 2023 the Attorney-General's Department released the Draft Family Law Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2023 (the Exposure Draft) for consultation. This was the second tranche of proposed reforms focused on improving the law for parties with family law property disputes, expressly recognising the impact of family violence.

As one of the larger frontline providers of domestic violence services in Australia, with a legal team delivering family law advice and assistance to some of the most vulnerable women who have experienced domestic violence, we believed it important to add our voice to the consultation process.



VS submission

We also made submissions to NSW Victim Services about changes to the Immediate Needs Support Package (INSP) application form to highlight the impact of these proposed changes for vulnerable women. These submissions addressed key concerns JSC had in relation to the impact the proposed changes for the vulnerable women we support.

A copy of our submissions can be found here



JobWatch submission

JSC endorsed JobWatch's submission to the Competition Taskforce Division entitled "Non-competes and other restraints: understanding the impacts on jobs, business and productivity", to give a voice to workers across the South West Sydney area who are unfairly impacted by non compete and restraint of trade clauses in their employment contract.





Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Services

Our DFV services

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



Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy service (WDVCAS)

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

South West Sydney (SWSWDVCAS)

Sydney (SYDWDVCAS)



DFV casework services

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



- + **Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) Program**
- + **Bankstown Domestic Violence Service (BDVS)**
- + **Financial counselling service**
- + **Disability Focused Caseworker**
- + **First Nations Focused Caseworker**

Clients feel heard and respected

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



DFV casework services



DFV casework services

Our clients



771

Total number of referrals received



70 – 9.08%
First Nations



28 – 3.63%
Living with a disability



771 - 100%

Women and children



6 – 0.78%
LGBTQIA+



230 – 29.83%
Multicultural women



“I am so grateful for the provision of Woolworths vouchers to assist me with buying food and clothes for myself and children after leaving my partner.

These provided me with some relief during all of what was happening.”

Notably, over \$80,000 in funding has been provided across areas, facilitating safety upgrades, essential purchases, and support for necessary appointments.

\$49,000 on vouchers for clients

Gift vouchers play a crucial role in supporting women experiencing or escaping domestic violence by providing immediate and flexible financial assistance. These vouchers empower women to purchase essential items such as food, clothing, household items, personal care products and fuel, which are often urgently needed when fleeing an abusive environment.

Unlike traditional forms of aid, gift vouchers offer a sense of autonomy and dignity, allowing recipients to choose the specific goods and services that best meet their needs. Furthermore, they can reduce the risk of financial dependency on the abuser, fostering a sense of independence and control. By addressing both the immediate and longer-term needs of survivors, gift vouchers can be a vital resource in their journey towards safety and recovery.

\$30,648 on security devices and their installation.

Security devices are installed in clients homes as part of the safety planning. They allow clients to monitor their premises either remotely and whilst they are in their home through an app on their phone.”

Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) program

Our SHLV program remained dedicated to assisting women and their children who have left abusive relationships to ensure their safety and pursue their long-term goals through the provision of tangible resources and the ability to stay in their own home.

The service operates in Liverpool, Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown, and Burwood. We also support women who live “out of area” in surrounding LGA’s such as Canada Bay and Strathfield, which lack current SHLV funding prioritising women who have been assessed as being at serious threat of risk of harm. SHLV provides intensive case management support, safety planning, security audits, court support, advocacy and referrals. This trauma-informed service empowers women and children to break cycles of domestic and family violence and to live free from fear and abuse, supporting our vision.



Supporting our community

517

Number of referrals received

440

Number of clients in total

191

Number of clients receiving tangible support

31

Number of clients who required an interpreter

233

Number of safety plans

Our clients



\$14,000

Total amount of brokerage provided for security upgrades



47 – 10.68%

First Nations



159 – 36.14%

Multicultural



5 – 1.14%

LGBTQIA+



94 - 21.36%

Children

SHLV team provides Maria* with tangible support

Maria was urgently referred to us by the Burwood Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service after her Domestic Violence (DV) case was discussed at the latest Safety Action Meeting, where police expressed concerns about her safety.

Maria had travelled to Australia on a student visa and became involved with Pedro*, her now ex-partner, where they continued an on and off relationship from 2020 to 2023. During the relationship Pedro had stalked, harassed, intimidated, and verbally abused Maria. During a particular incident in 2023, Maria filed a police report and police applied for an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) and Pedro had charges placed against him. However, the AVO was dismissed in 2023 and he was found not guilty of the charges.

For six months following the court matter there was no contact from Pedro. One night, unexpectedly, Pedro contacted Maria and she agreed to meet him at her home. During this meeting they argued and Maria called police again. After making the call Maria considered calling the police to cancel the accusation, however, she noticed that her keys were missing and feared that Pedro had taken them to gain access to the property. She tried to call him; however, he did not respond.

Police completed a Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool (DVSAT), where Maria scored as a matter of "Serious Threat" based on threats of Pedro to have her reported to immigration and

threats to kill both her and her pets. A new AVO was applied for with an exclusion order preventing Pedro from contacting or approaching her.

When our Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) team first contacted Maria, she was hesitant to speak due to safety and confidentiality concerns. However, our SHLV caseworker provided trauma-informed support, quickly assessed her needs, and arranged for her locks to be changed that evening to fit her work schedule. Maria was extremely grateful for the prompt support from SHLV, which allowed her to return to work the next day without financial impact, as she was working on a casual rate.

Reflecting on her experience, Maria expressed her deep appreciation: "I can't thank you enough for everything my caseworker from the Staying Home Leaving Violence Program has done for me. I was referred by another service, and I came scared for my safety and my kids' safety. The caseworker assured me I was in safe hands. I started off homeless, but she helped me get on my feet, connected me with other services, and helped me secure public housing with Wesley Mission. She also supported my mental health and self-esteem and provided food for me and my kids on multiple occasions. I'm now so happy and safe, and my three kids and I are in public housing. I am forever grateful. I'm crying happy tears writing this message. Thank you so much."

**Client names changed to protect privacy*



Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) program ctd.

Housing assistance, financial aid and applications to Victim Services for Lana*

Our SHLV service received a client, Lana as a direct referral from an external referral source. After a conversation and short assessment over the phone Lana was allocated a caseworker. The caseworker then contacted Lana and arranged a visit to her residence, after checking for any safety concerns, and on the visit a thorough assessment and safety plan was provided.

Lana disclosed during these conversations that she had been exposed to many forms of abuse and coercive control over their 6-year relationship, particularly after her first child was born.

Lana disclosed that her partner was isolating her from her family and friends, and it wasn't until she attended a clinic visit with her second child that she spoke of this and received assistance.

During the time that Lana accessed the service the caseworker provided housing assistance, financial aid in the form of vouchers and when Lana was re-housed, provided security cameras to ensure Lana remained safe in her new home with her family. This support included applications to Victim Services for further financial assistance and family law advice. Lana and her children were granted access to counselling through Victim Services.

**Name changed to protect privacy*

Keeping Women Safe In Their Homes (KWSITH)

KWSITH is an initiative to assist women and their children, who have experienced Family Domestic Sexual Violence (FDSV), to remain in their home or a home of their choosing. This enables women to continue to have access to their support networks, workplaces and children to remain in their schools. The initiative supports the women by providing them with a caseworker who can complete risk assessments, safety planning, home security audits and upgrades, and case management. Home security upgrades can be considered and assessed and can include security cameras, dash cams, locks, screens and monitored personal safety devices.

Our current KWSITH program has expanded to take referrals from out-of-area regions, specifically targeting areas like Canada Bay, which lack any current SHLV funding and services for those in need. Recognising the critical gap in support, we have extended our reach to ensure that women and children at high risk in these areas can access the assistance they require.

"I am extremely grateful to continue working with the justice support centre as my life has taken a huge turn for the better with your service, and my 8-year-old son and I have been healing and creating a new chapter of our lives which I very much think I would not have been able to achieve without my case managers at Justice Support Centre."

"You supported me through a pivotal, scary part of my life ... you were there for me through such a bad part of my life and that made it good, you supported when there was no one else to do it and I can't thank you enough for that".



KWSITH provides clients with a peaceful and stable life

Our client, Alyssa*, was a survivor of domestic violence. During the relationship, her now ex-partner, left Vietnam to immigrate to Australia. Five years later, Alyssa and her three children followed and immigrated to Australia. Alyssa and her children began life in Australia with her partner and were completely reliant on him for all financial support. Alyssa's partner became abusive towards her, making threats about revoking financial support as well as continually questioning her about her location and who she was with. The partner's abusive behaviours began to escalate intensely, and Alyssa explained she felt "very trapped" during this point of the relationship as she was socially isolated. As she spoke very little English this made things harder for her. Alyssa discovered her partner was having a relationship with another woman and she confronted him about this. This resulted in an argument which soon escalated with the partner making threats to Alyssa while the children hid in their bedroom. Police were alerted to the home; the partner was arrested and an ADVO was issued restricting him from Alyssa and the children.

In early 2024, Alyssa's eldest daughter Sophie* started to see her school counsellor and disclosed her concerns for herself, her siblings and her mother as her father would regularly attempt to visit their home. The counsellor explained it may be best to look for other services for support and referred the family to Justice Support Centre. The Justice Support Centre – Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) program received the referral and immediately assessed the severity of referral and began to provide support to Alyssa, her daughter Sophie and her sibling.

Alyssa and Sophie met regularly with the SHLV case worker and began to build a positive relationship. SHLV provided Alyssa and Sophie with advocacy, financial assistance, security options and counselling support - specifically to find a counsellor who spoke Vietnamese. A home security assessment was completed by the SHLV caseworkers. SHLV provided security upgrades to the home - cameras, sensor lights and locks for the front and back gate.

Alyssa and Sophie expressed their immense gratitude for this support and expressed during one of their last meetings with her case manager from the SHLV team that "they have never felt so reassured in their decision and for the first time in a long time, a sense of independence" Alyssa, her daughter Sophie and siblings could begin to move on, to a more peaceful and stable life with safety and support.

**Clients name changed to protect privacy*



Bankstown Domestic Violence Service (BDVS)

BDVS continued to offer support to women, with or without accompanying children, impacted by domestic and family violence, whether or not they had separated from the abuser. The service provided free, specialised case management support to enhance the safety and well-being of our clients.

These responses included safety planning – including support to leave the relationship, emotional support, court support, advocacy and referrals – including to legal services. Our BDVS service is available to people living in the Bankstown local government area (LGA).



"Thanks so much for all your empowerment and support you have anchored me," she stated, "you have helped me see the strength that

I have for myself and children." Later, she followed up, "Me and my kids are able to live a safe and happy life now". For the first time in a long while, Bianca* and her children have started to feel safe again, daring to dream of a peaceful future."

**Client name changed to protect privacy*

"She exhibited exceptional professionalism, compassion, and expertise.... Her unwavering support and guidance not only helped me navigate through a challenging period but also empowered me to make informed decisions for myself and my daughter. I was particularly impressed by my caseworker's ability to actively listen, offer practical advice, and provide resources tailored to my specific needs. Her dedication to ensuring my safety and well-being was evident in every interaction, and I am truly grateful for her tireless efforts."

Supporting our community

153

Number of clients in total

80

Number of clients receiving support via vouchers (\$18,338 value of vouchers provided for food and basic needs)

Our clients



71 - 46.41% - Multicultural



11 - 7.19% - First Nations



8 - 5.23% - Living with a disability

Empowering Bianca* towards a better life

Growing up in poverty in her home country, without access to education or support, Bianca was unable to read, write, or manage her finances independently. This lack of self-sufficiency led her to rely heavily on her ex-husband for everyday tasks, making her feel as though she couldn't survive without him. Upon relocating to Australia, Bianca and her ex-husband had four children, all of whom she raised in a small two-bedroom unit under the constant shadow of violence. Her life took a drastic turn when she was violently assaulted in front of her children and neighbours. The police were called, and a provisional Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) was served on her husband.

Despite being deeply terrified of her ex-husband, Bianca initially felt that she could not physically support herself and her children without him. She even considered speaking to the police to revoke the AVO to return to the relationship. However, in 2024, after enduring a decade of abuse and not really understanding that she was a victim of Domestic Family Sexual Violence (DFS), Bianca reached out to our BDVS service. During her time working with the caseworker she received psychoeducation, safety planning, referral pathways, advocacy, security upgrades, and financial assistance. Through the ongoing work with Bianca, we were able to empower her to advocate for herself and her children, fostering a newfound sense of independence.

Today, Bianca and her four children are living independently in their own three-bedroom home. She can now clearly articulate the violence, risks, and adversities of her past relationship. The tangible changes in their lives have given Bianca and her children a renewed sense of support, security, and safety.

Bianca expressed her gratitude for the sense of security our efforts have provided: "Thank you so much for all your empowerment and support. You have anchored me," she said. "You've helped me see the strength I have for myself and my children." She later added, "My kids and I are able to live a safe and happy life now."

**Client name changed to protect privacy.*



Financial counselling service

Freedom through financial counselling

Our Financial Counselling Service at Justice Support Centre continued to offer essential financial support to women who have experienced domestic and family violence, helping our clients manage or clear unfair debt, handle outstanding fines, bills, or rent, and plan for their financial goals. Through personalised financial counselling, our financial counsellor alleviated financial stress and supported women to achieve long-term stability. This support is part of the Centre's broader mission to provide comprehensive assistance to those affected by domestic violence, ensuring they have the resources to rebuild their lives safely and sustainably.



Supporting our community

How many women assisted: 101

- + 25 clients assisted with debt settlement and loans support
- + 360 hours - time spent on client work
- + English was the predominate language spoken with clients
- + 12 First Nations clients – 11.9%
- + Common sources of income – Government payments/pensions/allowances
- + 32 clients presented at risk of homelessness – 31.7%

Some Financial Counselling highlights for the 2024 year:

- **Sharkwatch Feature:** Our Financial Counsellor was featured in the Sharkwatch Financial Counselling Journal.
- **First Nations Training:** Participated in First Nations Financial Counselling training, gaining insights on Part 9 debt agreements, client eligibility, and observing bankruptcy court proceedings. Additionally, they visited Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) to learn about complaint processes and client assistance.
- **Super Summit:** Attended the First Nations Super Summit to discuss Indigenous issues with Super Funds.

[Read the Sharkwatch feature](#)



Community education and advocacy

The DFV Casework team strengthens community ties



Number of people reached through community education, engagement and advocacy: 918

Throughout the year, we engaged in numerous community events, activities and presentations to strengthen our ties with the community and our clients. Our participation in various expos, awareness walks, and cultural celebrations allowed us to promote our services, support community well-being, and foster connections. These activities, ranging from Reconciliation Week celebrations to International Women's Day events and local information sessions, exemplified our commitment to justice, inclusivity, and community support. Through these efforts, we have not only raised awareness but also built stronger, more resilient relationships within the community.



Community education and advocacy ctd.

A highlight of activities we attended in 2024 included:

1. Expos 4 Schools at Fairfield RSL

On May 23rd, staff attended the schools Expo at Fairfield RSL, engaging with 25 schools about our services. The event facilitated connections with school staff from Fairfield and Liverpool primary and high schools, promoting student and parent well-being. This Expo was a valuable opportunity to network and enhance service visibility among local organisations.

2. Reconciliation Week

In partnership with Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council, Blegravia Leisure, and Whitlam Aquatic Leisure Centre, we celebrated National Reconciliation Week. This day of reflection, celebration, and action reaffirmed our commitment to justice and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

3. St George Community Housing – Biggest Afternoon Tea

This event focused on community bonding, allowing participants to enjoy a BBQ sausage sizzle, afternoon tea, and connect with local services.

4. White Ribbon Day – Community Awareness Walk

Our staff participated in the annual Cabramatta Domestic Violence Awareness Walk to raise awareness about domestic and family violence (DFV).

5. International Women's Day

Held at Canterbury Leagues Club in March, this well-attended event featured a Welcome to Country by Aunty Lyn Martin, speeches from Para-Olympian Louise Savage and Deputy Mayor Rachelle Harika, and participation from local law enforcement. Attendees enjoyed interactive activities such as Relaxation, Zumba, Bollywood, Chinese, and Greek dance, followed by refreshments.



Community education and advocacy ctd.

A highlight of activities ctd.

6. Service NSW Information Sessions

Staff visited the Liverpool Service NSW office, receiving a tour of the Centrelink offices and a presentation on their client services.

7. Riverwood Halloween Event at St George Community Housing

On October 27th 2023, this community event brought together residents of Riverwood and surrounding suburbs. School children and families enjoyed free activities, dressed up, and shared a day of fun and food.

8. DV Service Speed Dating Event at Kerry Packer Education Centre

This event featured brief presentations from various organisations, providing introductions and outlining referral pathways. Attendees then visited stalls for further information.

9. Presentations

Such as Breathing techniques and Mindfulness to Vietnamese Groups, Empowering women to gain control of their lives, and Domestic Violence in Vietnamese culture provided invaluable insights and information to CALD groups.



Strategic initiatives and achievements

This year, the DFV casework team focused on several strategic initiatives to streamline our services, upskill our workforce, and enhance team support, resulting in significant organisational achievements and community impact.



Process enhancements

We streamlined administrative processes to reduce the workload for our team, allowing them to focus more on client services.



Increased referrals

There was an 18% increase in referrals to the Casework Services Programs, reflecting our growing impact and reach.



Enhanced client intake

Improvements to the intake process have created a more positive experience for clients entering the JSC Casework system.



Peer-support meetings

We regularly scheduled peer-support meetings, providing team members with opportunities to learn and develop their skills in a supportive, non-judgmental environment.

Expansion and new initiatives

• New office opening

A successful application to Fairfield City Council has secured office space in Bonnyrigg, enhancing community access to our services.

• New caseworker positions

- We obtained Commonwealth funding for a new specialist caseworker position focused on disability services for the Sydney LGA, which will be based in our Sydney office alongside Sydney WDVCS.
- We also applied for two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander roles for which we were successful.

Recognition and awards

• Staff achievement

Allaha Siddiqi was honoured with the NSW Excellence Award for her outstanding contributions.



Allaha Siddiqi
Used with permission.



The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS)

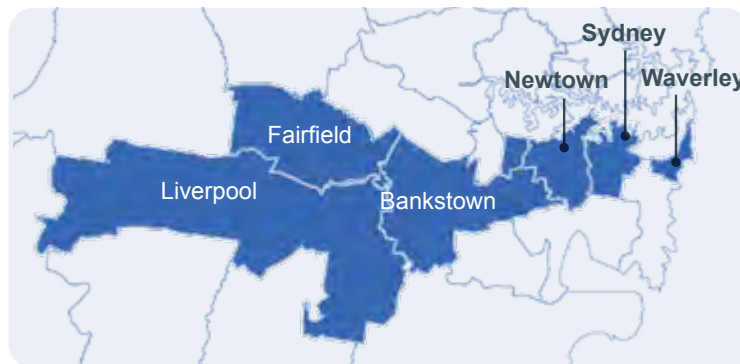


The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS)

Our Sydney (SYD) and South West Sydney (SWS) WDVCAS teams provided essential support to over 10,390 women and their children as they navigated their options, safety and the criminal justice system and sought protection through the courts.

Both teams exemplified remarkable stability and depth of knowledge, with many long-serving members deeply invested in their work. Their commitment is more than just a job; it's a calling driven by a passion to make a difference and give confidence to our clients.

The local government areas (LGAs) we service:



This dedication is reflected in the heartfelt feedback from the clients they assist, such as one client who expressed, **"I thank the SWS Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service for their great service. The team was very helpful and made me feel relaxed about the court. Their professionalism and support made the court experience not too overwhelming"**,

and another client of SYD Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service who said, **"I can't thank you enough and tell you how much your help gave me the strength to go forward and keep believing in a better life for my child and I."**

Our WDVCAS could not exist without the government's funding, which provides us with the security needed to continue our vital services. We are grateful for the funding support and hope for continued and extended funding to maintain and expand our efforts. The dedicated sections on Family Assistance Support Service (FASS), Case management, Co-location and Hearing Support highlight our comprehensive approach.



Funded by Legal Aid NSW | Artwork: © LaToya Kennedy



South West Sydney Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (SWSWDVCAS)

Supporting our community



5,846

Total number of ongoing clients



8,990

Total number of referrals received. We contact every referral received and provide advice.



1,900+

People reached through community education sessions

The clients came from the following LGAs across SWS:



Who our clients are



5,846 – 100%

Women and children*
(assisted directly or indirectly)



3,516 – 60.45%

Multicultural



103 – 1.76%

First Nations



701 – 11.99%

Living with a disability



11 - 0.19%

LGBTQIA+



SWSWDVCAS: Hearing Support Pilot

Crucial continued assistance

The Hearing Support Pilot allows a worker to assist clients in regard to defended hearings in the Local Court for Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) and/or domestic and family violence related criminal charge matters. The aim of the role is to empower clients to safely participate in the court process and attend hearings, and has been a pilot since November 2022.

Benefits of Hearing Support

Prior to the Pilot, WDVCSAs were only funded to provide court support to women on mention or list days. The Pilot, which commenced in November 2022, funded the employment of dedicated Hearing Support Workers to assist women victims of DFV matters that proceed to a defended hearing. The aim of the role is to empower clients to safely participate in the court process and attend the hearing, reduce the stress and trauma for victims associated with the court process, and help victims obtain ADVOs with appropriate conditions to ensure their safety.

During 2024, our dedicated team provided crucial Hearing assistance to over 170 clients in legal proceedings across three courts, marking a significant increase from the previous period's 100 clients. This growth highlights our ongoing commitment to supporting clients going to the SWS courts for an ADVO hearing, the positive feedback from SWSWDVCAS clients has been overwhelmingly touching. Many women have shared that the compassionate and professional support they received gave them the courage to face their court appearances. Without the invaluable assistance of our team, they felt they might not have had the strength to attend. Their words of gratitude underscore the profound impact our services have on their lives, inspiring us to continue our mission with renewed passion and dedication.

“The team was very helpful at court and covered everything in detail. The approach was amazing. I felt safe and in good hands, knowing they would do their best to advocate on my behalf and look after me. I am very pleased to see that a service like this exists, and I feel safer that I got the help I needed in this hard time.”

We are advocating to Government to continue this vital service beyond its current end date of 30 June 2025.



SWSWDVCAS: Fairfield co-location pilot

A model of collaborative support

The Fairfield Co-location Pilot trials placing specialist domestic and family violence (DFV) workers within police stations to support victims of domestic and family violence (DFV) who attend the station to report incidents.

The DFV specialist workers assist the clients navigate the legal system, provide referrals, conduct risk assessments, plan for safety, coordinate cases, and empower them during the critical reporting stage. This program is crucial as it ensures continued and expanded access to essential support services for vulnerable individuals, enhancing their safety and wellbeing.

In the first half of the 2024 financial year, 79 clients benefited from the Fairfield Co-location Pilot. The strong collaboration with officers at Fairfield Police Station has created a more positive and beneficial experience for victim-survivors reporting DFV incidents to the police for the first time. The Co-location DFV specialist workers not only assist and support women who attend the police station to make reports but also proactively reach out to those identified by the police as needing information and referrals to support services. This seamless collaboration ensures prompt responses to urgent matters, providing immediate and effective support. The co-location DFV specialist workers are dedicated to offering strength-based holistic services to victim-survivors of DFV.

Recently, their efforts have included liaising closely with the Officers in Charge (OIC) and Police Prosecutors, significantly improving communication among all parties involved. This advocacy has led to better outcomes for the victim-survivors they support.

As the co-location pilot continues, it is anticipated that even more victim-survivors will return to the station to report, seeking the vital support the pilot provides. SWSWDVCAS can assist the NSWPF where a criminal justice response is not required, yet a referral to support services is more appropriate.

Building positive relationships between WDVCS and frontline police enhances communication and understanding of each other's work.

The Pilot is only funded until 30 June 2025. Given the great success of the Co-location Pilot, we are advocating to Government to make the Fairfield Co-location project permanent and extend it to both Bankstown and Liverpool Police Stations.

Our client Jess* endured 17 years of domestic and family violence before seeking help at Fairfield Police Station. She bravely provided a written statement detailing historical incidents, including assaults on her children. She revealed that she had been confined to her home for two and a half years, with her partner controlling her finances and associations. Recognising the severity of her situation, Fairfield police promptly applied for a provisional order to protect Jess and her three children, two of whom have severe disabilities.

Jess felt truly heard and understood during this process. Ultimately, she was granted a provisional order with strict conditions and exclusion orders, ensuring her and her children's safety.

**Client name changed to respect privacy*



SWSWDVCAS: case management success and services

The SWSWDVCAS team received an overwhelming number of referrals for case management, assisting over 94 clients.

The team is achieving excellent outcomes for the clients, with case management durations ranging from one week to over 17 weeks.

The SWSWDVCAS case management team offers a wide range of specialised services to support our clients, including:

- + assistance with victims services INSP and counselling applications through specialised weekly clinics
- + advocacy and referrals for housing with DCJ Housing, Hume Housing, and St George Housing
- + support for physical and mental health needs, including referrals to counselling, GPs, and NSW Refugee Health
- + coordination with community services such as Mission Australia, Bonnie Support Service, anglicare, and others
- + assistance with obtaining FDV payments from the Red Cross
- + advocacy with Centrelink
- + referrals to legal aid and immigration team support
- + information on services, helplines, and tenancy
- + provision of safe phones, food hampers, vouchers, baby items, and dignity bags
- + court support and police advocacy

Our client Sam* was referred to SWSWDVCAS by the police as a serious threat. Despite facing eviction from temporary accommodation and domestic violence incidents, strong advocacy led to Sam being approved for further temporary accommodation assistance. We successfully secured priority housing for Sam while supporting applications for additional financial assistance.

**Name changed to protect privacy*



SWSWDVCAS: community education and advocacy

collaborating with the community



SWSWDVCAS reached over **1,900** people through community education, engagement and advocacy sessions.

1. Presentation at Goulburn Police Academy

SWSWDVCAS Assistant Manager, Maria, and a DV sergeant from Fairfield Police, presented to promote collaboration between SWSWDVCAS and the police Domestic Violence Officers (DVOs). Positive feedback from the attendees highlighted Maria's knowledge, communication skills, and the valuable insights she shared about the WDVCAS roles and the importance of collaborative working relationships with Fairfield Police Area Command.

“On behalf of myself and the Domestic and Family Violence Training Team, I am writing to extend my sincerest gratitude for Maria Zappala, who you nominated to present at our recent Domestic Violence Officer Course in Goulburn. Maria's knowledge, expertise and dedication to her role and her successful collaboration with the Police significantly enriched the learning experience for all participants. Her ability to effectively communicate (once the nerves settled), engage the audience, and foster meaningful discussions truly exemplified her professionalism and dedication to her job. The insights she shared relating to WDVCAS roles and the positive working relationship she has with Fairfield Police Area Command are commendable.

2. Training with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)

Continued involvement for the seventh year, training religious and community leaders, and frontline workers on DFV trends and challenges. Supported clients and raised community awareness about reporting DFV incidents to the police.

3. Creating Safer Communities for Women and Girls" Discussion

Participated in the "Let's Inspire Inclusion Forum" by the Cambodian-Australian Welfare Council of NSW for International Women's Day, attended by over 120 people. Positive feedback praised contributions for promoting safer communities for women and girls.

“Your contributions were instrumental in making the event a resounding success and significantly promoted the elements required to form a safer community for women and girls on International Women's Day. We received an outpouring of positive feedback, with many explicitly mentioning how your words sparked new ideas and inspired them, underscoring the significance of your contribution.”

SWSWDVCAS: community education and advocacy ctd.

4. Panel Participation with NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Invited as panellists in three seminars on domestic and family violence. Discussions focused on recognising and responding to DFV within the community.

5. SWS Elder Abuse Awareness Collaborative

Participated in organising community awareness education campaigns on elder abuse.

6. 'Love and Hope' DFV Hub at Lakemba

Ongoing participation in the DFV Hub hosted by Metro Assist, supporting female victims of DFV on temporary visas or recent migrants.

7. International Women's Day 2024 - "Inspire Inclusion"

Organising member of the event held at Canterbury League Club, attended by around 150 women and children. Activities included relaxation, Zumba, Bollywood, Chinese, and Greek dance, followed by refreshments.

8. Consultation with Settlement Services International

Discussed the 'Multicultural Framework for the Criminal Justice System' with Dr. Astrid Perry and team. Focus Workers shared experiences regarding the needs of CALD women navigating the criminal justice system.

9. DFV Awareness Conference by The Antiochian Welfare Association

Attended with SWSWDVCAS Manager as guest speaker, delivering a successful speech that engaged participants and facilitated open discussions on DFV issues.

10. Lebanese Muslim Association (Lakemba) Multicultural Community Health and Wellness Expo

Attended to promote health and wellness within the multicultural community.

11. 'CBCity DFV and The Faith Community' Event

Organising member of the upcoming event scheduled for the end of 2024.

12. DFV Awareness Conference at St Mary's Parish

SWSWDVCAS Manager, Farah Assafiri was a guest speaker, praised for her engaging and professional speech delivery, which helped participants discuss DFV issues freely. Positive feedback was received for making a heavy topic approachable and for connecting with the audience.

"We were concerned how the participants would react because DV is a heavy topic but you delivered it in a light and engaging way".



SWSWDVCAS receives industry recognition



AIM award

SWSWDVCAS was awarded the Australian International Multicultural (AIM) Association Business award in the NFP sector on Friday 17 May 2024.

Congratulations to SWSWDVCAS Assistant Manager, Maria who was the finalist representing JSC.

Testimonial

“Maria’s, knowledge, expertise and dedication to her role and her successful collaboration with Police significantly enriched the learning experience for all participants.

Her ability to effectively communicate, engage the audience, and foster meaningful discussions truly exemplified her professionalism and dedication to her job”



SWSWDVCAS receives industry recognition ctd.



ELSIE conference award

The Elsie Conference, hosted by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) is a national platform for refuge and shelter workers, domestic violence (DV) advocates and organisations, as well as researchers and public policymakers to celebrate the past and discuss emerging challenges.

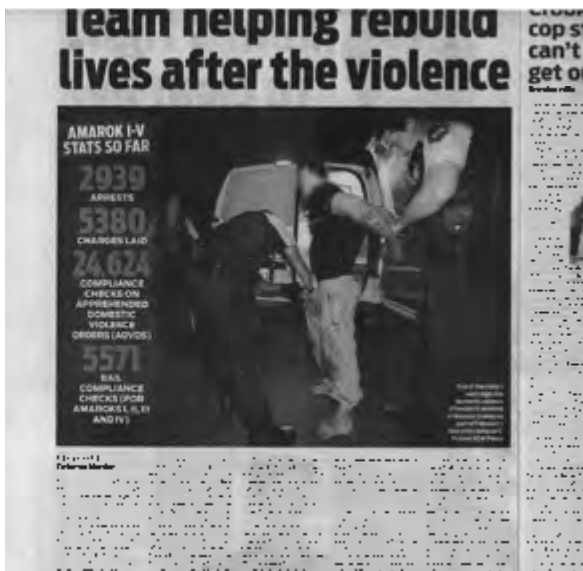
On Saturday 16 March 2024, SWSWDVCAS Manager, Farah Assafiri was awarded the Elsie award for her contribution to the Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) sector working with women and children.



SWSWDVCAS makes waves in the media

Sunday Telegraph - Operation Amarok

SWSWDVCAS Assistant Manager, Maria worked on a Saturday to support our clients during a four-day police operation targeting domestic violence in NSW. Over 550 people were charged, with 554 offenders arrested and 1,070 charges laid. Of these, 226 individuals were wanted for serious domestic violence offences. Operation Amarok received widespread coverage with mentions from SWS WDVCAS in the follow-up article.



Excerpt from Operation Amarok article

'A DFV program operating within selected stations across the state is helping police provide victim-survivors with the support they need. The pilot embeds specialist DFV caseworkers within a Police Department (PD) or Police Area Command (PAC) to help provide access to safety and support. It commenced in five stations in 2022 before doubling in number last year. Maria Zappala, from the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS), has been co-located at Fairfield PAC since the pilot commenced. She said working in tandem with police is helping break the cycle of violence.

"With this pilot, victim advocacy never stops. "They see us at work and develop their knowledge about what it takes to offer support. The victim follow-up by police has been amazing," she said. "The community talks.

"A lot of those (referrals in March) were historical and significant but they came forward because they knew the support was there."



ABC Interview – Liverpool Court







A journalist from ABC accompanied the team to Liverpool Local Court for a day. A few team members were interviewed. This experience was then published as a feature story; below is the article.

A day on the frontline of Australia's domestic violence crisis - ABC News

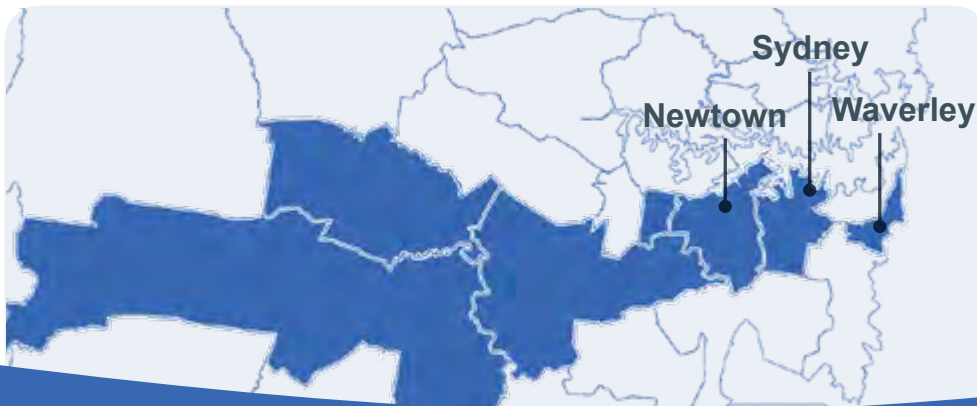


Sydney Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (SYDWDVCAS)






Supporting our community

-  **7,020**
Total number of referrals: We contact every referral and provide advice
-  **4,550**
Total number of ongoing clients
-  **800+**
Matters referred were serious threat
-  **230+**
Clients supported at court hearings through the Hearing Support Pilot
-  **216**
Clients supported with intensive case work
-  **530+**
People reached through community education sessions.

The clients came from the following LGAs across Sydney:



Our clients

-  **4,550 – 100%**
Women and children*(assisted directly and/or indirectly)
-  **1,411 – 31%**
Multicultural
-  **556 – 12%**
First Nations
-  **513 – 11%**
Living with a disability
-  **128 – 3%**
LGBTQIA+



SYDWDVCAS: Hearing Support Pilot

Hearing Support Pilot

The Hearing Support Pilot continued across our three courts of Downing Centre, Waverley and Newtown. The service assists and supports women when they must attend court for a hearing for their domestic violence matter. Being in court and giving evidence is very daunting for most women and having someone there to guide them through the process which includes advocating with the prosecutor, liaising with court staff and providing access to the AVL room; if they wish to give evidence from there as well as just explaining how the hearing works, is something most appreciated by many women.

During the financial year 2023-2024 the Sydney WDVCS Hearing Support Team directly supported **230** women at court hearings.

Many more were assisted prior to the hearing by our workers providing information over the phone and during prosecutor hearing clinics which we arrange once a month for women to attend and hear information from a police prosecutor.

We hope that the Government makes the decision to make the Hearing Support Pilot a permanent service beyond its current end date of 30 June 2025.

Advocating for Children's Safety in Court

Tracey was subpoenaed to a hearing for an ADVO against her ex-partner, involving her 10-year-old daughter as a witness. Understandably anxious about her daughter testifying, Tracey contacted our hearing support worker. Despite the subpoena, our worker successfully advocated with the prosecutor, ensuring the child was not forced to give evidence. This allowed Tracey to stay focused on her own testimony while her daughter was safely removed from the court environment.

Testimonial

"Thanks so much. You are the only one who truly helped me during this process, and I am very grateful"

**Name changed to protect privacy*



SYDWDVCAS: Family Advocacy & Support Service (FASS)

FASS, a drop-in service located within the Sydney Family Law Court, is dedicated to assisting women affected by family violence who are dealing with family law issues. Lawyers from Legal Aid provide legal advice, while our social support worker offers comprehensive assistance to clients. This includes identifying their specific needs and connecting them with necessary services such as counselling, housing, financial assistance, or multicultural support services.

Our social support worker also helps clients plan for their safety both at home and in court, arranging for safety plans with security when court attendance is required. This ongoing support may span several years as family law matters progress through the court system.

A key function of our service is to provide information and support during a client's family law case, including accompanying them in court. The service is primarily staffed by one main worker, with additional support from the SYDWDVCAS team, including our Aboriginal focus worker, when necessary.

Demand for our service is continually increasing, often requiring our staff to assist multiple women across various courtrooms within the Family Court building.

Our workers attended over 200 court events with clients over the past year. Given that these court events can last for hours and some for days, the service is very well utilised.

“A big thank you to FASS. The FASS worker came to me and was a beautiful calm ray of light, she put me in touch with legal, and stayed with me for my appearances in court. To have someone to debrief afterwards has been a life saver. Thank you, I will be forever grateful for your kindness.”



SYDWDVCAS: FASS team provides court safety plan for Nancy*



Recently the FASS service was contacted by Nancy who needed a safety plan for her appearance at court the next day.

Nancy was very nervous about her court appearance as she had experienced significant physical and psychological violence from her ex-partner and because of this she had developed a severe anxiety disorder. Like many women at the family court Nancy was also forced to represent herself as although her income was considered low the fact that she was working meant that she was ineligible for legal aid. Our worker contacted the court security who developed a safety plan for Nancy's arrival the next day. Once she identified herself to the court security, she was accompanied to a 'safe and secure' room with the security officer outside. He also accompanied her back and forth to the court room when she was giving evidence.

Nancy attended court for a final hearing, with the support of the FASS social support worker who sat with her in court and helped Nancy deal with her anxiety to prevent her having a panic attack which would have delayed the case proceeding.

Even though, English is her second language Nancy presented her case to the judge with orders she devised on her own, demonstrating great knowledge of the system and procedures.

The court noted that she also had an ADVO from the local court which protected her from her ex-partner. Strongly advocating for herself Nancy was granted final orders which favoured the safety of her and her children. Nancy demonstrated tenacity in engaging complex systems – local court and then family court. A woman of great courage and as the FASS social support worker remarked it was a privilege to walk alongside her.

**Name changed to protect privacy*

SYDWDVCAS supporting Ying* through FASS



Supporting Ying* for over 12 months

Ying married an Australian man whom she met when he was on holiday in her home country. She arrived in Australia knowing only him and speaking very little English. The man she met had 'borrowed' a significant amount of money from her and when the relationship broke down due to domestic violence, he refused to give it back saying it was a gift. Ying attended the Family Advocacy Support Service to get legal advice from the lawyers who then referred her to our service for social supports. Our worker was able to use interpreting services to communicate with Ying and discovered that she desperately needed support with housing, financial support, immigration and was also feeling desperately alone. She was able to be referred to appropriate services including a connection to a cultural group where she could make supportive friends in her new country. Ying visited the FASS worker many times over the next 12 months as her legal matter progressed through the legal system. Throughout this time our worker was able to provide Ying with information about the court process and accompanied Ying to all court dates. Without support Ying would have been alone in a system that is often very complex even for native English speakers.

**Name changed to protect privacy*

SYDWDVCAS: case management success and services ctd.

The SYDWDVCAS case work team provided case work services to 216 clients in the past year

Clients were supported according to need anywhere from 10 days to 2 months. Case work is personalised according to the individual's needs but some of the services provided include the following:

- + helping clients with Victim Services applications as well as applications to Wesley Mission for Escaping Violence payments.
- + referring and advocating with DCJ Housing for Start Safely and community housing organisations
- + referrals to DV counselling services such as Bondi Beach Cottage and The Deli Women's and Children's service as well as to Victims Services counsellors
- + referring and coordinating with community services such as Mission Australia, WAGEC, Red Cross, Wayside Chapel and Lou's Place
- + advocating with Centrelink
- + referring and advocating with Legal Aid DVU and family law teams
- + providing information about services, helplines, and tenancy
- + providing clients with a new safe phone through WESNET
- + providing food vouchers, baby items, and dignity bags
- + court support and police advocacy
- + advocating and coordinating with SAM Coordinators.

- + **SYDWDVCAS has three specialist workers** who focus on distinct communities within our client group: First Nations and Torres Straits Islanders, Multicultural communities and clients identifying as part of the LGBTQIA+ communities.
- + The First Nations Focus Worker's role is to **develop solid working relationships** with local services who work with First Nations women and with local First Nations communities to promote the services of the WDVCS, encouraging women to use the service. She also advises the manager of the service to assist in developing strategies aimed at making WDVCS more accessible and relevant to the needs of First Nations women and children. The worker also participates in NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day, Reconciliation Celebrations and other local community activities to promote the services of the WDVCS.
- + **Approximately 30% of our clients identify as being from a multicultural background** and our focus worker reaches out to these communities through participation in local events and attendance at court on DV list days where she is able to arrange interpreters if necessary. She provides assistance with information explaining the court process and liaises with police to assist in explaining any particular cultural aspects and concerns of the client's matter. Her connections with local cultural groups promotes the service and facilitate access for women who may not have previously known of the service or even realised that what they were suffering is illegal in Australia.

"Just want to say thank you for everything again. You have been a massive help and support for me!"

SYDWDVCAS: community education and advocacy

Collaborating with the community



530+ people reached through community education, engagement and advocacy sessions.



Ongoing participation in migration and refugee advisory committee for DVNSW

Our active membership in the Migration and Refugee Advisory Committee for Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) began with the committee's first meeting in April. Convening every six weeks for a one-year term, with the possibility of extension, this committee unites experts from various services in the domestic violence sector. Our goal is to develop a framework for culturally appropriate and responsive services for migrant and refugee communities, ensuring inclusiveness in program design from the outset.



Addressing Multicultural NSW and interpreter challenges at Downing Centre Local Court

In collaboration with the Multicultural NSW (MNSW) court coordinator, we discussed practical issues related to accessing interpreting services at Downing Centre Local Court. One significant concern is the assignment of a single interpreter to both the victim and the defendant when they speak the same language other than English. We proposed the possibility of assigning two different interpreters to prevent potential concerns and trauma for victim-survivors. Additionally, our Multicultural Focus Worker (MFW) provided context information to interpreters to enhance their preparation and ensure the highest quality of interpreting service for clients, meeting the required standards of the court.



First Nations focus worker engagement

Strengthening our collaboration and ensuring that the needs and concerns of the First Nations community are addressed effectively.



Indigenous Family Violence (FV) Forum

SYDWDVCAS: community education and advocacy ctd.

Advocating for our LGBTQIA+ clients

Our LGBTQIA+ caseworker continued tireless advocacy for clients, resulting in several success stories that underscore the importance of their work. These initiatives exemplify our ongoing dedication to fostering an inclusive environment and ensuring justice for all members of our community.

Members of the LGBTQIA+ community face unique challenges when seeking support and protection from domestic violence.

Fear of discrimination or disbelief from authorities and service providers can deter them from seeking help, and they often must navigate a system that fails to inclusively recognise them, denying them the support they need.

A powerful example of overcoming these barriers is the work of our Sydney Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (SYDWDVCAS) LGBTQIA+ Focus worker, Arianna*. She achieved an excellent outcome for our client Joanna*, who wanted to make a Victim Impact Statement at a sentencing hearing. Victim Impact Statements are not well understood and are infrequently seen in our Local Courts.

From the outset, Arianna supported and advocated for Joanna, ensuring her wishes were met. Arianna contacted the Prosecutor directly before the hearing, finding them more positive. With their support, our client Joanna was able to write a statement and attend the hearing.

While going to the police can be traumatic, LGBTQIA+ individuals often face the added stress of their cases not being categorised as domestic violence due to insufficient support within the system. However, in this instance, the Magistrate was receptive and encouraging.

The court was closed so Joanna could explain the personal impact of the crime without public observers. Joanna's wishes were respectfully heard, and the Magistrate thanked her for her statement.

Arianna shared afterward that Joanna felt listened to and found the experience positive and affirming.

This story underscores the importance of inclusive recognition and support for LGBTQIA+ individuals in the justice system, particularly in cases of domestic violence.

**Name changed to protect privacy*





Operations and Finance

Foreword from the COO, Marc

I wish to convey my heartfelt appreciation to all who have supported Justice Support Centre during the 2024 fiscal year. Managing the essential areas of Finance, IT, HR, Operations, and Governance has further enhanced my admiration for our team's commitment and the confidence the community places in us.

This year, we have achieved notable milestones, such as comprehensive re-design of our payroll function, bringing on board a new managed IT service provider, bolstering our finance team with the hiring of Jay Luangtongplew as Financial Controller, and revising key policies and procedures. Additionally, the creation of the 2029 Strategic Plan and its associated Operational Plan has established a definitive and ambitious path for the Centre's future.

The achievements highlighted in this report underscore our mutual dedication and commitment to the mission of Justice Support Centre. Anchored in our vision for equal access to justice and a future without domestic and family violence, every choice we make adheres to these core principles. Moving forward, your continued support will be crucial as we strive to utilise our resources efficiently and work towards our shared objectives.

Marc Haynes, Chief Operating Officer



FY2024: a year in review

To support JSC's excellence in our services, JSC finance has focused on instilling sound governance in financial management underpinned by three pillars:



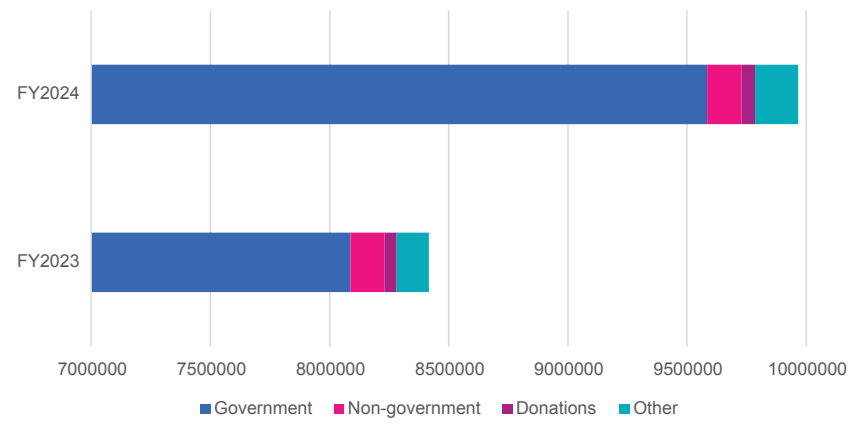
We understand that investing in people and systems improves our ability to serve the community. To support our mission, we have strategically prioritised staff training and system upgrades, while maintaining a focus on a people-centred culture.

The three graphs illustrate that in FY2024, JSC achieved stable revenue growth, optimal resource utilisation, and preserved trust in our services. Overall income increased by 18%, indicating the ongoing confidence of fund providers and donors in JSC's mission.

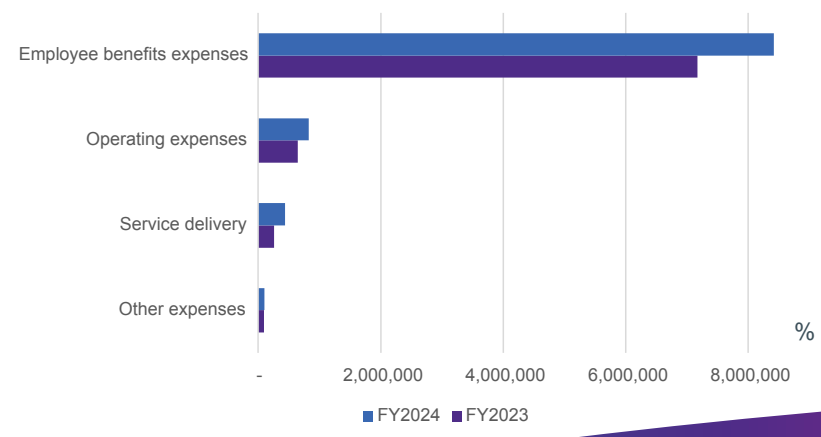
Income
 JSC received \$9.97M in FY2024 (18% higher than last year)

Expenditure
 91.3% of JSC's funding was applied to our Services/Education & Advocacy

JSC Segregation of Income FY2024 vs FY2023



JSC Expense Categories FY2024 vs FY2023



Our funding

FY2024 expenditure (% of Total) by service

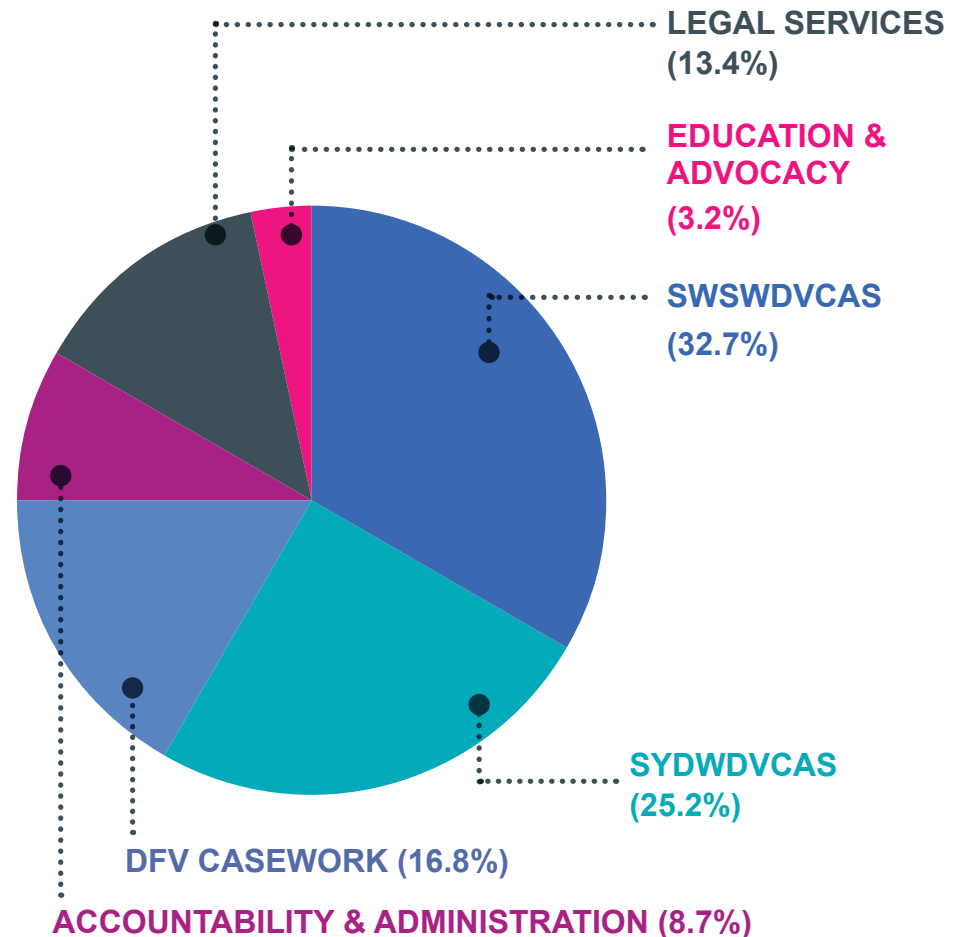
As we approach FY2025, we anticipate continued opportunities to sustain our current Services, extend Legal Aid's Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS) hearing support pilot program, expand the WDVCAS police co-location pilot program, and manage the NSW Government's emergency package aimed at enhancing support for domestic, family, and sexual violence victim-survivors. We also aim to broaden programs designed to reduce violence against women and children.

In recognition of JSC's exemplary track record in client service across all funding streams, we are confident that Finance's commitment to continuous improvement, robust financial governance, and capability building has positioned JSC well to expand our Services, reach more clients, and meet the evolving needs of our community.

The significant progress achieved in FY2024 is a testament to JSC Finance's dedication, organisation-wide collaboration, and valued stakeholder input. Together, we will continue to embody the spirit of our mission and make life-changing impacts on those we serve.

JSC demonstrated effective financial management, allocating 8.7 cents of every dollar spent directly to service operations. We embed lean, methodological and robust processes in our daily operations.

 **Audited financial statements**
Please see our Financial Report 2023-24 [here](#) on our website.



Our leadership team



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



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



Liz Simpson
Principal Solicitor
BA/LLB Hons I University of Queensland, MSc.
London School of Economics



Juliane Scuteri
HR Manager



Farah Assafiri
Manager SWSWDVCAS
LL.B., Ph.D. International Arbitration



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



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



Jay Luangtongplew
Financial Controller
BEc/BAcc, GradCertBusAn, CPA

Our management committee



Naushee Rahman
President

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



Diana Chang
Vice President | Secretary

BA LLB (Hons), GAICD



Rakesh Raj
Treasurer

B.Bus, MBA, CPA, FIPA, JP



Nana Sylapranay
Member

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



Joanna Abraham
Member

LLB, BSocSci, GradDipLegalPrac,
GradCertMgt, LLM.



Carmela Tassone
Member

BEd, LLB, MA



Wendy Zhu
Member

B.Com. (Acct & Com Law), MPP, JD, CA,
GAICD

Partnerships/acknowledgements

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

We acknowledge and thank the NSW State and Commonwealth Governments for providing significant funding to Justice Support Centre. We also thank the following partners who administer this funding:



Legal Aid who administers the funding for our Legal Service and Sydney and SWS WDVCS.



Department of Communities & Justice who administer funding for our SHLV, BDVS and KWSITH services.

We also acknowledge our largest private funder, the Financial Counselling Foundation, that fully funds our financial counselling service. Thank you to all our private donors for their commitment to ensuring that Justice Support Centre can continue to meet the increasing demand for our services not otherwise met by government funding.

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

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



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

Contact us

Head Office

Phone: (02) 9601 7777

Email: info@jsc.org.au

Level 4, 2-14 Meredith St,
Bankstown NSW 2200

Darug + Eora Land

Please make an appointment before visiting
our office.

Postal address:

PO Box 3558

Bankstown Square NSW 2200

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





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