



Submission to the NLAP Review

Acknowledgment of Country

Youth Law Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country and pays respect to the Elders, past and present. We acknowledge the strength, resilience and capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from the many locations across Australia where we support children and young people in their journey for safety, dignity, equality and justice.

Executive summary

1. We welcome the NLAP Review, and the focus on the funding arrangements for the Legal Assistance Sector.
2. In this submission we provide a case study of Youth Law Australia – a national community legal centre that is almost wholly reliant on non-NLAP Commonwealth funding. We focus on the terms of reference that deal with the effectiveness and challenges of service delivery.
3. Our model of a tech-enabled national service that specialises in helping children and young people with any area of law, anywhere in Australia, has considerable strengths. We make an important contribution to the legal assistance sector across Australia, and without us, community legal services to children and young people – an NLAP priority group – would be reduced by almost half of current levels.
4. The main challenges that Youth Law Australia face all arise from a lack of adequate funding for core legal service delivery, as well as enhanced services targeting particular disadvantaged groups and/or particular strategic areas. Ongoing and sustainable funding from the Commonwealth Government would enable us to improve access to justice for children and young people across Australia in myriad ways, to make sure we are a safe and attractive workplace for lawyers, and reduce risks of staff burnout, vicarious trauma, and staff turnover, among other things. It would allow us to continue to invest in innovation, and to make sure we are at the forefront of legal issues affecting children and young people.
5. We would like the Review to recognise the important role national community legal services can play, and to make sure future funding for the legal assistance sector supports the ongoing existence of such centres. Our experience is that funding distributed by the states and territories, and particularly NLAP funding, does not tend to prioritise the needs of national centres.



Youth Law Australia

Bedegal Land, Level 1, Law Centres Precinct
Law Building, UNSW Sydney 2052
T: (02) 9067 6510
W: yla.org.au

6. For the reasons set out in this submission, we recommend that:
 - a. Any revision to NLAP recognise that national legal centres are eligible for NLAP funding by States for activities conducted in that jurisdiction, and should not be discriminated against in decisions about the allocation of that funding notwithstanding that they are national and that their headquarters may be located elsewhere.
 - b. Non-NLAP Commonwealth funding for the legal assistance sector be maintained and grown in order to:
 - c. streamline funding arrangements for national and multi-jurisdictional community legal centres
 - b. ensure ongoing and sustainable funding for national and multi-jurisdictional community legal centres
 - c. more effectively and efficiently support Commonwealth policies and strategies.

We are supportive of steps to ensure legal assistance service data collection is more consistent to assist with planning in this sector. However, we also support differences in reporting where programs respond to particular policy or strategy areas.

- c. Children and young people be included in all holistic estimates of legal need and unmet legal need in Australia.
 - d. A sustainable and safe funding model for community legal centres be developed to guide funding distributions under NLAP and other Commonwealth Government programs. This model should:
 - a. be evidence-based, and responsive to published estimates of legal need among priority cohorts;
 - b. be based on an estimate of staff wages that (a) is trauma-informed and recognises psychosocial risks inherent in the legal assistance sector's work; (b) achieves pay and/or conditions that are on par with the relevant public sector rates of pay;
 - c. include realistic funding for operations and infrastructure, in the order of 33% or another evidence-based figure.
 - e. The Commonwealth play a systemic oversight role of the legal assistance sector, ensuring that all national, accredited community legal centres receive sustainable funding.
7. Our submission responds primarily to the following Terms of Reference (ToR):
 - a. ToR1 – A holistic assessment of legal need and all Commonwealth legal assistance funding
 - b. ToR2 – An evaluation of the effectiveness and challenges of service delivery
 8. It also responds to the following topics in the Issues Paper:
 - 4.2 Legal need
 - 4.3 Roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth, states and territories
 - 4.4 Disadvantaged groups
 - 4.5 Regional, rural and remote contexts

4.6 Funding models

4.13 Labour market

9. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in further consultation on these important issues.

1. Introduction

1.1 How we help

10. Youth Law Australia (YLA) is an accredited national community legal service that is dedicated to helping young people understand their legal rights and find solutions to their legal problems.

Among other things, we are:

- a. **Accessible:** Any child or young person (or an adult supporting them) from anywhere in Australia can ask us about any legal problem at any time and receive free and confidential legal advice and help.
- b. **Technology-enabled:** We use technology to improve access to justice for children and young people, and in particular, to facilitate online help-seeking. Children and young people can contact us by email, through our 24/7 webpage, by phone or by live webchat and 24/7 offline chat.
- c. **Trauma-informed:** We provide a trauma-informed holistic response to children and young people who have experienced maltreatment or harm or are at risk of harm, or who are worried about harm caused to others.
- d. **Specialist:** We provide specialist child-safe and child rights informed legal services for children and young people (and their advocates).

11. Youth Law Australia also:

- a. **Provides comprehensive legal information:** our website has legal information on a wide range of legal issues affecting children and young people, written for children and young people. The website is geo-located, meaning that it displays legal information that reflects the state or territory where a person is located. It is possible to change the jurisdiction to read about the laws in other jurisdictions as well.
- b. **Adopts a child-rights approach:** We monitor and advocate for the rights and best interests of young people in Australia, and we adopt a child-rights approach to our work. Youth Law Australia is a member of the Child Rights Taskforce, which is Australia's peak children's rights body made up of over 100 organisations. Through our role on the Taskforce, we assist in drafting and reviewing reports made to the UN on the state of children's rights observance in Australia.
- c. **Engages in law reform and advocacy:** we advocate on significant legal issues affecting the rights of children and young people in Australia, at both the state/territory and national levels.

12. We also aim to strengthen the response of the legal assistance sector to children and young people by bringing services together. We convene a National and NSW Youth Advocacy Network, and we co-convene a National Student Legal Services Network.

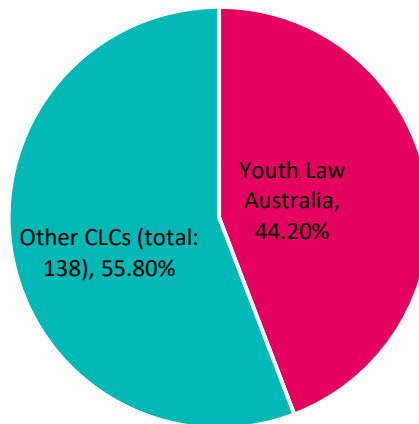
1.1.2 Effectiveness: our legal services

13. From 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, we provided over 6,000 legal services. In this period:

- 260 clients indicated they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 492 clients indicated they have a disability
- at least 776 clients were culturally and linguistically diverse
- 202 clients indicated they are LGBTQI+
- in 860 matters there was an indication of family violence.

14. We are the major community legal centre provider to children and young people under the age of 18, and nationally, we serve almost half of clients in this age-group who receive help from a community legal centre.¹

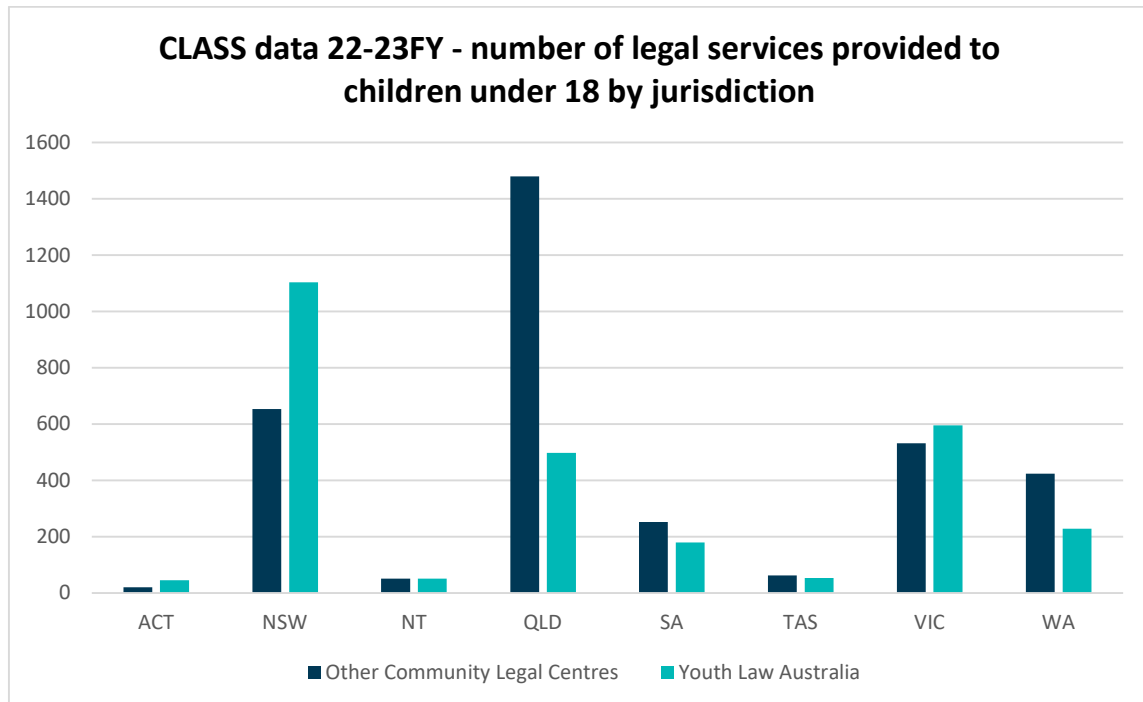
Clients under 18 served by 138 CLCs across Australia in 22-23FY compared to Youth Law Australia (including advocates acting on behalf of a young person aged 0-17)



15. In many jurisdictions we provide at least half of all services provided to children and young people who are under 18 by community legal centres.²

¹ This data has been taken from CLASS data provided by Community Legal Centres Australia.

² This data has been taken from CLASS data provided by Community Legal Centres Australia.



16. We are also an important source of reliable legal information for children and young people, including on emerging issues of concern. From 23 December 2021 – 30 June 2023, our website had **2,219,934** total page views, and **1,567,904** unique page views. In 2023, **84** organisations refer to our website (yla.org.au), comprising a mix of government and not-for-profit organisations providing legal, mental health, family planning and other services.

1.3 Our main source of funding is non-NLAP Commonwealth funding

17. We do not receive any NLAP funding. Our funding comes mostly from the Commonwealth Government, and in particular from the Commonwealth Legal Services Program.

18. Our funding in the 2022-2023 financial year was:

- a. Our **general practice (CLSP 1)**, funded under the Commonwealth Legal Services Program, receives \$233,398.71 annually and is funded for five years. This funding was initially received in 1994/1995. This project funds 1.36FTE lawyers. It provides legal services to any young person, anywhere in Australia, with any legal question that are not captured by any of our other practices.
- b. Our **harm/live chat practice (CLSP 2)**, funded under the Commonwealth Legal Services Program, receives \$832,995.00 annually and is funded for four years (because it was funded a year after CLSP1). This funding was initially received on 23 December 2021. This project funds 8.25FTE staff. It provides legal services including a live chat service to any young person, anywhere in Australia, who has experienced or is at risk of experiencing child maltreatment or who is worried about harm experienced by a child or young person.
- c. Our **Young Workers Rights service**, funded by the Fair Work Ombudsman, receives \$341,409.00 annually. This funding was initially received on 1 January 2021, for four

years. This project funds 2.14FTE staff. This project provides employment law services to any young person in NSW, NT and the ACT.

19. We also run a **Student Legal Service** for students of the University of Tasmania and practical legal clinics for law students, funded by SAFF funding and funding from the University of Tasmania. This project commenced on 1 November 2021.
20. NLAP currently includes a clause [24] supporting the distribution of NLAP funding by States to national legal centres, notwithstanding any other sources of Commonwealth funding to those centres. We have never received NLAP funding, but in 2020 we did receive one-off COVID funding from the NSW, Queensland, Tasmanian and South Australian governments. In the past we have applied for NLAP funding from individual jurisdictions, but we have been unsuccessful in these applications.
21. **We recommend that any revision to NLAP recognise that national legal centres are eligible for NLAP funding by States for activities conducted in that jurisdiction, and should not be discriminated against in decisions about the allocation of that funding notwithstanding that they are national and that their headquarters may be located elsewhere.**

2. Our unique role as a national community legal service

22. Nationally, we access the largest number of children and young people of any Community Legal Centre. In the last financial year, 44.2% of legal services provided to children and young people who are under 18 nationally were provided by YLA, compared with 55.8% provided by 138 other community legal centres across Australia. We anticipate that we would also be a major provider of legal services to young people aged 18-25. Children and young people are a priority group under the National Legal Assistance Partnership.
23. As a national community legal centre, it is important that we receive adequate core funding delivered directly by the Commonwealth. If all legal assistance funding was delivered through state and territory governments, in a model like NLAP, it would:
 - a. create significant reporting burdens as we would have to report to eight state and territory governments, instead of one core funding entity
 - b. jeopardise our ability to provide a national, baseline service if we were unable to secure funding in any particular jurisdiction, noting that in our experience, it can be more difficult to convince state and territory governments of the benefits of a national service
 - c. mean there was no single government entity responsible for ensuring that we, as a national service, receive adequate and sustainable funding
 - d. make developing and maintaining productive working relationship with funders more time-consuming and complex.
24. We consider that while national community legal centres may be in the minority, they can offer significant benefits. In the case of Youth Law Australia, these include the following:
 - a. **We can make it easier for children and young people to navigate the legal assistance sector:** the legal assistance can be fragmented and difficult to navigate. Being turned away from one legal service may act as a barrier to seeking legal help

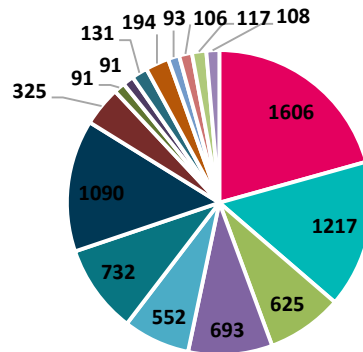
elsewhere. As a national legal service, we can be a first point of call for children and young people with any legal issue, including where they move interstate or to a different area, or experience a legal issue that involves multiple jurisdictions. Where we can't advise a young person, we can help by referring them to a suitable legal service.

- b. **We can help to address gaps in State and Territory services:** each State and Territory provides different levels of assistance to children and young people. While some have dedicated community legal services for children and young people, others don't. While great legal assistance programs for children and young people are set up, a reality of the not-for-profit sector is that these won't always secure ongoing funding and may not last. As a national, generalist, service, we have the ability to adapt our levels of service to provide a safety-net legal service for children and young people throughout Australia. We can also help children and young people who may be outside of Australia with an issue relating to Australian law; many of whom would be unable to access help through a legal aid commission or another community legal centre.
- c. **We can help address unmet legal need in regional, rural and remote areas:** while it is vital that regional, rural and remote communities have local legal assistance services, smaller communities can mean that there is a higher likelihood of conflicts of interest arising. In addition, it's important that children and young people have access to a legal service outside of their community, particularly where they are seeking help for sensitive issues. Our technology-enabled service means that we can play an important role in offering more choice to children and young people in regional, rural and remote areas.
- d. **We can support national priorities and strategies:** when the new, national sexual harassment laws were introduced in 2023, our funding from the Fair Work Ombudsman meant that we were well-placed to help children and young people experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace. Since the introduction of these laws on 6 March 2023, we have given advice about sexual harassment in 77 matters, opened casework assistance files in 8 matters, and taken 3 cases to the Fair Work Commission. Our funding for the harm/live chat practice is provided under the Commonwealth's Action Plan to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2024, which supports the implementation of the National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030. We also have the ability to support other national priorities, including:
 - i. an important principle underpinning the Family Law Amendment Bill 2023 to 'ensure the views of children are appropriately heard and considered in family law proceedings', consistent with Australia's obligations under Article 12 of the CRC;³
 - ii. the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2023 (see below);

³ Family Law Amendment Bill 2023, Explanatory Memorandum [5].

- iii. the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2023;
 - iv. policies directed at international students, such as the Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030.
- e. **We have the strongest national data set on the legal issues experienced by children and young people, particularly in civil, administrative and family law areas.** We continually review our data collection methods to enhance their relevance to other areas, such as assessing how we can effectively record data that aligns with the data sets in the Australian Child Maltreatment Study to develop nationally representative data about children and young people’s legal help seeking behaviours in response to child maltreatment.
- f. **Our law reform and advocacy is informed by a national perspective:** in recent years, we have focussed our law reform activities on national issues, campaigns or laws. Our recent law reform work has focussed on: youth justice across Australia and raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility, reviews into children’s participation in family law and Commonwealth privacy legislation, coercive control legislative reforms and the development of the National Principles to Address Coercive Control and ongoing consultation on specialised and trauma informed sexual violence legal services for children and young people.
- g. **We can facilitate collaborate legal services planning on a national level:** we chair an Australian Youth Advocates Network, and we co-chair a National Student Legal Service Network. We participate in legal assistance planning forums in particular jurisdictions, such as South Australia and Tasmania, and we chair a Youth Advocacy Network in NSW. From 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2023, we made over 6,000 referrals to legal and non-legal services.

Main source of referrals by YLA from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023



- Kids Helpline
- Legal Aid
- Other government agency
- Crisis/emergency accomodation
- Lifeline
- Law Society/ private solicitor
- eHeadspace/Headspace
- Other Community Legal Centre
- Police
- eSafety Commission
- Family counselling
- GP
- Other counselling
- Sexual assault counselling
- 1800Respect
- Child protection authorities

h. **We can partner with other national non-legal services:** for example, we have partnered with Your Town (which runs Kids Helpline) to provide training on identifying when children and young people are experiencing legal issues, and in our response to the review of the Commonwealth Privacy Act. We often receive referrals from Kids Helpline, and other national services such as the eSafety Commissioner. We have also recently partnered with the Daniel Morcombe Foundation in their Bright Futures national education and training project addressing the issues of problematic and harmful sexual behaviours, technology assisted harmful sexual behaviours and child sexual exploitation.

i. **We provide leadership in technology and legal services:** we provide a comprehensive technology-enabled legal service. We have sought to build the technology capacity within the broader Community Legal Centre sector and more broadly. For example, we chair the Access to Justice Tech Network, and participate in their projects, such as creating a register of technology tools that have been used in access to justice projects for the legal assistance sector, and guidance for legal-tech developers and the legal assistance sector on developing disability-accessible technologies. Our live chat service is an innovative example of how we are leading technology-enabled legal assistance nation-wide.

25. It is vital that funding arrangements support the diversity of legal assistance services, and in our case, national community legal services.

26. **We recommend that non-NLAP Commonwealth funding for the legal assistance sector be maintained and grown in order to:**

- a. streamline funding arrangements for national and multi-jurisdictional community legal centres
 - b. ensure ongoing and sustainable funding for national and multi-jurisdictional community legal centres
 - c. more effectively and efficiently support Commonwealth policies and strategies.
27. We are supportive of steps to ensure legal assistance service data collection is more consistent to assist with planning in this sector. However, we also support differences in reporting where programs respond to particular policy or strategy areas.

3. Unmet legal need for children and young people

28. While there have been some reports into the unmet legal needs of children and young people,⁴ this is difficult to measure. We note that the PULS Survey conducted by the Victoria Law Foundation was restricted to adults, and did not include young people who are under the age of 18.⁵ Yet, other estimates suggest that this cohort is likely to face significant legal needs.⁶
29. In considering the question of unmet legal need for children and young people in this submission, we have focussed on two areas:
- a. estimates of services we have been unable to provide due to funding constraints;
 - b. estimates of employment law services we would provide if we were funded Australia-wide;
 - c. legal services for particular cohorts of children and young people provided in-place.
30. We acknowledge that these are incomplete and inadequate indicators of unmet legal need. Nevertheless, they provide a window into the likely extent of unmet legal need for children and young people in Australia.

3.1 We can't keep up with demand

31. Due to funding constraints, from time-to-time we have to take steps to reduce our intake. We estimate that:
- a. in the last financial year, around 138 clients were unable to access us because we had removed our Get Help Now forms from our website;
 - b. in this financial year, 312 clients will be unable to access us because since 1 May 2023 we have had to reduce the availability of our phone lines;
 - c. in the last financial year, 462 clients were unable to access us via live chat because all our operators were busy;
 - d. in the last financial year, we received 584 offline chats (offline because someone had attempted to contact us outside of the times in which our chat is staffed);

⁴ For example, the NSW Law and Justice Foundation Legal Australia-Wide (LAW) Survey 2012.

⁵ Balmer et al, 'Everyday Problems and Legal Needs', Victoria Law Foundation, 2023.

⁶ See NSW Law and Justice Foundation Legal Australia-Wide (LAW) Survey 2012.

- e. in this financial year, we will be unable to help at least another 116 clients because we have had to stop receiving referrals from the Workplace Advisory Service for Queensland and Western Australia.
32. This does not address how many children and young people may not access our services for other reasons, including for example being unaware of us or being unaware that legal help is available for a problem they are experiencing. In section 4, below, we highlight how we have been able to make a difference with extra funding, which provides another indicator as to the extent of unmet legal need of children and young people.
 33. In addition, our experience is that work on the legal information on our website makes it more accessible to children and young people, which in turn increases demand.

3.2 Other indicators of unmet legal need

34. In this section we highlight some programs run by community legal centres across Australia that have proven effective in reaching different cohorts of children and young people who may not otherwise have accessed legal help. Another way of assessing unmet legal need among children and young people may be to extrapolate the data from these programs to the whole of Australia.
 - a. **LevelUP** – this was a two-year program funded from 2016 to provide specialised legal advice, education and support to one of the most vulnerable groups of children and young people - young people transitioning from out of home care (OOHC) to independence and adult legal responsibility in the Mid North Coast FACS region of NSW. The program had 60 referrals, 75% of whom engaged with the project with an average age of 17, and each of whom had an estimated 5-8 legal issues. The report into this program found that it ‘highlighted the significant unmet legal need among young people who have had contact with the OOHC system’, and that ‘The mainstream legal service delivery model needs to be radically altered in meeting the needs of young people in OOHC to ensure they receive equitable access to justice.’ The program did not receive funding to continue. We have attached a copy of this report.
 - b. **School lawyers** – some community legal centres, particularly in Victoria, have a lawyer embedded at high school for students to access legal advice, assistance and support. A 2-year school lawyer program at The Grange in Victoria was set up initially in 2015 ‘as a response to identified unmet legal need among students at The Grange and their parents/carers. Legal services were difficult to access due to geographic location and lack of public transport, there was unfamiliarity with and some mistrust of the law and legal services and Wellbeing staff reported only limited success when trying to link students and parents in with needed legal support.’ The program had a lawyer at the school 4 days a week. During the 80 weeks of the program the school lawyer: opened a case file for 14 students and 16 parents; provided legal advice to 100 students and 37 parents; had informal chats with 64 students and 12 parents; conducted almost 100 legal education sessions.⁷ We have

⁷ See WEstjustice, ‘School Lawyer Project: End of Project Evaluation Report’, August 2017.

attached a copy of this report. As a result of the needs faced by young people within that catchment, the school lawyer program has expanded to 3 other schools. Furthermore, school lawyer programs have also been developed in other community legal centres across Victoria and New South Wales⁸.

- c. **Civil law clinic at the Children’s Court:** the Hunter Community Legal Centre runs a civil law clinic at the Broadmeadow and Raymond Terrace Children’s Courts. This program attends the Broadmeadow court every Monday, and the Raymond Terrace Court one Wednesday a month, when the criminal list is heard. The service works to help young people attending for a criminal matter with civil law issues they may also be experiencing. From 1 January 2023 to 30 September 2023, this service provided 154 legal services to 129 clients.
- d. **Our Young Workers Rights Service:** we are funded by the Fair Work Ombudsman to provide employment law services to children and young people in the NT, ACT and NSW. We understand that we are the only community legal centre that specialises in children and young people that is funded to provide an employment law service in Australia. Our data about growth in service provision in employment law in these funded jurisdictions, if extrapolated out, gives an indication of the level of unmet legal need in this space in other jurisdictions.

35. **We recommend that children and young people be included in all holistic estimates of legal need and unmet legal need in Australia.**

4. Our primary challenge is that we don’t have enough funding to perform our core functions

36. Our current funding does not:

- a. **Pay for enough lawyers to service existing demand:** we are currently operating beyond capacity, and we set out above steps we have had to take to reduce intake due to a lack of funding to employ the number of lawyers we need. This is the case even with pro bono volunteer programs we have established with private law firms (see below). Funding for additional lawyers would not only allow us to meet demand, but it would also enable us to proactively reach particularly disadvantaged cohorts of children and young people, such as those in out-of-home care, those living with mental illness and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- b. **Support a trauma-informed workforce model that addresses psychosocial risks to employees:** at Youth Law Australia, we regularly assist children and young people who have experienced forms of child maltreatment. A trauma-informed workforce model recognises that exposure to traumatic content can be compounded by factors such as high workloads, tight deadlines and mentally and emotionally demanding work. The High Court has recognised that employers must take steps to address psychosocial risks in the workplace.⁹ We consider that funding should support an approach that ensures workloads are manageable, staff can have periods when they do work that doesn’t involve access to traumatic content, and staff can access leave.

⁸ See Shorna Moore 'New Wave Follows Success' Law Institute of Victoria Journal May 2017, page 69.

⁹ See *Kozarov v State of Victoria* [2022] HCA 12.

We note that some community legal centres have implemented trauma-informed policies that staff workloads should be kept at 80% of full capacity.

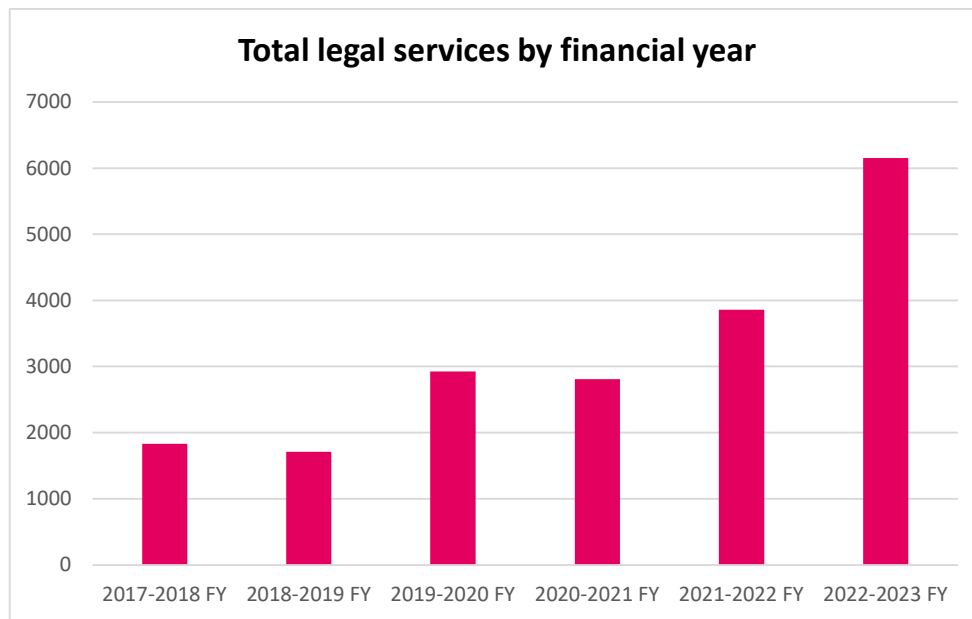
- c. **Allow us to take effective and ongoing action in key areas of legal assistance service provision identified in this Review's Terms of Reference:** this includes integration, collaboration and innovation of service delivery within the sector and with other areas of social service provision, provision of community legal information, systemic work in law reform and advocacy on a national level and in strategic areas.
 - d. **Pay for operations or infrastructure:** our current funding does not cover costs associated with human resources, IT services or infrastructure, or project management. The *Paying what it takes* report published in 2022 found that 'The average indirect costs of the not-for-profits analysed was 33% of the total costs, with significant variation between 26% and 47%', however in general 'funding agreements often only included indirect costs of between 10% and 20% of overall costs'. That report also found that 'there is clear evidence that spending insufficient resources on indirect costs can potentially reduce overall effectiveness'. We have attached a copy of this report.
 - e. **Enable us to achieve pay or conditions parity with Legal Aid Commissions:** we have benchmarked our staff salaries against those of staff in similar position in Legal Aid Commissions (LAC) around Australia. We estimate that our staff receive significantly less pay than their Legal Aid counterparts (see table below). To make sure the Community Legal Centre sector is seen as an attractive place to work, and that it can attract the best people to fulfil its important mission, funding should support pay/conditions parity with LACs.
37. We consider that a sustainable funding model for community legal centres would address each of these areas.
38. **We recommend that a sustainable and safe funding model for community legal centres be developed to guide funding distributions under NLAP and other Commonwealth Government programs. This model should:**
- a. **be evidence-based, and responsive to published estimates of legal need among priority cohorts;**
 - b. **be based on an estimate of staff wages that (a) is trauma-informed and recognises psychosocial risks inherent in the legal assistance sector's work; (b) achieves pay and/or conditions that are on par with the relevant public sector rates of pay;**
 - c. **include realistic funding for operations and infrastructure, in the order of 33% or another evidence-based figure.**
39. **We also recommend that the Commonwealth should play a systemic oversight role of the legal assistance sector, ensuring that all national, accredited community legal centres receive sustainable funding.**

5. How extra funding has made a difference to access to justice for children and young people

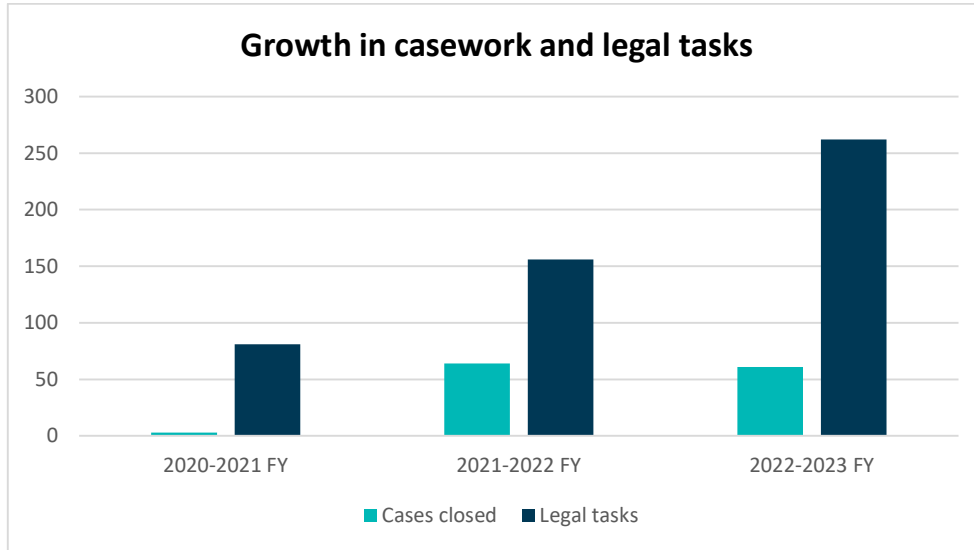
40. In recent years we have received additional funding:

- a. COVID funding for New South Wales, Tasmania, Queensland and South Australia in or around July 2020
- b. Fair Work Ombudsman funding for New South Wales, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory on 1 January 2021
- c. CLSP funding for a national harm/live chat practice on 23 December 2021 – by around May 2022 that practice was fully staffed.

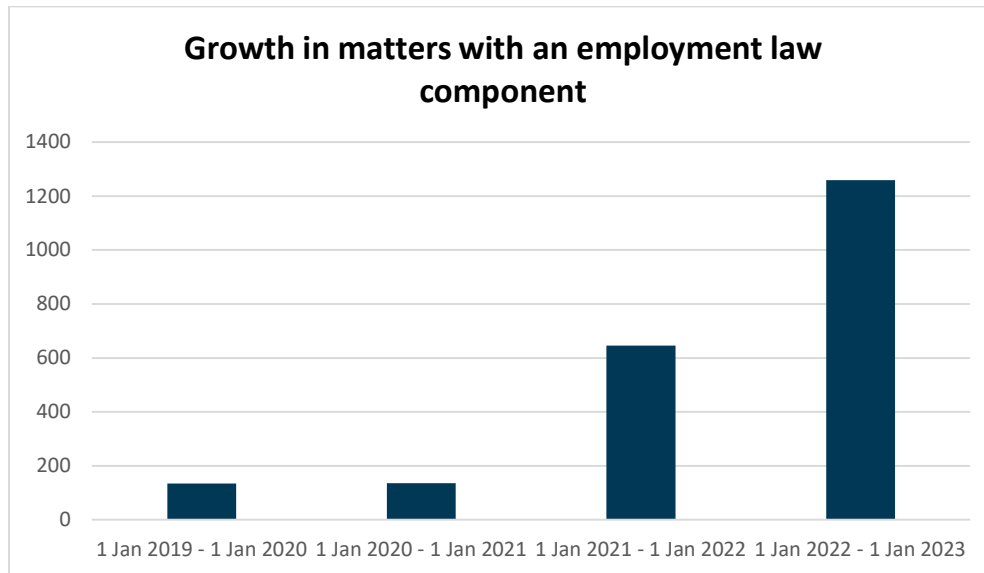
41. The following graphs illustrate the difference this extra funding has made in improving access to justice for children and young people globally, and in relation to specific areas.

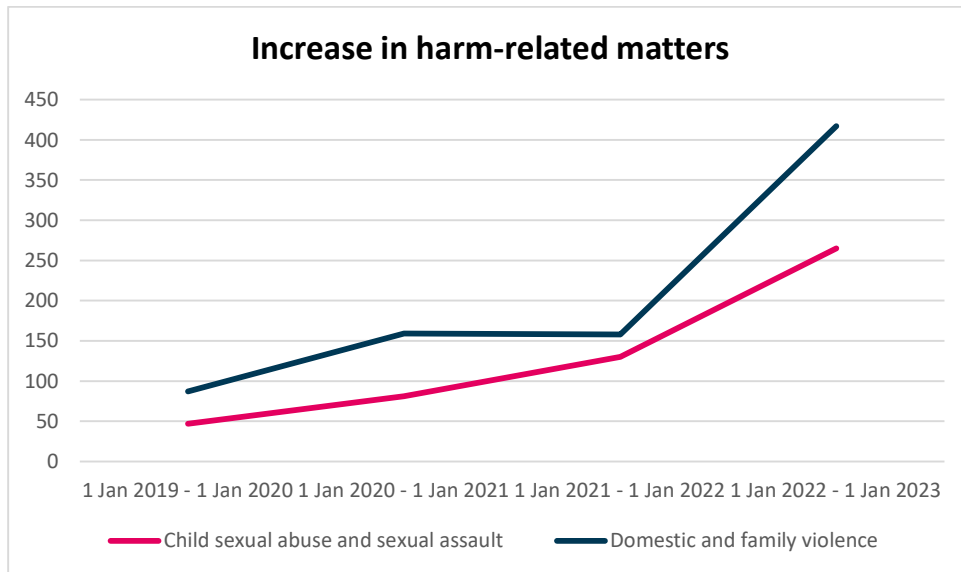


42. The growth in casework and legal task illustrates how, with extra funding, we have been able to take on increasingly complex matters, and provide greater levels of assistance than previously.



43. Where we have been funded to specialise in particular areas of law, we have been able to work strategically to target more children and young people experiencing that legal issue, providing another indicator of the scale of unmet legal need for children and young people in Australia.





6. Conclusion and recommendations

44. In addition to the recommendations summarised at paragraph [6], YLA and a group of five (5) other CLCs funded outside of NLAP have endorsed the following recommendations:
- a. YLA recommends all Commonwealth Legal Assistance Funding (NLAP and non-NLAP funding) be distributed to CLCs based on merit and in accordance with transparent principles and eligibility, legal need, and capacity to meet legal need.
 - b. No accredited CLC should be precluded from eligibility to apply for NLAP and non-NLAP Commonwealth funding by reason of not currently being in receipt of any such funding, or by reason of having one or more alternate sources of funding.
 - c. Should adherence to these principles give rise to enhanced access to eligibility for Commonwealth funding by a larger number of CLCs in each jurisdiction, as appears likely, we recommend that no CLC should receive less Commonwealth funding from a jurisdiction in real terms than they currently receive to ensure continuity of service delivery, address unmet legal need, and to underpin the sustainability of those centres.
 - d. YLA recommends that the quantum of non-NLAP funding streams be increased in the same proportion as any increase in NLAP funding.
45. Please do not hesitate to contact Ms Meredith Hagger, Principal Solicitor, at meredith.hagger@yla.org.au or (02) 9067 6516 should you have any questions or comments on this submission.

Yours faithfully



Matthew Keeley

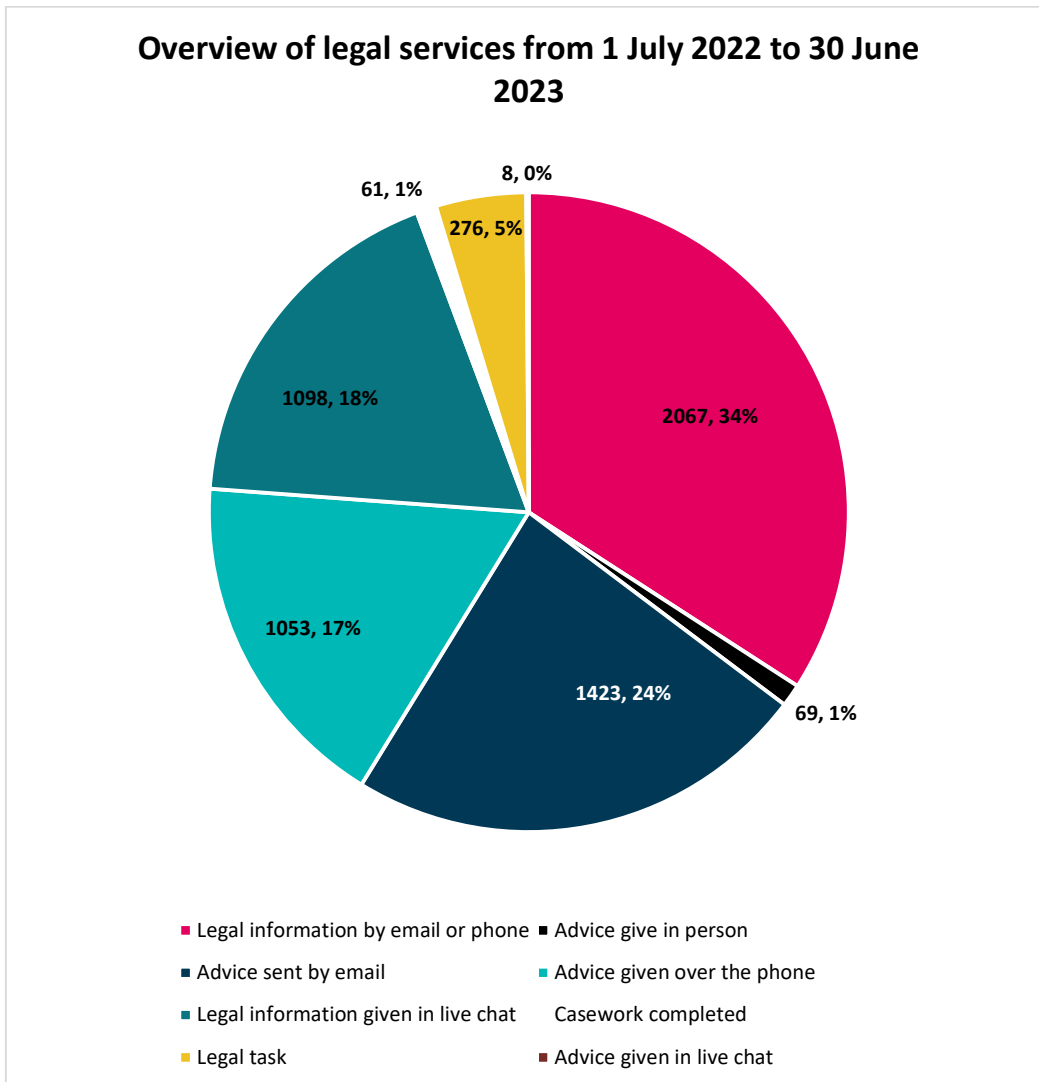
Director

T: 0434 046 120

E: matthew.keeley@yla.org.au

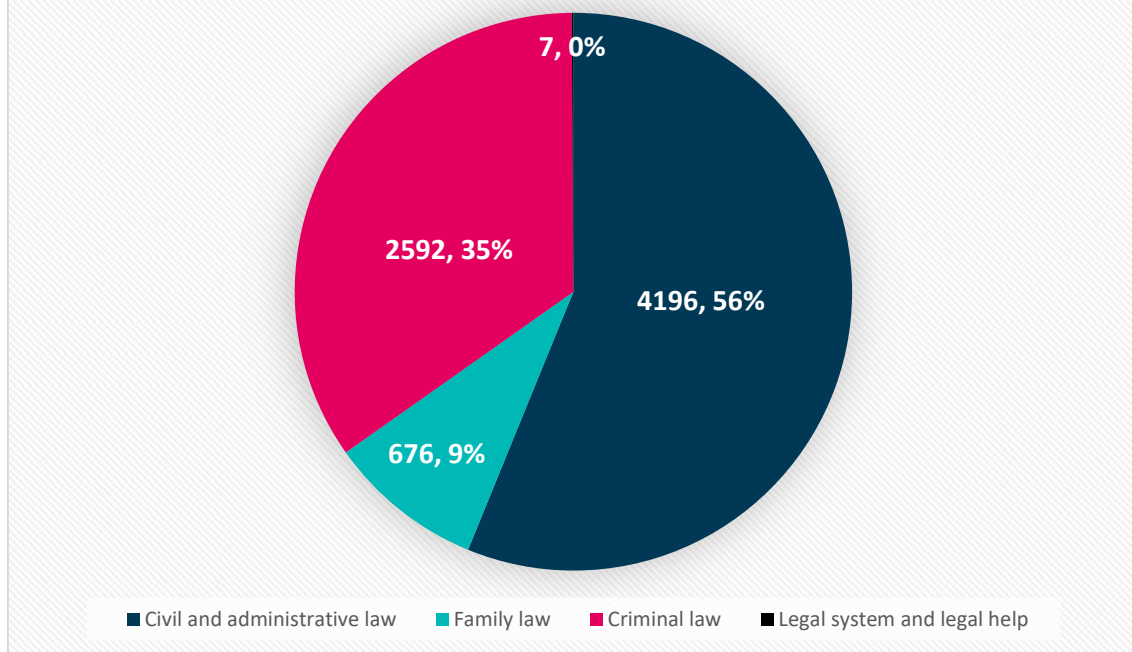
Appendix A: overview of Youth Law Australia’s services in 2022-2023 financial year

1. From 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, we provided over 6000 legal services, as follows.



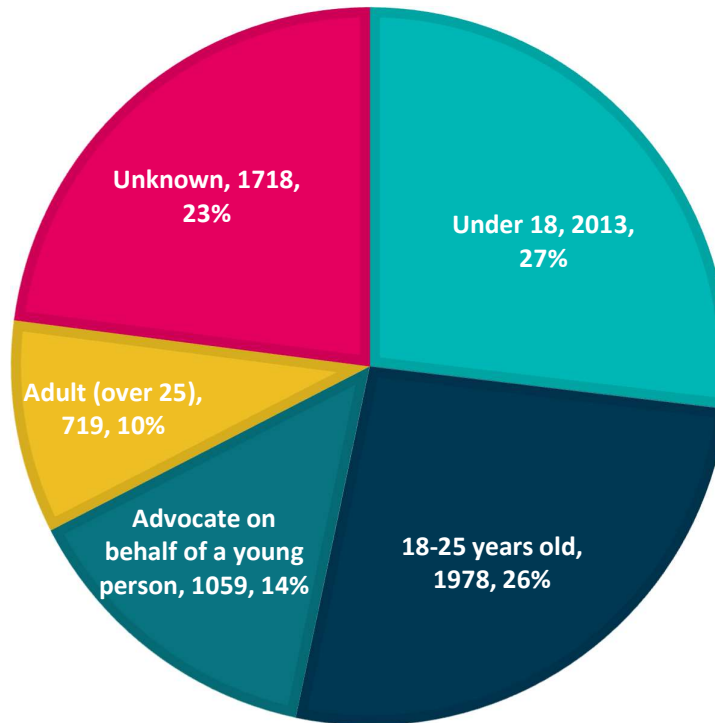
2. We aim to provide a safety net so that any child or young person, with any legal problem, anywhere in Australia, can contact us for help. Civil and administrative and family law makes up the bulk of our work, reflecting the important role that community legal centres play in these areas.

Classification of legal services 1 July 2022 - 30 June 2023

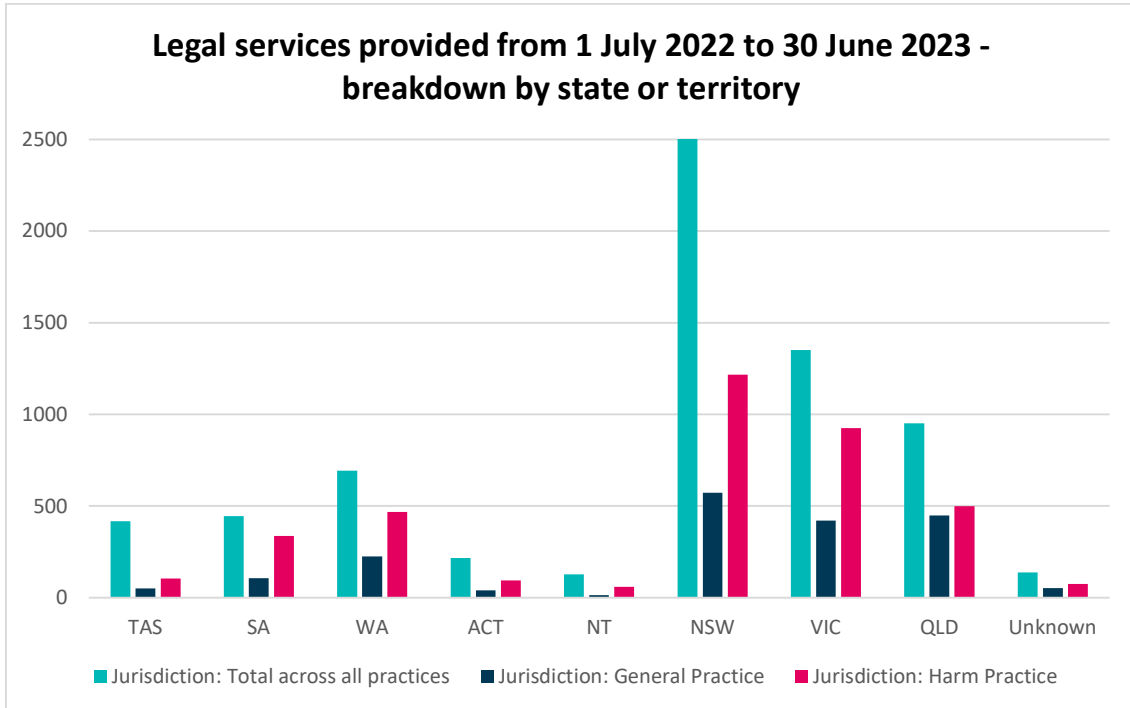


Note: the classifications illustrated in this graph exclude the information only classification. The total number of classifications exceeds the number of legal services provided, as one matter may have multiple classifications.

Age Breakdown For Legal Services Provided From 1 July 2022 - 30 June 2023

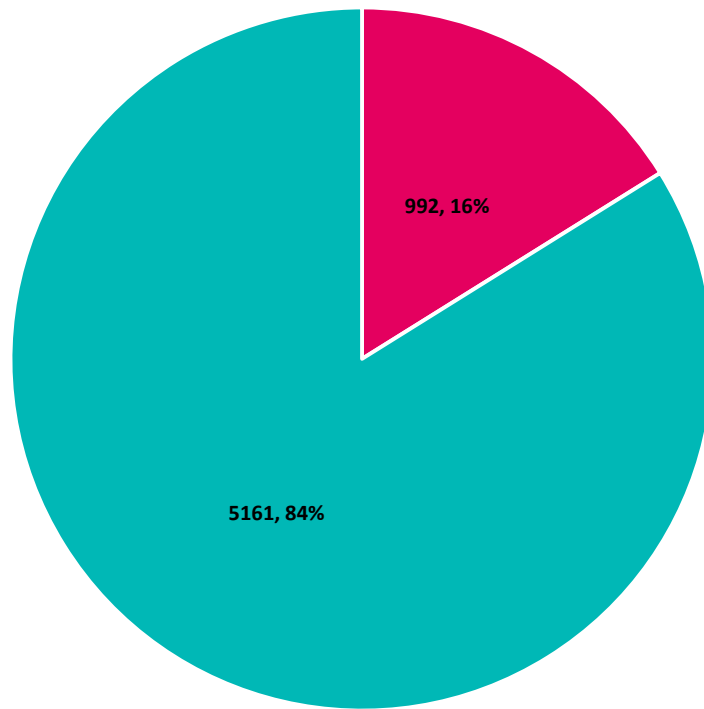


Note: the portion where age is 'unknown' is so large primarily because of the anonymous nature of our live chat service where we provide legal information without requiring identifying details unless the person feels comfortable to do so. This approach is taken to encourage earlier legal help seeking in response to sensitive issues such as sexual violence, child abuse and neglect, family and domestic violence, age of consent and sexual activity, bullying, image-based abuse and sextortion. This enables us to provide an initial trauma-informed service over chat without barriers to access with an option for the child or young person to later provide contact details for follow up assistance. Given the nature of legal information on our website as well as the types of questions asked in live chat, we believe that the majority of the people contacting us in this way are children, young people or an advocate on behalf of a child or young person.



Note: because some of our projects are funded in particular jurisdictions only, this graph provides an overview of the state or territory (1) across all our practices; (2) in our national, general practice; (3) in our national, harm practice. We explain our practices and funding arrangements in the following section.

Pro bono and volunteer help with legal services provided in 2022-2023 financial year



■ Number of matters drafted by a volunteer ■ Number of matters drafted by staff