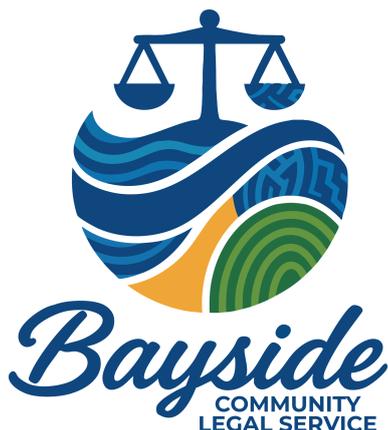


BALANCING THE SCALES

A funding submission for a fair, accessible and sustainable Bayside Community Legal Service.



November 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 01. Introduction | 12. Financial Constraints |
| 02. Our History | 15. Staffing & Capacity |
| 03. Our Reach | 16. Mediation Services |
| 05. Funding Disparity | 20. Conclusion |

Care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of data and statistics used, however revised data may have been published where errors or omissions occur.



Bayside Community Legal Service acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we operate, the Quandamooka People. We pay our deep respects to elders, past, present and emerging. Bayside Community Legal Service is strongly committed to reconciliation, and strives to work closely with our local First Nations communities to increase access to justice and improve judicial outcomes.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT



On behalf of the Management Committee, staff and volunteers of Bayside Community Legal Service Inc. (BCLS), I write to respectfully request an urgent review and uplift of our current funding under the 2025-2030 service level agreement (LASF).

Despite over thirty years of dedicated service to the Bayside and East Brisbane communities, BCLS now faces an unsustainable funding shortfall that places its ongoing operations — and the essential legal assistance it provides to thousands of vulnerable Queenslanders — at serious risk.

BCLS was established in 1992 to ensure that community members who cannot afford private legal representation still have access to justice. Over three decades, we have supported countless individuals and families facing issues of family violence, family law, child protection, tenancy disputes, consumer matters, and criminal law matters.

Our commitment to accessible, free legal help remains steadfast, but our funding has not kept pace with the realities of community demand and the cost of service delivery.

Our current annual allocation of **\$279,000** is the **lowest of all comparable community legal centres (CLCs) in Queensland, representing only one-third of the average per-capita allocation among similar generalist centres**. This inequity is compounded by the unique geography of our catchment — which spans both urban and remote island communities — creating increased travel, outreach and service costs relative to other centres.

In this submission, we have provided detailed comparative analysis and operational evidence demonstrating that BCLS's allocation is both inequitable and insufficient for sustainability.

The data shows that **every comparable CLC in Queensland receives at least double our funding, with several receiving over six times our allocation**, despite offering fewer service types.

To continue meeting our community's needs, BCLS has modelled two scenarios:

1. **Survive Model (\$363,848.00 p.a.)** – the minimum viable structure to maintain essential service delivery and prevent closure.
2. **Thrive Model (\$538,166.20 p.a.)** – the preferred model, providing a sustainable five-day operation, adequate staffing, and alignment with sector standards.

We respectfully request that strong consideration be given to the **Thrive Model** as the preferred framework moving forward and that annual indexation be applied in line with sector benchmarks to prevent further erosion of capacity.

BCLS is deeply committed to the principles of fairness, integrity and access to justice that underpin Queensland's legal assistance sector and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission further and to work collaboratively with you to ensure that our service can continue supporting the community into the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent and critical matter.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Stubbins
President

Bayside Community Legal Service Inc.

INTRODUCTION

This submission is made to urgently seek a review and uplift of the funding allocated to BCLS. Despite more than three decades of dedicated service to East Brisbane and the Redland communities, BCLS remains critically underfunded relative to comparable Community Legal Centres across Queensland.

Our request contains a minimum and optimal funding requirements to sustain and grow our impact and demonstrates that there is a disproportionate funding gap affecting our legal centre. The funding gap has operational consequences and a continued inability to attract, employ and retain solicitors at a fair and competitive rate of remuneration.

BCLS, when provided with sufficient funding has been able to provide unique services, tailored to the local community, including a mediation service that has never been funded, and document assistance as a requested by our local magistrates as a need for the community.

The submission will show the demographic and geographic realities of our catchment area and the members of our community that we serve and assist. Without immediate and sustained funding support, BCLS faces the real possibility of closure, leaving thousands of vulnerable individuals without access to essential legal assistance. This submission is not only a call for equity – it is a call for survival.

Our Role

As a generalist CLC, we provide free legal advice, assistance, referrals, resources, community legal education and mediation services, with a focus on family law, domestic and family violence matters, child protection, and victims of crime.

As a referral service, we work with the Queensland Police Service, YMCA, BABI, Wynnum Community Place, Redlands Community Centre, Centre for Women & Co, and our local Magistrates at Wynnum and Cleveland Courthouses.



OUR HISTORY

BCLS has proudly served the Bayside community since 1992, and over the last thirty-three years has provided free, high-quality legal advice and assistance to residents of the eastern suburbs of Brisbane and the Redlands who would otherwise be unable to afford it.

Over this time, we estimate that we have provided free legal advice, assistance, referrals and community legal education to more than 20,000 community members.

However, despite this long history of delivering free legal advice, assistance and support, BCLS is one of the most critically underfunded community legal centres (CLCs) in Queensland.

BCLS was established by a small group of volunteer lawyers and others, with nominal funding of \$24,000 per annum secured by 2002. Over the last 23 years, this funding has grown only marginally to \$279,000 per annum, representing an average annual increase of just 8.1%, in contrast to other community legal centres that have received average annual increases approaching 31% despite offering comparable or fewer services.

BCLS has only received two major funding increases since 2002. The first increase was in 2005, when baseline service funding grew just over \$100,000 per annum following a submission to the Queensland Department of Justice to allow for the employment of a part-time solicitor, and the coverage of rent and office expenses, to ensure community members wishing to seek legal advice and assistance during the day were able to do so.

Prior to this arrangement, all legal clinics were held on a Monday night at the Redlands Community Centre (RCC) using volunteer lawyers and a part-time coordinator working limited hours.

Prior to the 2024/2025 financial year, baseline service funding had only increased to \$159,000 per annum. The second increase occurred in April 2025 to \$279,000 as part of the renewal of our LASF Service Agreement.

BCLS supports upwards of 2,000 vulnerable members of the community each year across a growing and diverse community, yet we operate with a skeletal team.

At the current time the only employee on staff is the part-time Coordinator working 30 hours per week (four days). All other assistance is provided by a small group of pro-bono solicitors who are supported by a loyal team of volunteer law students, with three of our law students about to complete their PLT with us and seek admission as legal practitioners.

Other work such as policy writing, compliance checks, mediation risk management, planning and support, community engagement is completed by our volunteer management committee members.



OUR REACH

Geographic Catchment

The mix of urban and remote classifications makes BCLS unique among metropolitan CLCs. Residents on the islands face challenges more often associated with rural and remote Australia – limited transport, reduced service access, and digital exclusion – yet remain part of a region officially categorised as a major city. As a result, BCLS operates across four remoteness classes (Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional and Remote) and bears higher service delivery costs that most other CLCs with uniform metropolitan catchments.

For the purposes of this submission, the catchment is defined more precisely using the Australian Statistical Geography Standard developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). [1] Under this framework, the BCLS catchment is defined as the area that corresponds with the Brisbane - East Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) region. [2] Figure [no 1.] (right) illustrates the boundaries of this region. [3]

The area within this boundary – the Brisbane - East (SA4) region – represents the catchment that BCLS serves. However, while the boundary provides the basis for prioritising service delivery, is not absolute. In practice, BCLS does, at its discretion, occasionally extend its service delivery beyond this boundary when need arises and capacity allows.

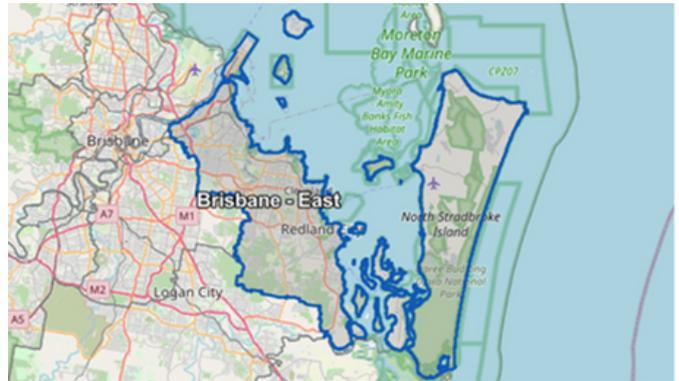


Figure [no 1.]: The boundaries of the Brisbane - East SA4 region.

Remoteness Classifications

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure classifies the remoteness of all areas of Australia based on a measure of relative access to services.

The five remoteness classes are: Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote.”[4]

Within this framework, the BCLS service area - the Brisbane – East (SA4) region - includes areas across four of the five Remoteness Areas: Major Cities of Australia, Inner Regional Australia, Outer Regional Australia, and Remote Australia. Only Very Remote Australia is not represented.

[1] For information about Australian Bureau of Statistics statistical areas (and the Australian Statistical Geography Standard), see: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3 (Web Page, 20/07/2021) <[Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3, July 2021 - June 2026 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)>.

[2] The Brisbane - East SA4 region comprises the following Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3) and Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) regions:

- Capalaba (SA3), including: Alexandra Hills (SA2); Belmont – Gumdale (SA2); Birkdale (SA2); Capalaba (SA2); Thorneside (SA2); and Wellington Point (SA2);
- Cleveland – Stradbroke (SA3), including: Cleveland (SA2); Ormiston (SA2); Redland Bay (SA2); Sheldon – Mount Cotton (SA2); Thornlands (SA2); Victoria Point (SA2); North Stradbroke Island (SA2); and Southern Moreton Bay Islands (SA2); and
- Wynnum – Manly (SA3), including: Brisbane Port – Lytton (SA2); Manly – Lota (SA2); Manly – West (SA2); Murarrie (SA2); Tingalpa (SA2); Wakerley (SA2); Wynnum (SA2); and Wynnum West – Hemmant (SA2).

[3] Figure [no 1.] (the map showing the boundaries of the Brisbane – East SA4 region) was generated using the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Search Census Data tool and reproduced for illustrative purposes. See: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Search Census Data (Web Page) <[Prior to the 2024/2025 financial year, baseline service funding had only increased to \\$159,000 per annum. The second increase occurred in April 2025 to \\$279,000 as part of the renewal of our LASF Service Agreement.](#)>

BCLS supports upwards of 2,000 vulnerable members of the community each year across a growing and diverse community, yet we operate with a skeletal team.

At the current time the only employee on staff is the part-time Coordinator working 30 hours per week (four days). All other assistance is provided by a small group of pro-bono solicitors who are supported by a loyal team of volunteer law students, with three of our law students about to complete their PLT with us and seek admission as legal practitioners.

Other work such as policy writing, compliance checks, mediation risk management, planning and support, community engagement is completed by our volunteer management committee members.

[4] Australian Bureau of Statistics July 2021-June 2026, Remoteness Structure, ABS, viewed 22 October 2025, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/remoteness-structure>>.

OUR REACH (Cont'd)

While much of the mainland area, including Redland City and the eastern suburbs of Brisbane, is classified as Major Cities of Australia, the island communities - particularly the southern Moreton Bay Islands and parts of North Stradbroke Island (Minjerrabah) - extend into the Remote Australia classification.

This is an exceptional feature of the BCLS catchment. It means that within a single region on the fringe of metropolitan Brisbane, there are communities that, according to national statistical standards, are considered remote in their access to essential services. Few urban-adjacent areas in Australia exhibit this degree of internal variation.

The presence of remote-classified communities within the BCLS catchment has substantial implications for service access and delivery. It highlights stark disparities in service availability between the mainland and islands and demonstrates that residents in parts of the BCLS catchment face challenges more commonly associated with rural and remote Australia.

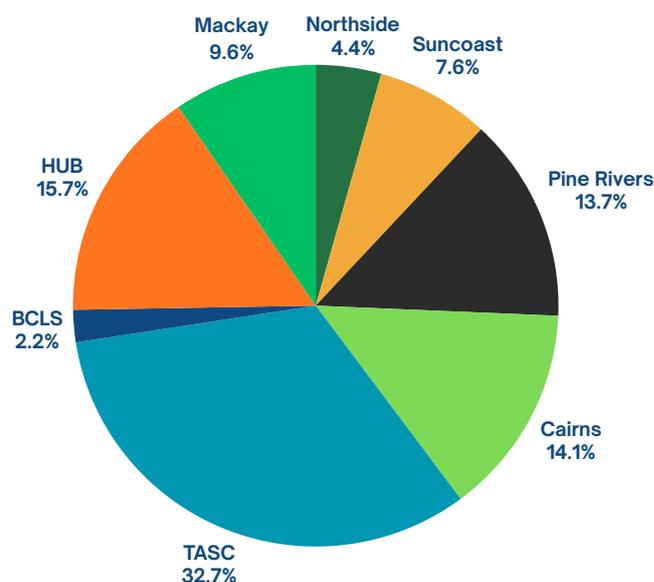
For BCLS, **this results in higher service delivery costs, increased outreach requirements, and the need to operate across markedly different accessibility contexts.**



FUNDING DISPARITY

While BCLS’s LASF allocation for 2025-2030 is \$1.395 million (an average of \$279,000 per annum), across the eight most comparable Queensland CLCs, total annual funding is \$12.4 million. **BCLS’s share is just 2.2% of that pool.**

Visual Representation



CLC	NAJP Funding P/A [5]	2024 AIS Revenue	2024 AIS Expenses
BCLS	\$279,000	\$163,732 [6]	\$203,689 [7]
Northside	\$561,800	\$906,100 [8]	\$906,100 [9]
Suncoast	\$977,400	\$1,267,570 [10]	\$1,126,920 [11]
Pine Rivers*	\$1,773,200	\$8,002,016 [12]	\$7,776,514 [13]
Cairns	\$1,825,400	\$2,254,459 [14]	\$2,356,156 [15]
TASC	\$4,226,200	\$6,005,995 [16]	\$5,953,313 [17]
HUB*	\$2,027,800	\$2,158,216 [18]	\$2,048,041 [19]
Mackay	\$1,234,000	\$995,394 [20]	\$966,826 [21]

* CLC is part of a larger community organisation

[5] Queensland Government, 'Legal assistance services funding', Department of Justice (Web Page) ><https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/about-us/services/legal-assistance-strategy-and-funding-unit><.

[6] Australian Government, 'Bayside Community Legal Service Inc', Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Web Page) ><https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/a50b2a59-39af-e811-a961-000d3ad24182/profile><.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Australian Government, 'Northside Connect Inc', Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Web Page) ><https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/2846df7-38af-e811-a963-000d3ad24077/documents/><.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Australian Government, 'Suncoast Community Legal Service Inc', Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Web Page) ><https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/5e1eff57-38af-e811-a961-000d3ad24182/profile><.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Australian Government, 'Encircle Community Services Ltd', Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Web Page) ><https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/d49c5fbf-38af-e811-a95e-000d3ad24c60/documents/><.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Australian Government, 'Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc', Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Web Page) ><https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/58f87b82-38af-e811-a963-000d3ad24077/profile><.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Australian Government, 'TASC National Limited', Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Web Page) ><https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/8cfd3082-3aaf-e811-a961-000d3ad24182/profile><.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Australian Government, 'Hub Community Projects Inc', Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Web Page) ><https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/4e8f0c5d-39af-e811-a963-000d3ad244fd/profile><.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Australian Government, 'Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc', Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Web Page) ><https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/7323f2a8-38af-e811-a963-000d3ad244fd/profile><.

[21] Ibid.

FUNDING DISPARITY (Cont'd)

Analysis Method

While a total of 24 CLCs across Queensland received 5-year LASF funding allocations, not all CLCs are comparable to BCLS. Many differ materially from BCLS in terms of catchment size, client base and areas of law.

As such, to ensure that BCLS's funding allocation was assessed only against those of like CLCs, a systematic process was undertaken to identify an appropriate comparator group from the 24 CLCs in total. The process involved the application of four criteria. Each criterion excluded CLCs with particular characteristics until only those CLCs broadly comparable to BCLS remained.

The four criteria were:

- 1. Criterion 1: CLC has a single, contiguous, sub-state catchment.** *This criterion excludes CLCs with state-wide, multi-regional and/or non-contiguous catchments.*
- 2. Criterion 2: CLC has a broad and non-specific client base.** *This criterion excludes CLCs with narrow and specific client bases (for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women, or young people).*
- 3. Criterion 3: CLC provides assistance across multiple generalist areas of law.** *This criterion excludes CLCs that provide assistance primarily or exclusively within a single specialist area of law (for example, only tenancy-related law, or only migration-related law).*
- 4. Criterion 4: CLC is the only, or primary, CLC servicing its catchment.** *Excludes CLCs that are not the only, or primary, CLC servicing its catchment (i.e., those that are secondary or supplementary). Where two CLCs operate within the same or substantially overlapping catchment, only the primary LASF-funded CLC – that is, the main provider delivering generalist legal assistance across that region – was retained.*

Application of these four criteria identified eight CLCs across Queensland that are broadly comparable to BCLS. **The eight comparable CLCs are as follows (in alphabetical order):**

1. Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc.
2. Gold Coast Community Legal Centre & Advice Bureau Inc.
3. HUB Community Legal
4. Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc.
5. Northside Connect Inc.
6. Pine Rivers Community Legal Service (Encircle Ltd)
7. Suncoast Community Legal Service Inc.
8. Wide Bay Burnett Community Legal Service.

BCLS's funding allocation was analysed against the funding allocations of these eight comparable CLCs.



FUNDING DISPARITY (Cont'd)

Funding Allocations

- There is marked disparity in LASF funding allocations across the comparison cohort.
- In aggregate, the comparison cohort share in a total LASF funding pool of \$12,402,200 per annum.
- **BCLS is, by far, the lowest-funded CLC of the comparison cohort.**
- BCLS's allocation represents **only 2.25% of the total funding pool.**
- The next-lowest funded CLC in the comparison cohort (after BCLS) – Northside Connect Inc. – receives \$561,800 per annum – **more than double BCLS's allocation.**
- The highest funded CLC in the comparison cohort – Gold Coast Community Legal Centre & Advice Bureau Inc. – receives \$2.748 million per annum, or 9.9 times BCLS's funding.
- The average allocation across the comparator group is \$1,378,022 per annum, almost five times BCLS's allocation.
- Every comparable CLC receives at least double BCLS's allocation.
- Seven of the comparable CLCs receive more than triple BCLS's allocation.
- Four of the comparable CLCs receive more than six times BCLS's allocation.

CLCs (sorted highest to lowest funded)	Funding Allocation		Funding Disparity		
	2025-30 (\$)	p/a (\$)	(\$ +/- BCLS)	(% +/- BCLS)	(x BCLS)
Gold Coast Community Legal Centre & Advice Bureau Inc.	13,741,000	2,748,200	12,346,000	885	9.9x
HUB Community Legal	10,139,000	2,027,800	8,744,000	627	7.3x
Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc.	9,127,000	1,825,400	7,732,000	554	6.5x
Pine Rivers Community Legal Service (Encircle Ltd)	8,866,000	1,773,200	7,471,000	536	6.4x
Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc.	6,170,000	1,234,000	4,775,000	342	4.4x
Suncoast Community Legal Service Inc.	4,887,000	977,400	3,492,000	250	3.5x
Wide Bay Burnett Community Legal Service	4,877,000	975,400	3,482,000	250	3.5x
Northside Connect Inc.	2,809,000	561,800	1,414,000	101	2.0x
BCLS	1,395,000	279,000	–	–	–
TOTAL	62,011,000	12,402,200			

Figure [no.2]: 2025-30 LASF funding allocations (BCLS and Comparable CLCs) and funding disparity

FUNDING DISPARITY (Cont'd)

Per-Capita Funding Allocations

- BCLS receives the lowest per-capita LASF funding allocation of all CLCs within the comparison cohort. BCLS's catchment – the Brisbane – East SA4 region – has (as at 2024) an estimated resident population of 255,048 people. [22] On this basis, BCLS's absolute funding allocation of \$279,000 per annum equates to a **per capita funding allocation of \$1.09**.
- The **average per-capita allocation across the comparator group is \$3.47 – more than three times BCLS's per-capita allocation.**
- The next-lowest per-capita funded service – Suncoast Community Legal Service Inc. – receives \$2.25 per resident – more than double BCLS's per-capita allocation.
- The highest per-capita funded service – Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc. – receives \$6.42 per resident, representing almost six times BCLS's per-capita allocation.
- For every \$1 of LASF funding available per resident in the catchments of comparable CLCs only **\$0.29 is available per resident in BCLS's catchment.**
- If funded at the same per-capita rate as the comparator average, BCLS's annual allocation would total around **\$960,000 p.a., or \$681,000 more each year than its current level.**

Disparities in funding allocations cannot be explained by population size alone. Several comparable CLCs serve smaller populations (e.g. Cairns and Mackay) yet receive substantially higher funding allocations.

These findings indicate comparative inequity: residents within the BCLS catchment receive significantly less LASF-funded legal service access per person per annum than residents in the catchments of comparable CLCs.

To analyse per-capita funding, catchment populations for each comparable CLC were estimated as follows:

1. Each CLC's publicly stated catchment area (described on its website, on the Community Legal Centres Queensland website, or in annual reports) was identified.
2. The catchment areas identified for each CLC were then (generously) mapped to the closest corresponding Statistical Area(s) under the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).
3. The ABS estimated resident populations for those Statistical Area(s) was then obtained. Where a CLC's catchment spanned multiple Statistical Areas, the ABS estimated resident population of each was identified and summed to determine the total catchment population.



[22] 'Region Summary: Brisbane – East', Australian Bureau of Statistics (Web Page) (Table: Estimated resident population) <<https://dbr.abs.gov.au/region.html?lyr=sa4&rgn=301>>.

FUNDING DISPARITY (Cont'd)

CLCs (sorted highest to lowest funded)	Funding allocation per annum	Estimated resident population of CLC catchment	Estimated resident population of CLC catchment vs BCLS (+/-)	Per-capita funding allocation per annum	Per-capita funding allocation per annum vs BCLS (x)
Gold Coast Community Legal Centre & Advice Bureau Inc.	2,748,200	698,017	442,969	3.94	3.6x
HUB Community Legal	2,027,800	693,606	438,558	2.92	2.7x
Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc.	1,825,400	303,102	48,054	6.02	5.5x
Pine Rivers Community Legal Service (Encircle Ltd)	1,773,200	528,934	273,886	3.35	3.1x
Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc.	1,234,000	192,302	-62,746	6.42	5.9x
Suncoast Community Legal Service Inc.	977,400	434,602	179,554	2.25	2.1x
Wide Bay Burnett Community Legal Service	975,400	330,788	75,740	2.95	2.7x
Northside Connect Inc.	561,800	240,654	-14,394	2.33	2.1x
BCLS	279,000	255,048	-	1.09	-

Figure [no.3]: 2025-30 LASF funding allocations (BCLS and Comparable CLCs) and per-capita funding disparity



FUNDING DISPARITY (Cont'd)

Service Delivery

- **BCLS delivers one of the broadest ranges of legal service types within the comparator cohort.**
 - BCLS provides at least seven distinct categories of legal services: legal advice; general information and referral; community legal education; assistance with legal documentation; community outreach and pop-up clinics; advocacy; and duty lawyer services.
 - This service breadth is equal to or greater than that of several CLCs receiving two to nine times more funding.
- **Funding does not correlate with service breadth.**
 - The highest-funded service, Gold Coast Community Legal Centre & Advice Bureau Inc., receives \$2.748 million per annum and delivers eight types of legal services—only one more than BCLS, despite receiving nearly ten times the funding.
 - HUB Community Legal receives \$2.028 million per annum (7.3× BCLS) and delivers seven service types, the same breadth of services as BCLS.
 - Cairns Community Legal Centre receives \$1.825 million per annum (6.5× BCLS) but delivers six service types, one fewer than BCLS.
 - Pine Rivers Community Legal Service (Encircle Ltd) provides seven service types but receives \$1.773 million per annum (6.4× BCLS).
 - Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre and Wide Bay Burnett Community Legal Service each deliver five service types yet receive between 3.5 and 4.4 times BCLS’s allocation.
 - Northside Connect Inc., the next-lowest funded CLC, delivers four service types, fewer than BCLS, while receiving double BCLS’s funding.
- **Overall trend:**
 - There is **no proportional relationship** between the level of funding and the number of service types delivered.
 - **BCLS delivers a broader or equal range of legal services than most comparators, despite receiving the lowest funding allocation** in both absolute and per-capita terms.

BCLS	Pine Rivers	Cairns	TASC
Legal advice including – Criminal Family Civil etc	Legal advice including – Family, Neighbourhood Disputes, Consumer, etc	Legal advice including – Family, Criminal, Civil, Mental Health, Discrimination, Guardianship, etc	Legal advice including – Family, Minor Criminal, Civil, etc
Mediation Services	Mediation Services	Case work	Advocacy Services – Tenancy, Disability
Documentation services	Document drafting – Law Reform, Family Law	Community Education	
Duty lawyer	Duty Lawyer		
Community Outreach			
Island pop-up clinics			

Figure [no.4]: Comparison of CLCs by service provision

FUNDING DISPARITY (Cont'd)

HUB	Suncoast	Mackay	Northside
Legal Advice including – Family Law, Criminal, Civil, Human Rights, PoA, Estates, etc.	Legal Advice including – Criminal Law, Family Law, Civil, etc	Legal advice including – Family, Tenancy, Elder Abuse, DV, Civil, Employment, Mental Health, etc.	Legal advice including – Family, DV, Criminal, Civil, Wills, Tenancy.
Flood legal assistance	Community Legal Education	Outreach services	Community Legal Education
HUB	Suncoast	Mackay	Northside
Legal Advice including – Family Law, Criminal, Civil, Human Rights, PoA, Estates, etc.	Legal Advice including – Criminal Law, Family Law, Civil, etc	Legal advice including – Family, Tenancy, Elder Abuse, DV, Civil, Employment, Mental Health, etc.	Legal advice including – Family, DV, Criminal, Civil, Wills, Tenancy.
Flood legal assistance	Community Legal Education	Outreach services	Community Legal Education
	Immigration Advice Service		

Figure [no.5]: Comparison of CLCs by service provision (cont'd)



FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

This section presents the financial evidence that underpins BCLS’s request for an urgent funding uplift. It demonstrates that current funding is insufficient to maintain operations, and meet sector benchmarks. Revenue growth has been outpaced by inflation, population expansion, and service demand.

Annual Information Statement - FY2023/24

BCLS Income Type (2024)	Revenue (2024)
State	\$94,017.00
Commonwealth	\$62,907.00
Service Generated	\$5,862.00
Travel Duty Lawyer	\$565.00
Donations	\$250.00
Interest Income	\$131

Income Category (2024)	Percentage of Total Revenue (2024)
Revenue from Government	95.84%
Other Revenue	3.58%
Revenue from Goods or Services	0.35%
Revenue from Donations and Bequests	0.15%
Revenue from Investments	0.08%
Income Category (2024)	Percentage of Total Revenue (2024)

Employee costs account for 88% of total expenditure, leaving negligible flexibility for development, outreach, or redundancy planning.

BCLS Expenses Type (2024)	Cost (2024)
Wages & Salaries	\$158,880.00
Superannuation	\$16,160.00
Library Resources	\$4,803.00
Finance Audit Bookkeeping	\$4,151.00
Office Overheads	\$3,930.00
Insurance	\$3,555.00
Communications	\$3,365.00
On Costs - Employees	\$2,767.00
Repairs and Maintenance	\$2,491.00
Superannuation Payable	\$1,961.00
Security Costs	\$480.00
Staff Training	\$479.00
Staff Development	\$396.00
General Expenses	\$262.00
Travel	\$175.00
Entertainment	\$136.00
Office Equipment	\$29.00
Legal Association Costs	\$10.00
PAYG Withholdings	(\$344.00)

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS (Cont'd)

Expenses Category (2024)	Percentage of Total Costs (2024)
Employee Expenses	87.72%
All Other Expenses	12.28%

BCLS Expenses Type (2025)	Cost (2025)
Wages and Salaries	\$151,401.11
Consultants - Contractors	\$18,910.00
Superannuation	\$17,382.56
Library Resources and Subscriptions	\$9,188.95
Finance Audit Bookkeeping	\$5,576.37
Rent/Building Maintenance	\$5,041.78
Communications	\$3,436.03
Office Overheads	\$3,078.19
Superannuation Payable	\$2,172.64
On Costs - Employees	\$2,094.79
Insurance	\$2,090.32
Staff Development	\$1,921.12
Legal Association Costs	\$1,240.00
General Expenses	\$1,179.37
Staff Training	\$954.55
Repairs and Maintenance	\$902.50
Security Costs	\$815.00
Entertainment	\$401.04
Office Equipment	\$227.26
Travel	\$166.15

Financial Statement - FY2024/25

BCLS Income Type (2025)	Revenue (2025)
State	\$96,098.00
Grant - Digital Capacity Grant Program	\$74,000.00
Grant - Work Uplift (State) and Indexation	\$73,904.00
Commonwealth	\$73,363.25
Grant - DV Legal Support Initiative	\$20,690.00
Miscellaneous Income	\$7,870.02
Fundraising Income	\$226.97
Interest Income	\$84.31

Income Category (2025)	Percentage of Total Revenue (2025)
Revenue from Government	48.94%
Revenue from Grants	48.70%
Other Revenue	2.34%
Revenue from Investments	0.02%

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS (Cont'd)

BCLS Expenses Type (2025) (cont'd)	Cost (2025) (cont'd)
Meetings - Meals	\$140.46
Bank Charges	\$15.77.00
Interest Exp	\$0.12
Rounding	(\$1.98.00)
PAYG Withholdings Payable	(\$1,301.00)

Expenses Category (2025)	Percentage of Total Costs (2025)
Employee Expenses	77.49%
All Other Expenses	22.51%

Totals

Surplus (Deficit):
\$119,203.45

Yearly Average (YTD) Surplus (Deficit):
(\$39,957.36)

Although revenue increased in 2025 due to targeted digital and DV grants, these were one-off project funds and **do not contribute to core service sustainability**.

It is estimated that the current funding model is insufficient to cover all operating costs and BCLS is reliant on grants to maintain service continuity.

BCLS currently employs one part-time administrative Coordinator (0.8 FTE). BCLS only operates four days per week, **compared with the five-day average of comparable CLCs.** Volunteer contributions remain vital in the short term but cannot replace qualified legal supervision required under professional indemnity insurance.

Without funding parity, BCLS lacks the ability to **attract and retain solicitors at sector-competitive remuneration levels.** If BCLS were to recruit legal practitioners at the average remuneration levels paid by the CLC sector, absent immediate adjustment, **cash reserves would be exhausted within 18 months.**



STAFFING & CAPACITY

There are currently no paid legal practitioners employed at BCLS. BCLS advertised for a Principal Solicitor earlier this year on Ethical Jobs for a period of three months and received one application for the position, which was assessed as unsuitable.

There was a similar outcome when the position was advertised on Seek, with 209 views and only one applicant for the position in three months. The applicant was again deemed unsuitable due to no experience in a community legal setting and very little experience in Queensland as a legal practitioner.

Staffing Model

For the last six months, BCLS has been exclusively relying on volunteer solicitors, pro bono work from Brisbane law firms and assistance from other CLCs to provide legal advice to our community. **This is unsustainable and fails to meet the needs of clients** seeking urgent advice and assistance, **nor does it instill confidence** in our clients, partner organisations, local Magistrates and elected representatives that we are effectively meeting community needs.

Due to the lack of legal practitioners, law student volunteers, our Management Committee and our Coordinator have needed to devote more time and effort to ensuring that BCLS remains operational, however they are increasingly facing **burnout and compassion fatigue**.

The Coordinator is increasingly subject to overwhelm due to managing an unsustainable workload that includes facilitating appointments for community members with the limited availability of pro-bono Solicitors, identifying and making referrals, triaging clients, scheduling and supervising volunteers, updating policies and procedures, coordinating outreach and events, and monitoring client calls and emails.

Outreach Programs

We have been striving to develop strong networks with our local courts to address domestic and family violence matters within the local community, but with no legal staff we are restricted in the amount of time and resources we can devote to this issue.

We received grant funding in May 2025 from Queensland Gives to deliver a clinic at local Magistrates courts to assist women and families with completing Domestic Violence Order (DVO) applications, however with no Solicitors, **we are unable to deliver on that commitment and may have to return the funding**.

The lack of legal practitioners further limits our ability to **conduct outreach clinics and other more focused legal assistance and education**. When we do have a principal solicitor, there is space available for in person appointments, and a marked willingness for other CLC's to refer matters to BCLS.

Student Placements

BCLS relies on law student PLT placements to assist with the administrative load of BCLS. This necessitates BCLS providing law students an opportunity to support our legal practitioners and has always been regarded as a mutually-beneficial arrangement, with students being exposed all aspects of a functioning legal practice, whilst providing valuable assistance to maintain operational efficiency amidst high community demand for our services.

It is interesting to note that **three of our current law students have completed their PLT and will soon be admitted as legal practitioners**. Our experience has been that some of our law students will come back to BCLS and volunteer as lawyers.

MEDIATION SERVICES

The provision of free Mediation Services by BCLS is a unique offering. This is an unfunded service that is available to the greater community. We receive the majority of clients through referrals from other CLCs, including Women's Legal Service. There is a panel of 19 FDRPs and AMDRAS Mediators that volunteer their service for our community.

BCLS uses a co-facilitation model so our mediators are better supported and can learn and reflect on their practice at the same time as better safeguarding them from potential complaints. BCLS receives an intake form with a preliminary risk screening before assigning it to mediators.

We have a volunteer Team Leader of Mediation who assists the panel if they have a complex case, complaints or inquiries. The Team Leader also serves as a wellbeing checkpoint for the volunteer mediators, can offer supervision and case manages any complex cases to ensure people get the best service and support.

We understand free volunteer mediations are not currently offered at any other CLC in Queensland. It is a proud achievement of BCLS that enables community members to reach an agreed outcome and to avoid further costs, conflict and court appearances where possible.

BCLS has previously delivered Island Pop-Up Legal Service where the Principal Solicitor and the Coordinator visit the islands to offer face to face support. We would like to extend this to include mediation sessions in response to overwhelming community demand.



FUNDING REQUEST

To continue delivering accessible, high-quality legal assistance to members of the Bayside community, BCLS has modelled two funding options: the Survive Model and the Thrive Model.

Both models are based on the **Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award [MA000100]**, using Level 8 (Principal Solicitor), Level 6 (Solicitor) and Level 5 (Coordinator) pay scales, reflecting current industry averages within the Community Legal Services sector.

Each model outlines a staffing and operational framework designed to maintain essential services, address community demand and provide reasonable remuneration in-line with sector expectations.

Survive Model		
Current LASF Funding (p/a)	Required LASF Funding (p/a)	Difference
\$279,000.00	\$363,848.00	(\$84,848.00)

Thrive Model		
Current LASF Funding (p/a)	Required LASF Funding (p/a)	Difference
\$279,000.00	\$538,166.20	(\$259,166.20)

Survive Model

The Survive Model represents the minimum viable operational framework that would allow BCLS to continue operating under financial and staffing constraints.

Based on current LASF funding of \$279,000 per annum, this model requires a baseline funding increase to \$363,848.00 per annum to sustain essential staff and operational costs. The model provides funding for a Principal Solicitor (4 days per week), Solicitor (2 days per week), and a Service Coordinator (4 days per week), supported by an essential administrative, human resources and service budget.

This staffing composition would allow BCLS to maintain core services, including free legal advice, document completion clinics, and triage for family and domestic violence matters. However, under this model, **the Centre would continue to operate on restricted hours of four days per week**, falling short of the five-day average operating hours most Queensland Community Legal Centres are funded for.

This reduced availability would continue to limit client access, particularly for working families and residents in ferry- and bus-dependent areas such as the Southern Moreton Bay Islands.

While the Survive Model preserves service continuity and ensures compliance with funding, professional and insurance obligations, **it does not meet growing community demand or expectations for accessible legal help.**

It restricts outreach, CLE activities, and capacity to respond to prevalent family law, crime and domestic violence issues across the Bayside-Redlands corridor, where demographic and SEIFA data show increasing socio-economic vulnerability.

FUNDING REQUEST (Cont'd)

Survive Model				
Role / cost	Days	Est Cost pw	Est Cost p/a	Benefits
Principal Solicitor	4	\$2,210.00	\$115,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Supervise provision of legal advice and provide family, civil and criminal law advice. · Act as the responsible person for PII purposes · Provide internal leadership and manage junior solicitors · Lead community engagement initiatives · Oversee CLE activities
Solicitor	2	\$945.00	\$49,140.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Provide specialist advice to victims of crime and DV survivors. · Supervise document completion clinics.
Service Coordinator	4	\$1,713.00	\$89,076.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Manage Service operations · Coordinate community engagement and CLE activities · Provide administrative support to solicitors · Oversee student volunteer and mediation programmes
Employee and Service expenses less wages	-	-	\$110,632.00	Essential operational expenditures including PAYG and leave withholdings, training and professional development, maintenance, infrastructure and facilities.
TOTAL FUNDING REQUIRED:			\$363,848.00	

Figure [no.6]: Detailed breakdown of the 'Survive' funding model.

Thrive Model

The Thrive Model provides the resources necessary for BCLS to deliver a fully functional, sustainable, and responsive legal service that aligns with the sector's five-day operational average.

With increased total annual funding of \$538,166.20, the Thrive Model enables the employment of a full-time Principal Solicitor, two Solicitors (three and two days per week respectively), and a full-time Service Coordinator, supported by an essential operational, human resources and professional-development budget.

This structure would allow BCLS to deliver expected levels of community access to legal advice, representation, and education across the Bayside-Redlands-Island region.

It supports a 30 per cent increase in client capacity and ensures consistent supervision, outreach and early intervention.

Importantly, this model provides the staffing and resourcing required to meet Queensland Legal Assistance Service Plan standards, while facilitating dedicated capacity for community legal education, partnerships with local organisations, and proactive prevention initiatives for victims of crime, family and DV matters.



FUNDING REQUEST (Cont'd)

Thrive Model				
Role / cost	Days	Est Cost pw	Est Cost p/a	Benefits
Principal Solicitor	5	\$2,783.00	\$144,716.00	· Supervise provision of legal advice and provide family, civil and criminal law advice. · Act as the responsible person for PII purposes · Provide internal leadership and manage junior solicitors · Lead community engagement initiatives Oversee CLE activities
Solicitor	3	\$1,411.00	\$73,337.20	· Provide specialist advice to victims of crime and for civil disputes · Oversee development of CLE resources · Assist with CLE activities.
Solicitor	2	\$945.00	\$49,140.00	· Provide specialist advice to DV survivors · Supervise document completion clinics.
Service Coordinator	5	\$2,217.00	\$115,284.00	· Manage Service operations · Coordinate community engagement and CLE activities · Provide administrative support to solicitors · Oversee student volunteer and mediation programmes
Employee and Service expenses less wages	-	-	\$155,688.00	Essential operational expenditures including PAYG and leave withholdings, training and professional development, maintenance, infrastructure and facilities.
TOTAL FUNDING REQUIRED:			\$538,166.20	

Figure [no.7]: Detailed breakdown of the 'Thrive' funding model.

Preferred Model

The Thrive Model is the most appropriate funding model to ensure that BCLS can attract and retain qualified legal practitioners and administrative staff to meet the escalating legal, social and demographic needs of our region.

The Bayside–Redlands corridor continues to grow at approximately 2% per year, with an aging population (median age 43 years) and several SA2s in the lowest SEIFA quartile for socio-economic advantage.

These factors correlate strongly with growing demand for legal assistance, compounded by transport disadvantage and rising domestic-violence and property-crime rates.

Queensland Police Service data confirms that breaches of domestic violence orders have increased by 30% and serious assaults have more than doubled since 2016.

Under the proposed Thrive Model at \$538,166.20 per annum, **BCLS would still receive over 50% less than the sector average, whilst delivering a comparable—and in some cases broader—range of services**, including family, civil and minor criminal law advice, unique mediation services, documentation assistance, education, and island outreach legal clinics.



CONCLUSION

BCLS remains one of the most critically underfunded CLCs in Queensland.

BCLS’s ability to provide legal advice, assistance, referrals and community legal education that meets the needs and expectations of the local community is unsustainable with the current funding allocation.

The uplift would not only preserve legal services but also align with sector averages in a manner that reflects its broad service scope and complex catchment demographics.

While comparable CLCs have seen significant increases in their LASF allocations, BCLS’s funding has grown only marginally—from \$24,000 in 2002 to \$279,000 in 2025, an average annual increase of approximately 8 per cent.

During the same period, other CLCs have received average annual increases above 30 per cent and now operate with budgets exceeding \$1 million per annum.

This disparity has placed BCLS in a precarious position: staffing has fallen to unsustainable levels; our inability to offer sector-competitive remuneration for paid legal practitioners has resulted in very limited interest from solicitors wishing to work for BCLS; our reliance on a willing and committed group of volunteers to provide advice and assistance to community members has intensified substantially; and operational continuity is at risk.

We respectfully request that the Department of Justice provide an uplift to BCLS’s annual LASF funding to the level outlined in the Thrive Model (\$538,000 per annum), with annual indexation aligned to sector benchmarks.

This would acknowledge and address the structural inequity of current funding relative to other CLCs delivering a similar level of legal services.

BCLS remains committed to accessible justice, community engagement, and sector collaboration. **Adequate and equitable funding is therefore essential to ‘balance the scales’ and ensure continuity of vital legal services across the Bayside and Island communities.**



BCLS wishes to thank the following contributors for their efforts in compiling this funding submission:

Edward de Graaf
Harrison Cotton
Hugh Bettinson
Kristine Ranger
Margo Orbell
Michael Stubbins

