



24-25

ANNUAL REPORT



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.



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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.



ABOUT US



BCLS delivers free, high-quality legal services to residents of the eastern suburbs of Brisbane and the Redlands who would otherwise be unable to afford them.

As a generalist Community Legal Centre (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.

We estimate that we have provided free legal advice, assistance, referrals and community legal education to more than 20,000 community members since our founding.

Our History

BCLS was established by a small group of volunteer lawyers and others in April 1992, with nominal funding of \$24,000 per annum secured by 2002. Initially, 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. Over the last 23 years BCLS has incrementally expanded its operations. In 2015, BCLS moved to its present location at Room 1.04/105 Florence Street Wynnum (the Wynnum Community Centre). Today, the Service offers a range of advice and assistance services on a walk-in and appointment basis, operating from Monday - Thursday, 8:30am - 4:30pm.

Our Service Area

The mix of urban and remote classifications makes BCLS unique among metropolitan CLCs. Residents on the Southern Moreton Bay 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 than most other CLCs with uniform metropolitan catchments.

In principle, the BCLS catchment is defined using the Australian Statistical Geography Standard developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as the Brisbane - East Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) region. Figure [no 1.] (below) illustrates the boundaries of this region.

However, in practice, the boundary provides the basis for prioritising service delivery, but is not absolute. BCLS does, at its discretion, occasionally extend its service delivery beyond this boundary when need arises and capacity allows.

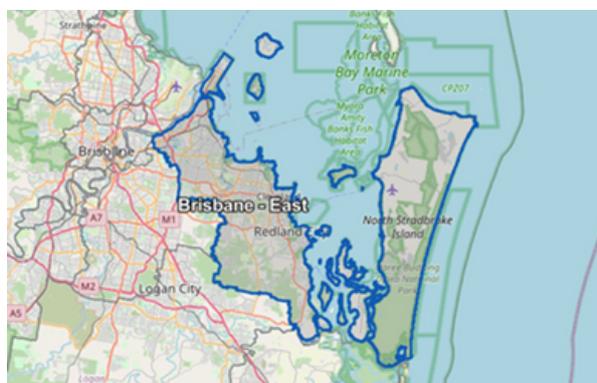


Figure [no 1.]: The boundaries of the Brisbane - East SA4 region.



OUR SERVICES



85%
Overall client satisfaction



79%
Would strongly recommend us



95%
Would return for assistance

Legal Advice

BCLS provides free, high-quality legal advice across a wide range of general legal issues. Our service assists people with family law matters, minor civil disputes, criminal matters, domestic and family violence, consumer issues, and community safety. Advice is delivered confidentially by qualified volunteer solicitors and supported by law students. We offer appointments in person, by telephone, and online to ensure accessibility. Our legal advice helps community members understand their rights, identify practical options, and make informed decisions before issues escalate. BCLS is often an essential service for people who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or cannot afford private legal advice.



Mediation



Mediation helps parties reach practical agreements without going to court, making it a constructive option for resolving disputes cheaply and efficiently. During our free, three-hour mediations, our co-mediators assist parties to communicate clearly, identify options, and explore mutually acceptable solutions. A broad range of matters are mediated, including parenting plans, property settlements, neighbourhood and minor civil disputes. Mediation empowers parties to take an active role in resolving their own issues, often resulting in more durable, agreements and reducing pressure on courts. BCLS proudly offers the only free volunteer mediation service in Queensland.

Legal Education

BCLS plays an important role in improving community legal knowledge. Our legal education seminars help people learn about important topics such as domestic violence, elder abuse, tenancy rights, consumer law, and wills and estates. These sessions strengthen community confidence and promote early intervention by helping people recognise legal problems sooner. BCLS also provides support with a range of legal tasks, including drafting letters, completing forms, preparing documents, and navigating online applications. This practical assistance is particularly valuable for vulnerable community members who may struggle with literacy, technology, or complex legal processes.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Michael Stubbins
President

Bayside Community Legal Service (BCLS) has proudly served the Brisbane Bayside and Redlands communities since 1992, providing free legal advice, assistance, referrals, and community legal education. We also remain one of the only Community Legal Centres (CLCs) in Queensland offering a free mediation service, a component of our work that continues to experience strong demand.

Whilst our core purpose is to support residents within our immediate catchment, increasing need across the broader region has meant that, when capacity permits, we continue to provide assistance to clients from outside our traditional geographic boundaries. This is particularly true of our mediation service, which remains a critical resource for individuals seeking early intervention and constructive dispute resolution.

Service Delivery & Staffing

This year presented significant staffing challenges, including the resignation of both our part-time Principal Solicitor in March and our part-time Solicitor in August. These departures had a noticeable impact on service capacity; however, through the dedication of our volunteer legal practitioners, we were able to maintain operations four days per week.

We are especially grateful to long-serving volunteer solicitor Renelyn Green and her colleagues from Hall & Wilcox, who have tirelessly provided consistent, high-quality advice. We also acknowledge Shelley Answerth, Candice Hughes and her team from YFS, and our own Peter Goodwin, whose willingness to step in wherever needed has ensured continuity of service for clients who may otherwise have gone without legal support.

Although this volunteer-based model has enabled us to keep BCLS open, it is not a sustainable long-term solution.

Despite two recruitment rounds for a Principal Solicitor, each receiving more than two hundred views yet yielding only two unsuitable applicants, the position remains vacant. The reasons for this low response rate relate to salary, part-time arrangements, and sector-wide workforce shortages. We have discussed these challenges with the Department of Justice and have submitted a proposal aimed at achieving a more sustainable staffing and service delivery model into the future.

Volunteer Engagement

Our law student volunteers continue to be an invaluable part of the service. Their commitment—whether answering phones, conducting intake interviews, or assisting the solicitors—helps ensure that clients receive timely and compassionate support.

This year we were also fortunate to host three PLT students who completed their practical training with us. One of these students, Edward De Graaf, has since been admitted as a practising solicitor, while the others are progressing toward their own admissions. Their contributions have enhanced service capacity and reflect the strong learning environment fostered at BCLS.

Financial Position

As Acting Treasurer, I am pleased to confirm that BCLS remains financially solvent, continues to meet all financial obligations promptly, and benefits greatly from the expertise of our bookkeeper, Judy Carse. Full financial statements are included in this Annual Report.

Acknowledgements

I extend my sincere thanks to all organisations and individuals who continue to support BCLS.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Michael Stubbins
President

The YMCA (the Y), Bendigo Community Bank Wynnum Manly, the Queensland Police Service, Brisbane City Council, and our local representatives Kara Cook MP, Joan Pease MP, and Councillor Alex Givney each remain accessible and engaged with our work.

I also acknowledge the members of the Management Committee for their guidance during a challenging year, and offer particular thanks to our Coordinator, Julz, whose dedication, professionalism, and good humour ensure that our centre continues to operate smoothly.

Finally, I would like to recognise our Secretary, Hugh Bettinson, whose leadership in funding applications, communications, and centre improvements—including upgrades to IT systems and office infrastructure—has been instrumental in strengthening our service.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to the ongoing success and resilience of BCLS.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Stubbins
President

Bayside Community Legal Service Inc.



OUR BOARD



Michael Stubbins
President | Treasurer

Michael was admitted as a Solicitor in 1998 and worked for various government agencies over a long career, including the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Queensland Corrective Services. Michael has volunteered at BCLS for 25 years has been the BCLS President for 17 years.



Margo Orbell
Vice President

Margo is a Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner/Child Consultant and holds a Juris Doctor, Master of Justice (Intelligence), Grad Dip Theology and BA (Politics). Margo currently runs Olive Branch Mediation and has worked in FRCs, Department of Justice & Attorney-General, and as an academic. She has volunteered at Bayside since 2019. Margo is passionate about assisting families build conflict-free futures.



Hugh Bettinson
Secretary

Hugh has completed a Bachelor of Business (Management), and is in his penultimate year of a Bachelor of Laws (Honours). A community-minded leader and governance professional dedicated to strengthening local services, Hugh is a board member of several local not-for-profit organisations and the Head of Media Relations for Joan Pease MP, Shadow Minister for Small Business, Customer Service & Open Data.



Clare Stanford
Board Member

Clare began her career in the health sector before practising as a medico-legal solicitor and later lecturing in health law for over a decade. She went on to hold senior executive roles in the university sector, including national appointments in Entrepreneurship and as Chief Operating Officer. Clare also served as CEO of an international not-for-profit association. She is currently an Adjunct Associate Professor at UTS and serves on multiple boards.



Danielle Forward
Board Member

Danielle is the Bayside Practice Leader of Australian Family Lawyers and has specialised exclusively in family law for over 10 years. Danielle holds a dual degree in Law and Justice from QUT and a Master of Laws (Family Law) from the College of Law. Admitted to practice in both the Supreme Court of Queensland and the High Court of Australia, Danielle is known for her empathetic and results-driven approach.



Hannah Robinson
Board Member

Hannah is a dedicated family law solicitor with a strong commitment to supporting clients through challenging circumstances. She holds a Bachelor of Laws from Griffith University, a Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice from QUT, and a Master of Applied Law (Family Law) from the College of Law. Hannah was admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of Queensland and the High Court of Australia in 2019.



OUR BOARD



Peter Goodwin
Board Member

Peter has over 40 years of practice experience as both a Solicitor and Barrister. He has worked across criminal, family, personal injury, succession, property, trusts, and commercial disputes. Peter has appeared in more than 1,000 hearings and trials and participated in over 1,500 mediations and settlement conferences. He brings particular expertise in workplace health and safety matters.



Edward de Graaf
Board Member

Edward completed his Bachelor of Laws (Honours) at QUT in 2024 and has volunteered with Bayside Community Legal Service since 2021. He has a strong interest in family law and child protection, shaped by an international legal placement in Cambodia. Edward brings a structured, thoughtful approach to legal problem-solving and is deeply committed to supporting vulnerable individuals and promoting access to justice.



OPERATIONS REPORT



Julianne Davies
Coordinator

The 2024–25 financial year has been one of significant operational improvement and modernisation for BCLS, paired with consistently strong service delivery across our legal, mediation, and legal education programs. Despite ongoing staffing and funding pressures, the service continued to meet or exceed the majority of its performance targets, demonstrating the resilience and commitment of our volunteer students and practitioners.

Operational Overview

BCLS assisted 623 clients, including 557 new clients, well surpassing our annual target. The demand for flexible service remained strong, with 414 telephone advice sessions, representing 138% of our delivery mode target and reflecting the increasingly complex transport and access barriers in our catchment, particularly for clients living on the southern Moreton Bay islands. Mediation remained a core area of excellence, with 49 Facilitated Resolution Processes completed—122.5% of our target—that were supported by a dedicated panel of 20 volunteer mediators.

Capability Improvements

A major milestone this year was our transition from the CLASS reporting system to ActionStep, a far more modern, adaptable, and intuitive legal practice management platform. This shift has significantly improved our internal data accuracy, matter tracking, and reporting capability. ActionStep now provides real-time visibility of matters, streamlined workflows, and automated reminders, enabling BCLS to more efficiently and effectively track legal issues, workload patterns, and emerging community needs with much greater reliability.

Importantly, our move to ActionStep has allowed us to produce more detailed matter-type analysis, helping us identify trends and allocate resources more effectively.

We also improved the client intake experience by adopting a guided online system. This has enabled clients to submit initial information before their appointment, reduced administrative bottlenecks associated with telephone triage and manual processing, and improved our ability to flag urgency, safety concerns, and referral needs early. The online intake form has been particularly valuable for clients experiencing domestic and family violence, clients with a disability, and residents on the islands who may have difficulty attending in person.

Another significant development has been the introduction of a digital client survey, which has enabled more systematic collection of service feedback. Historically, feedback has been inconsistent due to reliance on paper forms and ad-hoc follow-up. The new online system has improved response rates, provided clearer data on client satisfaction, and produced actionable insights into service quality. Early results show strong client satisfaction across accessibility, communication, and advice quality—core principles of our service ethos.

Volunteer Contributions

Service delivery this year was underpinned by an extraordinary cohort of over 80 volunteer solicitors, mediators, and law students. Their contributions ensured continuity during a challenging period without any paid solicitors, and a critical funding deficit. This collective effort allowed us to keep the doors open four days per week and provide high-quality advice and assistance, whilst maintaining a very high overall client satisfaction rating of 85%.

The year ahead will focus on consolidating our new systems, expanding the quality of our data insights, and continuing to modernise our service delivery model to meet the evolving needs of the Bayside community.



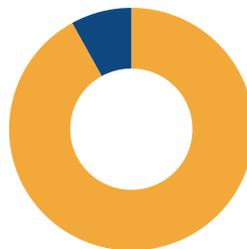
OUR IMPACT



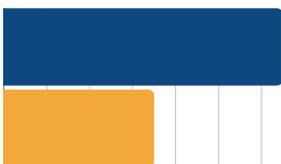
Our Clients



623
Clients assisted



89%
of clients were new



67%
Female Clients
33%
Male Clients

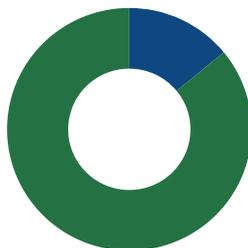


42%
DV Indicator
58%
No DV Indicator

Legal Advice

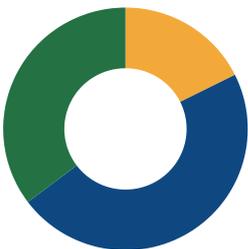


50%
Family law
42%
Civil law
8%
Criminal law



414
Telephone advice appointments
220
In-person advice appointments

Legal Education



6
Stakeholder Sessions
3
Education Sessions
8
CLE Activities



Top Legal Tasks:
1. Parenting plans
2. Letters of demand
3. QCAT Applications
4. Statutory Declarations

Mediation & Referrals



49
Disputes mediated



284
Referrals to wraparound services



SERVICE FEEDBACK



What Our Clients Say

"After years of abuse, you saw through what's going on and have literally made me feel like there is hope for my daughters and I."

"I felt very comfortable and reassured at my meeting and have been provided with a wealth of information to assist in making my application to the court."

"Your solicitor read my documents and saw them for what they are. I cannot put into words how much it means to be seen and heard."

"My financial situation had me feeling overwhelmed and unsure where to start. Your team helped me understand my rights, guided me through each step, and treated me with dignity when I felt at my lowest. I finally feel like I have a path forward, and am so grateful for the support I received."

"I came to BCLS feeling completely lost after my separation. Your solicitor explained things in a way I could finally understand and helped me feel in control again. I left the appointment with clarity and confidence I haven't felt in months."

"Thank you for listening and treating me like a person, not a problem. The advice I received helped calm my fears and gave me the strength to take the next step in being a better co-parent to my kids."

"I didn't think anyone would take my situation seriously until I came to this service."
Thank you!!"



SERVICE FEEDBACK



What Our Stakeholders Say

"BCLS plays a vital role in ensuring meaningful access to justice for vulnerable and disadvantaged parties. Their education, advice, and mediation services consistently reduce the number of matters escalating unnecessarily and help achieve better legal and non-legal outcomes in our local area."

"BCLS is one of the most collaborative and community-focused organisations we work with. They respond quickly, communicate clearly, and ensure clients receive proper support. Their commitment to fairness, dignity, and accessible justice makes a tangible difference to the wellbeing of our Bayside."

"BCLS is an essential partner in supporting community safety. The legal advice they provide to individuals affected by domestic and family violence helps reduce reporting delays and ensures survivors receive the right support and information about their next steps."

"Our clients often face complex legal issues alongside health and social challenges. Whenever we refer to BCLS, we know our clients will be treated with the utmost respect and receive thorough, timely advice. Their willingness to collaborate ensures better wraparound support. BCLS is an indispensable partner in keeping vulnerable people stable and supported."

"BCLS is always responsive and compassionate."



SUCCESS STORIES



Legal Advice: Family Law

Maya (de-identified), a mother of three young children, sought assistance after leaving a **long-term abusive relationship**. She had recently separated but continued to receive coercive and threatening messages, and was subject to repeat attempted visits, from her former partner. Maya was apprehensive to contact police, and was unsure how to protect herself and her children. After reviewing her evidence—including screenshots of text messages and home CCTV footage—our solicitor advised Maya that the behaviour likely satisfied the threshold for a Domestic Violence Order (DVO). **Our solicitor assisted Maya to prepare her application, and explained what to expect at court.** Following lodgement, a **temporary protection order was granted** pending a hearing for a full order, **naming both Maya and her children**, with conditions restricting her former partner from making contact and coming within close proximity. Maya later told us the order **“finally gave her breathing room to feel safe again.”**



Legal Advice: Civil Law



Sally (de-identified), an aged pensioner, was involved in a **motor vehicle accident**. She acknowledged being partially responsible and was willing to contribute to the cost of repairs. However, upon receiving the insurer’s repair estimate, **Sally believed the amount quoted was excessive in light of the actual damage sustained to both Sally’s own vehicle and the other party’s vehicle.** Sally had taken photographs documenting the damage and had recorded details of the incident that cast doubt on her being fully at fault. **Acting on our solicitor’s advice, Sally wrote to the insurer** to seek additional repair quotes, challenging both the reasonableness of the repair costs and the assertion that she was 100% responsible for the accident. **Sally subsequently negotiated a \$2,300 reduction—more than 50% of the original repair cost—** achieving a highly favourable outcome.

Legal Advice: Criminal Law

Daniel (de-identified), a shift worker, was charged with **mid-range drink driving** after being stopped at an early-morning RBT. The incident resulted in the **immediate suspension of his licence and placed him at risk of disqualification**, which would have cost Daniel his job and left him unable to support his young family. Daniel subsequently attended BCLS, seeking advice on **obtaining a restricted (work) licence.** Our solicitor reviewed his traffic history, confirmed that he likely met the criteria for a work licence, and assisted him to prepare the application form and obtain supporting documents. Daniel was also advised to complete the Queensland Traffic Offenders Program (QTOPS) to demonstrate rehabilitation. At court, **Daniel successfully obtained a work licence**, allowing him to continue working while serving a restricted driving period.



SUCCESS STORIES



Mediation: Family Law

A parenting matter involving three young children (aged 2, 4 and 8) was referred to BCLS after **Parent A had not seen the children for an extended period**. Parent B cited significant risk concerns and ongoing communication conflict. **Although a previous DVO naming Parent B as the aggrieved had expired, the case required careful assessment**. The Team Leader assigned an experienced FDRP, who conducted intakes and offered one party a second intake after they obtained legal advice, allowing them time to better prepare. Despite initial presentations of deep mistrust, fear and entrenched conflict, **the mediation proceeded via shuttle to maintain safety and calm**. **The parties reached a partial agreement, later returning—after further legal advice—to achieve a full parenting agreement**, saving substantial financial and emotional cost through BCLS’s free mediation service.



Mediation: Neighbourhood Dispute



Two neighbouring property owners attended BCLS’s mediation service to resolve a dispute about **replacing a dividing fence**. The timber fence had been installed decades earlier, and was **bowed and leaning significantly into one party’s yard**. This party believed the fence was a serious safety risk and wished to replace it urgently. However, **the other party felt they should not bear any replacement costs, arguing that several large, unkempt trees on the adjoining property had caused the fence to warp and deteriorate** over time. During mediation, both parties were able to present photographs, arborist advice and repair quotes. Ultimately, the parties **agreed to replace the fence with an agreed alternative and to apportion costs to balance both the fence’s age and the impact of the trees**. They also agreed to undertake future trimming of tree branches to prevent further issues.

Legal Education

Thomas (de-identified), a long-term Australian permanent resident, sought assistance to **apply for Australian citizenship**. Although he had lived in Australia for nearly 15 years, Thomas had **limited family support and a mild cognitive impairment, which made navigating the detailed citizenship application process overwhelming**. He struggled to understand what information was required, how to complete the online form, and where to locate records relating to his arrival and family background. With guidance from our solicitor, Thomas was supported to complete his citizenship application. We helped him **obtain his arrival information from the Department of Immigration, locate details about his family’s immigration and marital history, and provided advice on how to obtain a criminal history check**. We also assisted Thomas to ensure his supporting documents were uploaded accurately to the online form. **Thomas successfully lodged his application, and subsequently was successful in obtaining an interview and sitting the citizenship test**. Pending a final outcome, Thomas expressed his gratitude for the kindness, patience, and reassurance provided by our team throughout the process.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Solicitors

Renelyn has over 10 years' post-admission experience in insurance and personal injuries across Queensland and New South Wales, acting for plaintiffs in workers' compensation, public liability and CTP matters. She has a strong interest in dispute resolution, supported by a Master of Applied Law (Dispute Resolution), and assists clients to resolve disputes through litigation or alternative dispute resolution processes. Renelyn is actively involved in pro bono work with BCLS, where she provides phone and in-person appointments across civil, family, criminal, traffic, wills and estates, QCAT and court-related matters, and assists with education activities, including form assistance and document drafting.



Renelyn Green
Volunteer Solicitor



Shelley Answerth
Volunteer Solicitor

Shelley is a volunteer solicitor at BCLS with over 15 years' experience in litigation and personal injury law. Her legal career began in 2001 as a paralegal in an intellectual property firm in Osaka, Japan, before returning to Australia to complete her law degree. Shelley is known for her kind, compassionate and approachable manner, taking the time to ensure clients feel at ease and understand the legal process. At BCLS, she assists with civil advice - specialising in property damage and personal injury matters -, document drafting, and task completion, helping clients navigate complex issues with clarity and confidence.

Mediators

Dee is a volunteer mediator at BCLS, specialising in child-inclusive and high-conflict family dispute resolution. Dee holds a Graduate Diploma in Family Dispute Resolution (FDRP), is a nationally accredited Mediator (AMDRAS), and is deeply experienced in family separation, reunification therapy and complex parenting arrangements. Known for her calm compassion and clarity, Dee guides clients through structured mediation, supports children's voices in discussions, and helps families construct practical arrangements tailored to their situation. Her trauma-informed approach and commitment to safely resolving conflict bring strength to BCLS's mediation panel and benefits the Bayside community.



Dee Hardy
Volunteer Mediator

Law Students

Edward completed his Bachelor of Laws (Honours) at QUT in 2024 and has volunteered with BCLS since 2021. He has a strong interest in family law and child protection, shaped by an international legal placement in Cambodia. Edward brings a structured, thoughtful approach to legal problem-solving and is deeply committed to supporting vulnerable individuals and promoting access to justice. We are pleased to announce that Edward was admitted as a legal practitioner in November 2025, and was moved by our President. Edward continues to give back to BCLS, both as a volunteer and now a Board Member.



Edward de Graaf
Volunteer Student



MEDIATION REPORT



Margo Orbell
Mediation Team Leader

Over the last two years, I have had the privilege of serving as the Mediation Team Leader at BCLS. During this time, I have witnessed firsthand the extraordinary contribution our volunteer mediators make to the Bayside community and the profoundly positive impact our program has on the individuals and families who come through our doors. BCLS offers the only free, community-based volunteer mediation programs in Queensland, and this year our service delivery continued to grow in both demand and complexity.

Service Delivery Model

Our mediation service operates through an exceptional panel of 19 active private mediators, all of whom generously volunteer their time to support a co-mediation model. This structure—where two mediators work together on each matter—provides a unique professional environment not often available in private practice. It enables mediators from diverse backgrounds to collaborate, learn from each other, and reflect together on best practice. Clients also benefit greatly from this model, as they receive the combined expertise, perspectives, and skills of two practitioners guiding them through what is often one of the most challenging periods of their lives.

This year, our service saw a consistently high demand for family law mediations, with over 85% of matters involving parenting arrangements, post-separation communication, or property settlement discussions. In every family matter, we ensure that at least one mediator assigned is a qualified Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner (FDRP). This guarantees that sessions meet ethical, professional, and legislative requirements, and that our clients receive support from practitioners trained in child-focused and trauma-informed facilitation.

The diversity of our mediator panel is one of our greatest strengths.

Our panel includes barristers, social workers, psychologists, counsellors, academics, lawyers, and experienced family practitioners. Each mediator brings a unique blend of professional experience and personal insight, enriching the co-mediation process for both clients and colleagues. Before anyone joins our panel, BCLS ensures that all qualifications, professional memberships, and insurance documents are fully up to date. Maintaining high standards of professionalism and safety is essential to the integrity of our service.

When referrals are received, our Coordinator and I conduct an initial risk assessment, checking for family violence concerns, safety risks, and conflicts of interest. Only after these steps is a matter offered to mediators. Throughout the process, I remain available to provide supervision, case management support, guidance on complex dynamics, and debriefing opportunities. Mediation is a unique discipline—mediators do not advocate for clients, nor do they make decisions on their behalf. Instead, our role is to facilitate constructive dialogue, gently reality-test proposals, reframe unhelpful communication, and support families to self-determine a way forward. This often includes identifying when clients need legal advice, therapy, financial counselling, or other wrap-around supports.

Our mediators are regularly exposed to difficult stories involving trauma, risk, and emotional distress. To safeguard their wellbeing, they have full access to co-mediator debriefing and to me as Team Leader. This reflective practice is essential to sustain a healthy, resilient mediator panel.

The Bayside community is incredibly fortunate to have access to free, high-quality mediation, due to the generosity and professionalism of our volunteers. If you are an accredited mediator or FDRP and would like to join our panel, we warmly welcome your interest.



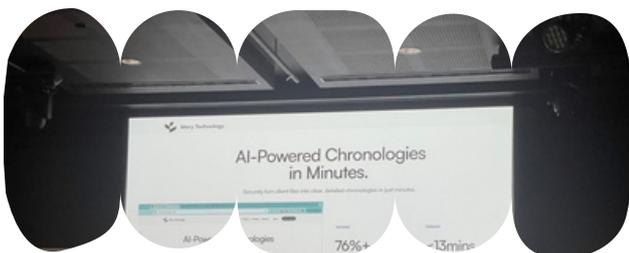
LEGAL EDUCATION



Legal education continues to be a central pillar of our mission to improve access to justice and empower community members to navigate the legal system with confidence. This year, BCLS strengthened its commitment to community legal education through targeted outreach, professional development, community partnerships, and the expansion of our practical legal assistance clinics. These initiatives have not only increased awareness of common legal issues but have also deepened our engagement with vulnerable groups, seniors, and culturally diverse communities across the Bayside region.

Professional Development

A major highlight of the year was the active participation of members of our Board and Operations Team in the 2025 Community Legal Centres Queensland State Conference, held in June. This annual gathering brought together sector leaders, policy experts, community organisations, and frontline workers to explore emerging issues in community law, including digital transformation, trauma-informed service delivery, and legal sector reform. Attendance provided our team with valuable insights and practical tools that have since been integrated into our education strategy and client support practices.



In September, our President represented BCLS at the Community Legal Centres Australia National Conference, further cementing our connection with the national CLC sector. This conference emphasised innovation, sustainability, and collaborative practice models—key themes that continue to shape our approach to community education and outreach. The opportunity to learn from interstate colleagues broadened our understanding of best practice and future directions in legal service delivery.

Community Outreach

Throughout the year, BCLS delivered outreach across the Bayside, including a presence at the NAIDOC Family Fun Day. This event allowed us to engage directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, share information about legal rights and support pathways, and strengthen trust with service providers. Our team provided culturally respectful information about domestic and family violence supports, helping community members access timely legal information.

BCLS also delivered a series of legal education seminars to local community groups, focusing on wills and estates, and elder abuse prevention. These sessions were particularly valuable to seniors, carers, and families concerned about vulnerability, coercion, financial abuse or succession planning.



LEGAL EDUCATION

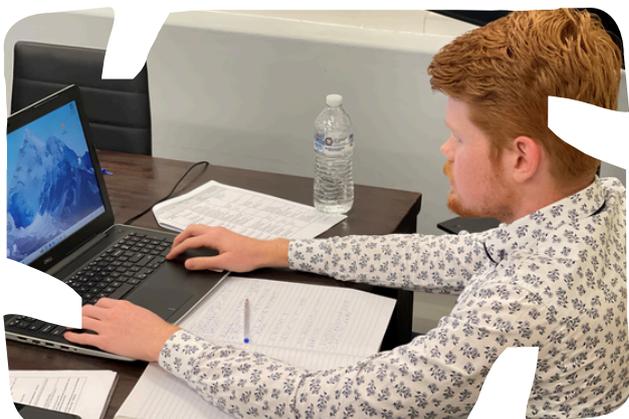


Legal Assistance Clinics

This year also saw the successful launch of our Document Clinic, an initiative that offers hands-on assistance with legal paperwork. Through the support of volunteer solicitors and trained law students, clients received help with drafting letters of demand, Peace and Good Behaviour Order (PGBO) applications, affidavits and other essential legal documents. The clinic has quickly become an important component of our education and early-intervention framework, enabling community members to understand the purpose of legal documents while receiving practical guidance on completing them accurately.

Looking ahead, BCLS is preparing to launch a Domestic Violence (DV) Form Clinic in 2026, in partnership with local Magistrates Courts. This initiative will provide safe, confidential support to applicants completing DVO applications, both at the court and onsite at BCLS. By guiding clients through the form, evidence preparation, and next steps, this clinic will fill a critical accessibility gap and ensure that vulnerable applicants receive clear information and compassionate support from the very beginning of the process.

Collectively, these activities reflect BCLS's commitment to empowering the community through knowledge, early intervention, and accessible legal support.



TREASURER'S REPORT



Michael Stubbins
President

BCLS has delivered a strong financial result, underpinned by prudent cash management, careful expenditure control, and several significant one-off grants. This measured, diligent approach has restored BCLS to profitability and facilitated sustainable service renewal, to ensure BCLS remains responsive to the needs of its clients.

Financial Performance

BCLS recorded a net surplus of \$120,100 for the 2024–25 financial year, reflecting a substantial improvement from the previous year's deficit of \$41,539. Total income increased to \$346,152, representing a 112% uplift from 2023–24, due largely to targeted grants—including the Digital Capacity Grant Program, Work Uplift and Indexation funding, and the DV Legal Support Initiative. Government and grant income together accounted for almost the entirety of revenue, with nominal contributions from fundraising and service-generated income.

Operating expenses of \$226,136 were generally well contained, increasing 10.6% due to expanded capital expenditure funded by one-off grants. The net surplus margin of 34.7% is strong for a community organisation of our type, though it is materially influenced by grant funding. Employee-related expenditure continued to dominate the cost structure, with wages and salaries, and superannuation together comprising over 88% of total expenditure, consistent with the labour-intensive service delivery model of a CLC.

Financial Position

As at 30 June 2025, BCLS reported total assets of \$190,319, an increase of 156% on the prior year. Cash at bank of \$152,052 represents a strong liquidity position, driven by our operating surplus and careful cost management. Fixed assets increased significantly to \$38,267, reflecting the commencement of a rolling office equipment renewal scheme and targeted IT asset upgrades.

Liabilities remained low at \$11,814, resulting in net assets of \$178,506, more than tripling the previous year's position. The organisation's current ratio of 12.87 indicates an exceptionally strong liquidity position and a capacity to meet short-term financial obligations. The ROI of 67.28% further demonstrates efficiency gains realised by service delivery improvements and targeted capital expenditure projects.

Cash Flow

Net cash inflows for the year totalled \$78,635, driven by strong grant receipts and stable expenditure. After capital investment of over \$38,000 and adjustments for GST and PAYG movements, the organisation closed the year with cash reserves more than double the opening balance.

Financial Constraints

Despite this healthy year-end position, it is important to recognise that 48% of income was derived from one-off grants, which do not support baseline staffing or ongoing service delivery. BCLS remains the lowest-funded generalist CLC in Queensland, receiving less than half the allocation of the next lowest-funded service and as little as one-tenth of what some comparable CLCs receive. When adjusting for these structural issues, it is clear BCLS remains critically underfunded relative to demand, and the strong financial performance this year should not be interpreted as a persistent, recurring trend.

BCLS remains financially solvent, operationally efficient, and well-positioned in the short term. However, without a sustainable uplift to baseline funding, the organisation will continue to rely exclusively on non-recurrent grants and volunteers to maintain service levels. I would like to thank our bookkeeper, Judy Carse, and the Management Committee for their commitment to strong financial governance throughout the year.



TREASURER'S REPORT



Michael Stubbins
President

Financial Statement - Income

Income Type	Amount
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	% of Total Income
Income from Government	48.94%
Income from Grants	48.70%
Other Income	2.34%
Income from Investments	0.02%



Financial Statement - Expenses

Expense Type	Amount
Wages and Salaries	\$151,401.11
Consultants	\$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
Maintenance	\$902.50
Security Costs	\$815.00
Entertainment	\$401.04
Office Equipment	\$227.26
Travel	\$166.15



FUTURE VIABILITY



Michael Stubbins
President



Hugh Bettinson
Secretary

Bayside Community Legal Service (BCLS) was established in 1992 to ensure that residents of the Bayside and Island communities—some of Queensland’s most geographically and economically diverse areas—could access free legal assistance that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Since 1992, BCLS has become a trusted destination for legal advice, mediation and legal education. We have assisted more than 20,000 clients in our history, with issues spanning family law, civil disputes, domestic and family violence, consumer matters, criminal law and community safety.

Our catchment is unique. The Brisbane–East SA4 region includes metropolitan suburbs alongside island communities with four remoteness classifications, significantly increasing transport barriers and service delivery costs. The region has a median age of 43, well above the Queensland average, contributing to higher demand for wills and estates support, elder abuse prevention, and caregiving-related disputes. It also contains significant areas of entrenched disadvantage, with SEIFA data showing vulnerability across income, employment and housing stability.

Compounding these pressures, the region has experienced rising safety concerns. Queensland Police Service data shows a 30% increase in domestic and family violence breaches, a doubling of serious assaults, and escalating complexity in matters involving children. Meanwhile, ongoing population growth of approximately 2% per year continues to expand the number of people requiring legal assistance.

Despite these challenges, BCLS currently operates with one part-time coordinator and no paid solicitors, relying entirely on volunteer solicitors and law students. Whilst this speaks to the extraordinary dedication of our volunteers, the reality is clear: the current model is not sustainable. The combination of growing community need and chronic underfunding has undermined our ability to deliver.

Balancing the Scales

Balancing the Scales is BCLS’s most comprehensive funding submission to date. Its central purpose is to correct a long-standing structural inequity in Queensland’s Legal Assistance Services Funding (LASF) allocation and establish a sustainable funding base for the 2025–2030 LASF cycle.

BCLS currently receives \$279,000 per annum, the lowest funding allocation of any comparable CLC in Queensland. This amount is not proportionate to our catchment, service scope, or operational requirements. It is less than one-third of the average funding received by similar centres and significantly below what is required to meet statutory, ethical, and professional standards.

The submission seeks to secure a funding uplift that ensures the continuity of BCLS’s services, addresses the staffing deficit, and aligns our funding with sector norms.

The Problem

The submission identifies several interrelated problems that create an urgent need for funding uplift:

1. Chronic Underfunding

Comparative analysis within the submission shows that BCLS receives:

- The lowest LASF allocation among comparable centres
- The lowest per-capita funding (\$1.09 vs \$3.47 comparator average)
- Less than half the funding of centres serving smaller populations
- Up to ten times less than some centres with similar service offerings

No reasonable interpretation of population data, geography, or service breadth can justify this disparity.



FUTURE VIABILITY



Michael Stubbins
President



Hugh Bettinson
Secretary

2. Service Fragility

Without funding for solicitors, BCLS operates entirely on volunteer advice. This model, while commendable in the short term, is not viable. It exposes the service to operational disruption and increases risk associated with supervision, PII compliance, quality assurance, and continuity of legal practice.

3. Recruitment Challenges

BCLS has been unable to recruit a Principal Solicitor or staff solicitors because current funding does not allow for competitive remuneration. This further affects service continuity and limits our ability to meet growing demand.

4. Rising Community Need

Demographic shifts, increases in family violence, ageing communities, and cost-of-living pressures mean that more people require legal help now than at any time in the service's history. Without uplift, BCLS cannot keep pace.

Proposed Funding Model

The submission proposes two models:

1. The Survive Model – \$363,848 per annum.

This is the minimum uplift required to stabilise the service, comply with professional obligations, and prevent service collapse.

2. The Thrive Model – \$538,166.20 per annum.

This model represents a fair, sector-aligned funding level enabling BCLS to operate five days per week, recruit core staff, and provide services aligned with community expectations.

Even under the Thrive Model, BCLS remains funded below the comparator average.

Desired Outcomes

BCLS seeks to:

1. Restore equity in funding through adoption of the Thrive Model.
2. Recruit and retain qualified staff, including a Principal Solicitor, two part-time solicitors, and a full-time Coordinator.
3. Operate five days per week, consistent with sector standards.
4. Improve service continuity, including legal advice, mediation, and education.
5. Enhance outreach capacity, especially to island communities.
6. Reduce reliance on volunteers, ensuring quality and sustainability.
7. Deliver early-intervention and preventative programs, lowering long-term legal need in the region.

Balancing the Scales is not merely a request for additional funding—it is a declaration of what fairness, sustainability and genuine access to justice should look like for the Bayside region. The submission articulates a clear, evidence-driven case for why BCLS must be resourced at a level proportionate to its community, its responsibilities, and its impact. With uplift, BCLS can become the CLC the Bayside community deserves: stable, accessible, client-centred and future-focused.



Scan
to read
"Balancing the
Scales."



INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE



Hugh Bettinson
Secretary

At BCLS, our strength has always been listening to our community. This year, we took meaningful steps toward designing the Community Legal Centre of the Future, and we began that journey in the most important place: our clients. Through extensive review of our post-appointment client surveys, we gained invaluable insights into what our community wants. Clients consistently identified three priorities:

1. More ways to access legal advice
2. More efficient infrastructure to meet increasing demand
3. More accessible and safe office facilities

1. Expanding Access

Clients told us they want more access options beyond standard telephone appointments while retaining the connection and reassurance of face-to-face communication. In response, BCLS is launching virtual appointments in 2026. Virtual appointments combine the best of remote and in-person service delivery, and will particularly benefit clients with a disability, island community residents, elderly clients and shift workers.

To make this possible, with the support of the Queensland Government's Digital Capacity Grant of over \$50,000 and Bendigo Bank - Community Bank Wynnum Manly's contribution of nearly \$8,000, we invested in new desktop computers, portable touchscreen laptops, mobile devices, stronger networking infrastructure, and professional video conferencing equipment.



2. Smarter Systems

Clients have expressed a desire for faster turnaround times and more intuitive digital services. This year we implemented several innovations to meet and exceed those expectations.

We transitioned from CLASS to ActionStep, a modern cloud-based legal practice management system that delivers improved workflow management, real-time matter visibility, better reporting, and automated reminders. This change has significantly reduced the administrative burden and improved consistency across our processes.

We also implemented a new integrated digital intake system for legal advice, mediation, and education services. Clients can now quickly and easily tell us more about their legal issue before their appointment. The system automatically populates ActionStep with client details and matter information, saving time for volunteers and increasing accuracy. Communications such as booking confirmations and reminders are also being progressively automated.

In July 2025, we launched a new BCLS website, designed to be fast, modern, and user-friendly. Its highlight is our new Resource Centre, which offers searchable digital fact sheets and articles with integrated navigation. This upgrade was made possible through a \$20,000 grant from Queensland Gives, as part of implementing the infrastructure necessary to deliver our DV Form Clinic.



INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE



Hugh Bettinson
Secretary

3. Better Spaces

Clients have told us they want more appointments and safer, more comfortable spaces. In response, BCLS has launched the Service Renewal Program, a multi-year renovation of our premises designed to create a fit-for-purpose environment that balances privacy, accessibility, comfort, and increased capacity.

Stage 1, completed in July 2025, focused on technology upgrades that immediately increased our appointment capacity by 30 percent.

Stage 2, which began in October 2025, focuses on renewing our physical environment. Ageing office furniture has been replaced with modern, ergonomic, and disability-friendly alternatives, including height-adjustable desks, ergonomic chairs, and adjustable monitor arms. We also installed a dedicated conferencing space for client meetings and online education sessions. One of the most innovative improvements is the iPad Intake Station in our waiting room, which supports digital intake for in-person clients and frees up space in our solicitors' offices. We extend our sincere thanks to **Community Bank Wynnum Manly**, whose funding in this year's Community Grants Program made this infrastructure upgrade possible and contributed to the success of this renewal stage. By January 2026, Stage 2 will conclude with a fully renovated waiting room complete with new furniture, form-filling facilities, and digital signage displaying legal education resources.



Stage 3, commencing in mid-2026, will focus on improved acoustics and privacy. Soundproofing materials will be installed in our offices and conference areas, ensuring confidentiality for multiple simultaneous appointments. This stage will enhance safety and comfort for clients during sensitive appointments.

Stage 4, beginning in late 2026, will complete the transformation with an acoustic ceiling grid, updated lighting, and culturally significant artwork from a local First Nations artist. This final stage will further improve sound quality, visual comfort, and the cultural grounding of our service.

Once implemented, the Service Renewal Program will allow BCLS to confidently meet its goal of a 30% increase in appointment capacity, ensuring we can support more clients, more often, in a space more fit for purpose.

The Community Legal Centre of the Future is not defined by flashy facilities and modern equipment alone. It is a commitment to listening, adapting, and ensuring every person—regardless of background or circumstance—can access the legal support they need, when they need it most. By investing in technology, infrastructure, and client-centred service models, BCLS is building a truly accessible service that reflects not just the expectations of our clients today, but the needs of our community tomorrow.





THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS



As one of the lowest-funded Community Legal Centres in Queensland, we rely on the support of our community. We are incredibly grateful to the following supporters this year, who ensured we could continue providing advice and assistance to vulnerable and disadvantaged Baysiders:

Major Partners



Australian Government

The Australian Government have delivered the baseline funding our Services relies upon to deliver services to Baysiders under the National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP). We are very thankful for this arrangement, which ensures Baysiders maintain free access to legal advice, mediation and legal education.

The Queensland Government have delivered the baseline funding our Service relies upon as part of a reciprocal arrangement under the NAJP. They have additionally sponsored **\$50,000 of essential asset upgrades** to our practice management software, IT equipment and networking infrastructure.



Queensland Government



Queensland Gives have ensured we can deliver more legal assistance to our community. They have played an important role in sponsoring a DV Form Assistance Clinic, providing **\$20,000 in financial support**. This clinic will provide on-site assistance for survivors of domestic violence to complete Domestic Violence Order applications.

Bendigo Bank - Community Bank Wynnum Manly have played a pivotal role in sponsoring necessary computer and facilities upgrades, providing us with almost **\$13,000 in financial support**. These upgrades have increased our capacity, and enabled us to serve our clients in an environment that is fit-for-purpose.



Financial & In-Kind Supporters





side
Community
Service



HELPING YOU THROUGH THE LEGAL MAZE.

Legal Advice. Mediation. Legal Education.