



Impact report 2015-16



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9 November 2016

This report is intended to be a living document that will be adapted and grow as we better understand and develop our evaluation framework and processes. We welcome your feedback. If you have any comments, please write to us using the contact details listed below.



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About QPILCH

Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House (QPILCH) is an independent, not-for-profit, community-based legal organisation coordinating the provision of pro bono legal services for individuals and community groups in Queensland.

QPILCH is a partnership of law firms, barristers, the Queensland Law Society, the Bar Association of Queensland, Legal Aid Queensland, university law schools, accountancy firms and government and corporate legal units.

QPILCH is committed to working in flexible and innovative ways to improve access to justice for people who cannot afford to pay a private lawyer and who are ineligible for legal aid. We also assist community groups with public interest objectives.

QPILCH operates a civil law referral service and direct legal services for disadvantaged client groups and undertakes law reform, policy work and legal education.

Our vision

Our vision is for a just, fair & accessible legal system

Our objectives

Our key objectives are to:

1. provide appropriate, efficient and effective legal services
2. facilitate engagement of the legal profession and community services in pro bono work
3. undertake research and exercise a responsible influence to achieve systemic change.

Our services

QPILCH provides the following programs and services:

- Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic
- Refugee Civil Law Clinic
- LegalPod
- Mental Health Law Practice
- Referral Service
- Self Representation Service
 - Supreme Court of Queensland, including the Queensland Court of Appeal
 - Queensland District Court
 - Federal Court of Australia, including the Federal Circuit Court
 - Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (**QCAT**).

We are currently piloting three representation services:

- compulsory conferences in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (**QIRC**)
- enforcement hearings in the Magistrates Court
- child protection conferences in Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Introduction

QPILCH has a strong commitment to continuous improvement through timely and relevant evaluation. We measure the performance of our projects and programs to inform our approach so that we use the funds we receive responsibly, effectively and efficiently. We undertake regular evaluation, both internally through close monitoring of our performance and externally with the support of professional evaluators. This allows us to make evidence-based decisions on whether we are having the impact we expect, and to adapt and improve our services when necessary.

We strive to make a difference to the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable Queenslanders and to have a positive impact on Queensland communities. We are committed to operating openly, transparently and being fully accountable for the ways in which we use the funds we receive.

This is our first impact report and is based on 2015–16 data. We are currently reviewing our goals and improving our evaluation framework, which will be published in early 2017. Our next annual impact report for 2016–17 will be based on this new framework.

Methodology

This report measures our impact against each key objective for our five core specialist programs:

- Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic
- LegalPod
- Self Representation Service
- Mental Health Law Practice
- Pilot representation services.

Towards understanding and measuring our impact

QPILCH seeks to address a complex community problem: vulnerable and disadvantaged people have significant and complex legal problems which get worse if they are not addressed. We know that our services are more likely to be effective when we go to where vulnerable people go and provide the services they both want and need in a timely manner.

If we provide vulnerable and disadvantaged people with access to pro bono legal services, we know that the immediate impact is that the client is empowered and better informed, and the community is fairer. We also know that our pro bono legal services are cost-effective—they are provided by skilled and confident lawyers with the bulk of the work undertaken at no cost to the client. The modest cost to the taxpayer for the coordination of these services is returned many times by the contribution of the profession in providing the services pro bono.

QPILCH will measure our performance annually to determine if we are achieving our longer term outcomes and making a difference in our communities.

What we measure

For each program or service, we assess our performance against our objectives using the following information:

1. output data
2. outcome data
3. client information
4. engagement, communications and partnerships information
5. client stories
6. client and volunteer survey information
7. external evaluations.

1. Outputs

We collect an extensive amount of quantitative data that we analyse and report on a monthly basis to monitor caseload. Through our close examination of quantitative data, we have greater insight into demand, performance and trends. We collect output data for information services, referrals, legal advices, duty lawyer services, dispute resolution services and court, tribunal and other representation services. These are all measured against targets set at the start of each year.

2. Outcome data

As far as possible, we identify and report on the outcomes our clients achieve (without identifying individual clients).

3. Client profiles

We collect de-identified demographic information of our clients to inform our service delivery, program design and processes—we want to ensure that we are properly reaching and serving our clients. We also undertake research to contribute to our understanding of the needs of our clients. As an example, we identified a few years ago that a significant number of our clients used languages other than English at home. In response and to increase our accessibility, we obtained the *Browsealoud* software for our website. This software helps clients and potential clients to immediately translate or read aloud our web pages in English and a wide range of other languages.

4. Engagement, communication and partnerships

We collect data on client resources (as part of our commitment to community legal education) and stakeholder engagement activities. This information relates to how and where clients can access our services, how partnerships enhance the services we provide, best practice in community legal education and the effectiveness of our events.

5. Client stories

The stories our clients tell clearly demonstrate the outcomes they have obtained, how we have helped and the impact we have had.

6. Feedback from clients, volunteers and partners

Each QPILCH program seeks feedback from every client through tailored surveys. We also seek feedback from clients about our tools and resources, such as our website.

We conduct periodic surveys of clients about specific issues. For example, a periodic survey may help us understand better how the client's problem occurred, if they have experienced technical issues in their interactions with QPILCH or increase our understanding of the demographics of our clients.

We seek feedback from stakeholders, such as volunteers, caseworkers and community partners, about their satisfaction with our service partnerships and impact on their clients.

7. External evaluations

When needed and funds permit, we engage external specialists to conduct evaluations.

Note: All names in this report have been changed to protect the identity of our clients.

Our core programs

Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic

People experiencing homelessness and related forms of marginalisation are likely to have at least three new legal problems each yearⁱ and do not attend traditional legal services for legal help. Unaddressed legal problems perpetuate the disadvantage experienced by those most vulnerable in our community. By empowering clients to resolve their legal issues, the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic (HPLC) assists people experiencing hardship to break the cycle of disadvantage and build self-reliance.

What we do

The HPLC is located at community, welfare and health agencies where vulnerable people access essential services, including housing, social support and medical treatment. The HPLC currently operates at 18 outreach locations in Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns and Toowoomba. Pro bono lawyers attend these outreach legal clinics on a weekly or fortnightly basis and provide direct legal casework and representation to address each legal problem to its conclusion.

LegalPod

Each year, over 500 young people on turning 18 will transition from the Queensland child protection system into independence. At least 34% will experience homelessness in the first 12 monthsⁱⁱ. This often leads to chronic, long-term homelessness throughout their lifetime. QPILCH developed LegalPod to limit this negative lifelong impact for these vulnerable individuals through an early intervention approach before legal problems can escalate. These clients often experience multiple legal needs during an unstable transition, commonly relating to tenancy, debt, Centrelink and criminal law problems.

What we do

LegalPod involves small teams of pro bono law firm volunteers who connect to a young person exiting the child protection system. LegalPod provides assertive, personalised and consistent long-term legal assistance to vulnerable young people. In collaboration with non-legal youth support agencies, LegalPod completes a Legal Health Check with the young person to diagnose emerging legal needs and maintains a personalised connection with the client for up to four years.

Self Representation Service

People from a range of backgrounds may find themselves involved in litigation. Some may be unable to afford early legal advice or to engage a lawyer once a matter escalates. Most free legal services have limited resources to assist with the complexities of litigation. Equal access to the courts and tribunals is vital for the effective operation of our justice system, as these are the places where legal rights are ultimately adjudicated.

Representing a party in civil litigation on a pro bono basis can be costly and resource intensive, even for the largest of law firms. The Self Representation Service (SRS) was developed to enable firms to tailor their assistance for self-represented litigants using available resources. The SRS is an ideal vehicle to apply the skills and expertise of lawyers in limited scope services in the courts and tribunals.

What is not so well understood outside the court system and the legal profession is the cost to the system, and the community, in terms of disruption and delay, of the unrepresented litigant. If the work which the courts routinely leave to be done by lawyers is left in the hands of the litigants themselves, in most cases the work will either not be done at all, or it will be done slowly, wastefully, and ineffectively.

The Honourable Murray Gleeson, Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia

What we do

The SRS helps people involved in court or tribunal proceedings who cannot afford a lawyer and meets the QPILCH eligibility criteria to navigate complex processes throughout their proceedings or to identify and desist from unmeritorious cases. The SRS coordinates multiple appointments with skilled pro bono lawyers. QPILCH dedicates significant resources to assess applications, apply our eligibility criteria and tailor our response, brief volunteers, manage clients between appointments and refer people to other internal and external services when appropriate. Ongoing assistance is subject to means and merit tests.

Mental Health Law Practice

Many people with a mental illness are highly vulnerable and their mental illness can cause other difficulties with housing, income and decision-making. Accordingly, they accumulate multiple legal problems and have limited capacity to resolve them. Researchⁱⁱⁱ shows that people with a disability (of which 80% relate to mental illness) are twice as likely as those without a disability to experience legal problems, and these problems are often substantial. Disability status is often one of the strongest predictors of the prevalence of a legal problem, along with low odds of finalisation^{iv}.

What we do

The Mental Health Law Practice (MHLP) operates the following services to target people with mental health and legal problems to help them resolve their legal problems:

- Mental Health Review Tribunal Advocacy Service to assist with Involuntary Treatment Order (ITO) review hearings;
- General civil casework, such as debt, housing and guardianship, for people on ITOs or affected by mental health law;
- Mental Health Legal Clinic at Princess Alexandra Hospital Mental Health Unit to help clients with profound mental health problems;
- Mental Health Civil Law Clinics at Footprints and Open Minds Community Mental Health services to give holistic assistance to people in the community;
- Health Advocacy Legal Clinics at two Brisbane Hospitals: St Vincent's Hospital and Mater Young Adults Health Centre.

Pilot Representation Services

There are many vulnerable people who simply cannot adequately assist themselves if they cannot obtain legal representation. The QPILCH Representation Services are pilot services that commenced in April 2016. They were developed with extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders to target people in particularly stressful circumstances (specifically when faced with the execution of a debt), in workers' compensation appeals and child protection matters. We identified from our casework that legal representation at relevant stages of a proceeding can assist self-represented litigants to clarify or resolve issues in dispute, which is ultimately beneficial for all parties involved, including courts and tribunals.

What we do

Within the Self Representation Service (SRS), QPILCH operates three representation/duty lawyer services that assist:

- parents and carers in QCAT child protection compulsory conferences
- appellants in workers' compensation appeals in compulsory conferences in the QIRC
- debtors in enforcement hearings in the Brisbane Magistrates Court.

QPILCH engages pro bono barristers to provide one-off legal representation to clients at these critical stages. Clients of the QIRC service may also be offered a one-off one hour appointment with a skilled pro bono barrister or solicitor to help them prepare key documents for their appeal. Clients of the representation services remain self-represented for the majority of their proceedings.

Legal Health Check

The Legal Health Check (LHC) is a QPILCH innovation that is now being used by other legal and social services across Australia. The LHC is critical to the success of a number of our programs as it enables lawyers and social service caseworkers to identify all of the client's legal problems, not just the presenting problem. It is an essential tool when working with vulnerable people who often do not know that they have a legal problem and for non-lawyers who do not always recognise one. The LHC also supports closer cooperation and collaboration between lawyers and non-lawyers.

Training videos for community workers and many other Legal Health Check resources are now available on a dedicated website: www.legalhealthcheck.org.au

An independent evaluation of the LHC conducted in two phases by Encompass Family and Community Pty Ltd in 2016 found in phase one that, 'community workers and lawyers were in overall agreement that the current questions listed in the six domains of the new Basic LHC are worded well and effective in identifying and prioritising the legal needs of clients.'

The phase one evaluation also reported, 'where a LHC is physically completed by a community worker 3.66 legal issues per client are identified, whereas without completion an average of 1.47 issues is identified.'

The findings from the phase two evaluation included:

- the LHC training and referral processes increased the numbers of referrals of clients from the participating community services to the participating legal services
- community workers who completed the LHC with clients identified more types of legal issues than they might otherwise have been aware of, or thought of, as legal issues
- the LHC is relevant for vulnerable clients and aids communication with such clients in a non-threatening way
- the LHC collaboration enabled the paired services to have a better understanding of each other and therefore a better-integrated service for clients
- joint training of these participating community services and legal services enabled greater understanding and knowledge of each other's roles—this in turn enabled effective referrals that would not have occurred prior to the pilots.^v



Objective 1: To provide appropriate, efficient and effective legal services

Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Assist all homeless and at risk people who request our help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1515 new client files opened in 2015–16, representing a 235% increase from 2014–15 877 files closed after resolving clients' legal matters
Reduced homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 304 tenancy and housing matters resolved 15 clients avoided homelessness through our successful advocacy and representation in QCAT
Reduced debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 525 debt and fine matters resolved 58 debt and fine outcomes achieved Over \$601,800 in fine waivers in 2015–16, primarily in recognition of hardship
Increased community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 128 responses to criminal charges and justice system interactions
Improved wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander through 331 new client files Over \$136,800 in victim of crime compensation awarded in 2015–16

Did QPILCH provide appropriate services for homeless people and people at risk of homelessness?

The Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic (**HPLC**) delivers appropriate pro bono legal representation by tailoring our service delivery model to the circumstances of people experiencing homelessness and related vulnerabilities:

- we know that the homeless rarely seek out legal services so we have established our clinics where homeless people go for other services, such as food and shelter—we have 18 clinics located in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Townsville and Cairns
- we work collaboratively with the host services to ensure our services are 'joined up'—our clinics are well known across the homeless support and pro bono sectors
- the clinics are available on a weekly or fortnightly basis and we are connected by host agency caseworkers to their clients to ensure our services are timely
- we know that our clients can have multiple legal problems so we also target our legal services to sensitively address their needs—we use our Legal Health Check to ensure we can assist clients holistically in order to identify and address their legal problems and to break the cycle of homelessness and disadvantage.

Were our services effective?

In 2015–16, the HPLC opened 1515 new client files, helping these disadvantaged Queenslanders to become stronger by resolving their legal issues. By providing assistance with 304 tenancy and housing matters, we helped clients transition from homelessness into stable housing. We reduced our clients' debts by assisting with debt matters and obtaining approximately \$601,800 worth of waivers, which reduced financial stress for 525 vulnerable clients.

We helped our clients to appropriately engage with the community by responding to over 140 criminal charges. We obtained approximately \$136,800 worth of compensation from Victims Assist

Queensland, helping our clients to move forward and access mental and physical health treatments after being the victim of violent crimes.

An evaluation conducted by Encompass Family and Community Pty Ltd concluded:

Numerous examples of good client outcomes from accessing the HPLC and the RCLC were given by host agencies and in the case studies. These of course include many successful legal cases which would not have been possible without the HPLC and RCLC pro bono services provided by solicitors and barristers. Also important however are the personal outcomes and achievements for clients who may or may not have had a successful legal outcome. Clients are reportedly more positive about contact with lawyers and courts, more positive about seeking legal assistance, better informed about their legal rights and options, and having addressed legal issues that are directly or indirectly related to their homelessness, feel better and less distracted about moving forward generally. Many good outcome stories are available in the Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House Incorporated annual reports and HPLC newsletters, available from QPILCH's website.^{vi}

Our clients have confirmed that the assistance they received from HPLC was effective:

"Thank you kindly. Highly appreciate your effort and service. The \$20 per fortnight I can manage and I won't be bankrupt (thank god) by them taking anymore than I can cope with. Now I can continue a peaceful life and move on in a positive direction. So, thanks to you, I can get by."

Client thanking his HPLC pro bono lawyer for helping him to establish a payment plan

"I'd like to thank you both for all your hard work in achieving this outcome for her. It will have such a significant impact on her mental health and the financial situation of the whole family."

Caseworker expressing gratitude for a debt waiver obtained by HPLC pro bono lawyers

"I just wanted to offer you a massive thank you in assisting me with my chronology and compensation claim. I would not have made it this far without your assistance. Thank you for all your hard work along the way and for your support."

Client thanking her HPLC pro bono lawyers for assistance with a Victims Assist claim



The following HPLC client stories demonstrate the practical value in addressing the legal needs of people experiencing homelessness and related forms of disadvantage:

Belinda and her children avoid eviction into homelessness

When Belinda first attended the HPLC, she was struggling to pay numerous debts and unpaid fines totaling around \$47,000. Through urgent negotiations, HPLC pro bono lawyers arranged manageable payment plans and prevented the repossession of Belinda's car. The HPLC also drafted urgent, detailed submissions to QCAT in relation to Belinda's residential tenancy dispute, securing a positive outcome that avoided her eviction into homelessness. Belinda is now able to focus on the wellbeing of her children and reconcile her family's financial position.

Debt waivers help Peter break the cycle of disadvantage

When Peter first met with pro bono lawyers at the HPLC, he was facing recovery proceedings for significant debts of over \$40,000. After the breakdown of his relationship and loss of his small business, Peter had fallen into a chronic cycle of homelessness and incarceration. The volunteer lawyers obtained pro bono tax assistance from a specialist accountancy firm and through substantive negotiations, achieved a withdrawal of prosecution regarding Peter's debts on 'public interest' grounds.

Jason helped to navigate the criminal justice system and reconnect

Jason is a 33 year-old Aboriginal man from Far North Queensland. When Jason first came to the HPLC, he had been chronically homeless and 'sleeping rough' for a number of years. During his adult life, Jason had struggled with personal hardship and health concerns, and found it challenging to positively engage with crisis or community support services. Jason completed the Legal Health Check with his support worker at a specialist homelessness agency in Cairns and identified that he wanted legal help to resolve his State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) debt of over \$17,600. Over the years, Jason had been fined over 100 times for minor criminal offences, mostly connected to his homelessness (such as public nuisance). The HPLC helped Jason to successfully apply for a Fine Option Order to work off the majority of his SPER debt through community service at a local homelessness agency and arranged a manageable payment plan for the remainder of the debt.

Legal advocacy assists Georgia to rebuild after escaping domestic violence

Georgia was a single mother who had recently escaped domestic and family violence and faced significant medical issues after being forced into homelessness. The Public Trustee was appointed to manage her affairs after she had a mental health episode. With the help of detailed submissions from the HPLC's pro bono lawyers, Georgia had the Public Trustee's appointment revoked, letting her move forward with her life and focus on the wellbeing of herself and her child.

Were our services provided efficiently?

The HPLC is operated by a small team of staff in Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville and Toowoomba who support, resource and supervise over 500 pro bono volunteer lawyers from 28 partner firms. To make best use of our capacity, HPLC staff also partner closely with over 30 community agencies, including providing on-going, specialist training in relation to legal needs. The HPLC's collaborative outreach model also maximises our resources, particularly by achieving holistic, long-term outcomes for vulnerable people and improving access to justice within the broader community.

LegalPod

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Assist transitioning young people who seek help	<ul style="list-style-type: none">69 new client files opened in 2015–16, representing a 15% increase from 2014–15
Reduced homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">6 tenancy and housing matters
Reduced debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">13 debt and fine mattersOver \$10,000 in waivers
Increased community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Around 20 responses to criminal charges and justice system interactions
Improved wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assisted several clients to access government records from their time in care and obtained over \$15,000 in victim of crime compensation

Did we provide appropriate services for young people transitioning from State care?

By targeting a key transition point in the life of a young person who has been in State care, we can reduce their chance of experiencing homelessness, particularly if it is likely to be as a result of unaddressed legal problems. We coordinate and train a pod of lawyers to be sensitive to the legal needs of vulnerable young people. They meet the client where the client feels comfortable, such as a coffee shop or park, rather than a city office—this promotes an appropriate means of service delivery.

“The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.” So said Dietrich Bonhoeffer but many public figures over hundreds of years from Dr Johnson to Mahatma Ghandi have made similar observations. The latest is the now former Democrat presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders. We must hope that those who examine such things look to QPILCH and not to the State to see how moral we are in Queensland.”

The Honourable Margaret White AO, Chair of the LegalPod Reference Group

We do not have 2015-16 client survey data for LegalPod. From 2016–17, we are surveying LegalPod clients, so this data will be available in our next impact report.

Were our services effective?

Importantly, none of the clients who have been assisted by LegalPod to date have become homeless and many have had legal problems addressed to ensure their stability. This is a significant indicator of the effectiveness of LegalPod.

In 2014–15, we commissioned an independent evaluation of LegalPod by Encompass Family and Community Pty Ltd. The evaluation identified a number of strengths of the project, including:

- stakeholders viewed the overall coordination provided by the project team as effective
- the lawyers interviewed viewed the guidance and supervision provided by the project team for legal casework as effective
- the Legal Health Check is a key strength of the project

- the legal assistance provided to young people has been of a high quality
- caseworkers found the promotional postcard useful for young people interested in accessing the service.

However, the evaluation also recommended a number of issues for future consideration, which we are currently addressing.

Our clients have directly confirmed that the assistance they received from LegalPod was effective:

"[In]...the eyes of the community I was a drop kick that wouldn't make it in life but thanks to the support and belief provided by QPILCH I was able to confidently make a change in my lifestyle and change my ways. This would've been impossible if it wasn't for the awesome eye openers I was shown...none of what [I] accomplished would have been possible without LegalPod and QPILCH guiding [me] through the entire journey so thank you."

Feedback from a young person about their experience with LegalPod

"During the period that LegalPod has been engaged with [client], we have observed a definite shift from crisis driven responses to early intervention and future planning work. This has been a very positive transition."

Youth worker feedback about a vulnerable client supported by LegalPod

The following LegalPod client story demonstrates the practical value in addressing the legal needs of vulnerable young people:

Effective legal support helps Bobby's transition to independence

Bobby was first connected with LegalPod in 2014 by her disability support worker. When Bobby first met with the volunteer lawyers, she was homeless and had a number of outstanding debts, fines and criminal charges. Bobby's LegalPod was able to negotiate with her payday lenders to arrange manageable payment plans, give Bobby practical advice about her criminal appearances and brief the duty lawyer. Through the help of LegalPod, one of the charges was dropped and the terms of her DVO were modified allowing Bobby to reconnect with her family without the threat of criminal sanction. After assisting with Bobby's immediate legal issues, her LegalPod was able to assist her to access her records from Child Safety which meant that Bobby could apply for adequate funding from Disability Support Services Queensland for ongoing support. Bobby recently gave birth to her first daughter. During her pregnancy, LegalPod assisted Bobby with her engagement with Child Safety so that her daughter was not removed from her care. Bobby's LegalPod will continue to provide assistance for the duration of her transition to independence.

Were our services provided efficiently?

With temporary funding, LegalPod is supported by one lawyer who works three days per week and one administrative assistant who works two days per week to coordinate the operation of the pods, including training pod lawyers, settling and facilitating correspondence and following up and supervising legal work. At the cost of \$70,000 per year for the coordination of this service and the provision of pro bono services, legal problems are efficiently addressed and forestalled and young people are prevented from slipping into homelessness, saving other service costs.

Self Representation Service

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Help all self-represented litigants (SRLs) who are eligible for our help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 650 SRLs assessed ▪ 592 SRLs assisted ▪ 58 SRLs referred elsewhere for assistance ▪ 924 appointments
Informed choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 108 clients informed us of positive resolutions (favourable court decisions and negotiated outcomes) ▪ 78 diversions out of 90 clients advised to not proceed ▪ 27 referrals to mediation panel ▪ 13 referrals to external lawyers and counsel for full representation
Improved participation and confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 86% of clients said our help improved their participation in the litigation process ▪ 78% of clients were satisfied with the assistance provided.

Did we provide appropriate services for representing themselves in courts and tribunals?

The Self Representation Service (SRS) delivers appropriate pro bono legal representation by tailoring our service delivery model to the circumstances of self-represented parties across Queensland:

- our services are located at the courts and tribunals in Brisbane and Townsville
- our services are available by telephone and email for people involved in proceedings who cannot attend our offices in person (21 per cent of our SRS clients in 2015–16 lived outside South East Queensland and we conducted 142 appointments by telephone)
- our staff and volunteers are trained to advise clients of the difficulties of their case using plain English—out of 90 clients advised on the difficulties of their case, 78 clients were diverted from the court system, reducing the costs and stress for clients and the other party and alleviating some pressure on court resources
- if clients have sufficient funds to afford a lawyer, they are encouraged to seek private legal assistance or in some cases given one appointment to help triage their legal problem—78 per cent of our SRS clients in 2015–16 earned less than \$52K per year
- thirty eight per cent of our clients were referred to the SRS from the courts and tribunals themselves, recognising the appropriateness of our services to the courts and tribunals
- taxpayers are saved on average of \$372,176 in court operating costs for every financial year in which QPILCH operates in the Federal Courts^{vii}.

Were our services effective?

During the 2015–16 financial year, QPILCH provided assistance to 592 clients with a range of legal steps throughout their litigation. Many of these clients were helped to resolve their legal problem or were assisted to more easily navigate complex procedures. QPILCH staff members and volunteers provided timely assistance so that clients met court deadlines, understood court procedures, drafted appropriate pleadings and attended to court orders.

Our staff and volunteers are trained to provide practical discrete assistance for each stage in the proceedings when clients need that assistance. If clients need a pleading or other document prepared, they will leave the office with a completed document or a draft showing how to complete it and are given a factsheet that reiterates the face-to-face advice. Eighty six per cent of clients reported that their participation in the litigation process was improved by QPILCH. Seventy eight per cent of clients who provided feedback were satisfied with our help, regardless of the outcome of their legal matter.

Our services are also shown to be effective by the confidence we receive from the courts and tribunals.

“The appellant filed an application seeking leave to amend the statement of claim on 10 December 2014, and it was first before the court on 7 January 2015. On that occasion, the appellant, who was unrepresented, had not filed any affidavit exhibiting the proposed amendments, but handed up a draft to the court. The applications judge noted that there was a proposed amendment which alleged aggravation of pre-existing injuries, with consequences for the appellant’s earning of income as a golf professional. It was necessary, his Honour observed, that the intended amendments be made clear. An adjournment was granted on the basis that the appellant would seek assistance from QPILCH for the formulation of his amendment.”
Edwards v Romaguera [2016] QCA 16 at [3] per Holmes CJ.

“[The Self Representation Service in the Court of Appeal] is viewed by other Australian jurisdictions as a model to be emulated. It assists not only the litigants, but also appeals registry and court staff, the judges and, indirectly, the broader community. It gives the Court of Appeal judges great comfort to know that the SRSCA allows self-represented civil litigants the opportunity to obtain considered legal advice. The SRSCA is playing a critical role in ensuring access to civil justice for vulnerable Queenslanders. “

The Honourable Justice Margaret McMurdo AC, President of the Queensland Court of Appeal at the launch of the Civil Justice Fund, 18 March 2015.

“I record the court’s gratitude to... the dedicated staff and volunteers of QPILCH whose commitment to assisting individuals who find themselves caught up in the difficulties and uncertainties of litigation with the assistance they have rendered to litigants and to the court. They embody what is best in the legal profession in terms of dedication to justice.”

Keane CJ (as he then was) Ceremonial Sitting to Farewell the Chief Justice, 28 February 2013

“At the court’s request, the Public Trustee provided Shane Drabsch with information about pro bono legal assistance provided by the Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House Incorporated (—QPILCH) to self-represented litigants. This service is known as the Self-Representation Service (Courts) and helps self-represented parties to prepare their case for civil litigation in the Supreme Court (both Trial Division and Court of Appeal) as well as in other courts and tribunals. This valuable service is independent of the courts and government and helps litigants without legal representation to take the practical steps necessary to have their case fully heard and determined. By providing free legal advice, the service also assists those whose claim or defence is likely to be successful to prepare for trial or alternate dispute resolution and those whose claim or defence is unlikely to be successful to understand that continuing the proceeding may not be in their interests.

Drabsch v The Public Trustee of Queensland [2012] QSC 217 at [15] per Atkinson J

It is noteworthy that litigation is inherently risky and litigants given the best legal advice can still lose their case for a variety of reasons. While clients may not obtain the legal outcome they want, the legal outcome does not in and of itself reflect on the effectiveness of the legal assistance provided—the involvement of QPILCH is not a guarantee to win, it is simply a way of strengthening our clients’ ability to make informed choices and to be best prepared through the provision of timely pro bono legal advice.

Our clients have confirmed that the assistance they received from the Self Representation Service is effective:

“Extremely happy with all the valuable help I received. Fantastic service. Without QPILCH I could never have represented myself. And a wrong has now been righted, so I feel vindicated, which is the best thing of all. Thank you so much!”

Federal court client

“I am a self-representing litigant and I have had the opportunity to have the assistance of QPILCH’s Self Representation Service in a commercial litigation which started in 2014. This case had a very big impact on our family and it was complicated. I can only give very positive feedback on all the support and help that I have received during these two years. Without the help of QPILCH, I would not have been able to go to Court. I can say that all the persons who I

have met at QPILCH have been very supportive and helpful. I am very grateful to all the volunteer solicitors who have helped me in regard to the preparation of all the legal documents, the advice on the proceedings.”

State Courts client

“I felt that the people I dealt with were very professional and courteous at all times. I felt that they cared about my issue and were tolerant when I felt confused, stressed and made it easier for me to deal with my difficult situation.”

QCAT client



The following stories demonstrate the practical value of the Self Representation Service:

Veteran fights unfair pension decision

Matthew was a former defence force member diagnosed with severe depression. Matthew approached the Service for assistance to appeal an Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) decision to the Federal Court of Australia (FCA). The AAT had affirmed a decision of the Repatriation Commission to refuse Matthew a pension under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1966* (Cth). Volunteers gave Matthew advice about amending his notice of appeal. The FCA set aside the AAT decision and noted in its judgment how the SRS assisted Matthew to achieve a favourable outcome. The Repatriation Commission has now granted Matthew his pension.

Collective impact of volunteer lawyers settles indigenous woman's wages dispute

Stephanie was an Indigenous woman who approached the Service for assistance to pursue her former employer in the Federal Circuit Court for contravention of the general protection provisions under the *Fair Work Act 2009*. Over three appointments, volunteers assisted Stephanie to draft her initiating documents, provided her with advice about serving her documents and attending her first court date and helped her to start work on her affidavits. Stephanie then received an offer from her former employer to settle proceedings outside of court and volunteers helped her to consider this offer and request changes to a settlement deed. Stephanie was successful in negotiating an out of court settlement to her liking and was able to resolve her legal matter without the need for a final court hearing.

Non-English speaking woman recovers deposit from a dodgy builder

Jenny was an Eritrean woman who spoke little English. She had entered into a contract with an unlicensed builder and paid a deposit for the construction of a fence at her house. The builder demolished the existing fence but refused to build a new fence unless Jenny agreed to also build a retaining wall. The builder abandoned the job after Jenny refused to build the retaining wall. Volunteers assisted Jenny to prepare an application and the supporting affidavit to QCAT and advised her of the filing and service requirements. QCAT recently ordered the builder to refund the deposit paid by Jenny. Jenny was extremely grateful for the support and assistance she received.

A simple act creating an enormous problem solved

Patrick, a retiree and internet enthusiast, applied to QPILCH for assistance to defend District Court proceedings brought against him after an electric appliance he bought and then re-sold on a popular website apparently caused a fire, destroying the ultimate buyer's rented home. Patrick approached the SRS for assistance shortly before his trial was initially listed as he could no longer afford to fund his own representation. Volunteers helped Patrick to respond to a Notice to Admit Facts, helped him to successfully apply for an adjournment of the trial, to finalise his defence for further proceedings brought by the buyer's landlord and helped him prepare for his two day trial. The District Court rejected the plaintiff's argument that Patrick (as opposed to the importer) was liable for the damage to the plaintiff's property, finding that Patrick's activities were not conducted in the course of a business and that he did not owe a duty of care to the plaintiff.

Were our services provided efficiently?

In 2015–16, 78 clients were diverted from the courts system, representing enormous savings for the clients themselves, the other parties and the courts and tribunals.

In addition, as pro bono lawyers provide the bulk of assistance, the private profession's contribution represents an enormous return on the investment made by government for the coordination of the Self Representation Service.

An external evaluation of the Federal Court SRS conducted by BDO in 2015 found:

"Based on the above data and assumptions, the SRS avoids court operating costs of \$372,176 per year...This equates to a benefit-cost ratio of 2.1."^{viii}

Mental Health Law Practice

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Help all clients who present for assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">277 clients represented105 clients supported by advocates at review hearings
Improved participation and confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">25% of clients completed client survey98% client satisfaction with service98% clients felt service assisted to have voice heard at Tribunal hearing
Accessible legal processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">277 with mental illness/under mental health act assisted105 supported Tribunal hearings (unlikely to have had legal representative otherwise)

Did we provide appropriate services for people experiencing mental illness?

UK research^{ix} shows that:

- for people who had at least six legal problems, over 60 per cent had a mental illness
- people with a mental illness were especially likely to report stress-related ill health as a result of their legal problems and concluded that legal problems not only are associated with mental illness, but also can cause and exacerbate mental illness
- people with a mental illness were overrepresented among those who lacked legal knowledge, failed to obtain advice and suffered adverse consequences.

For these reasons, unlike any other mental health legal service in Queensland, QPILCH provides holistic legal services, seeking to address all the legal problems a client has, not just the presenting problem. To ensure all legal problems are identified, volunteers and staff members implement the Legal Health Check whenever possible (we currently do not have data on the number of times the LHC is used).

Clients report a very high satisfaction with this service: 91% of clients indicated that they felt more involved in the hearing process as a result of the service and 93% indicated that the service assisted them to understand the hearing process.

We believe, but cannot yet measure, that we reduce vulnerability for people with a mental illness. Access to pro bono legal services is particularly beneficial for clients in locked wards, hence our focus on patients in the Princess Alexandra Hospital Mental Health Unit.

Were our services effective?

Feedback from our clients shows that our Mental Health Law Practice (MHLP) is highly effective. Our clients became stronger with 98% reporting that their participation in the legal process had improved and 98% of clients were satisfied with our help, regardless of the outcome of their matter.

Our clients have confirmed that this assistance was effective:

"The service helped me understand my rights. It's not nice being locked in hospital and not knowing what rights you have."

Client

"The advocacy service helped us with the legal jargon, to know who would be present at the hearing and how it would be run. [The advocate] led the way. We felt more confident and it was less scary. It definitely helped us understand the hearing process."

Client

"At the moment, being in prison, I have extremely limited access to information. Without the service, I wouldn't have been able to address the legal criteria or known how to request a statement containing the Tribunal's decision."

Client

"I was able to present very well because I had someone beside me who was a professional and who knew the law. If I hadn't had someone with me who understood the law I would still be on an ITO."

Client

"I was very upset before calling you guys and then I calmed down and felt more confident. It was a great help."

Client

"The assistance had a positive impact on my wellbeing because there were many positive results, the debt was decreased and it made it a lot easier financially."

Client



The following stories demonstrate the practical value of the MHLP:

Young woman assisted to get back on her feet after hospital admission

Lilly was placed on an Involuntary Treatment Order (ITO) in early 2016, with a diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder. She asked for help through our Princess Alexandra Hospital outreach clinic with a number of debts (totalling \$22,000) that she had incurred while she was unwell. Lilly's Centrelink payment was being garnished to pay off her debts and she couldn't leave hospital because she didn't have enough money to pay rent. She was at risk of homelessness and medical staff believed that due to her mental illness, Lilly had experienced significantly impaired capacity for an extended period of time. On behalf of Lilly, the MHLP obtained supporting documentation from health workers and made hardship applications to her lenders. The MHLP was able to secure a full debt waiver of \$10,500 for one debt and \$9,450 for another, organised affordable payment plans and moratoriums for others. We are still in the process of liaising with one lender to negotiate either a full or partial waiver or an instalment plan. With the help of MHLP and her support worker, Lilly has been able to focus on her health, find affordable accommodation and gain casual employment.

Woman and her young children assisted to safe and secure housing

When Susan first met with QPILCH lawyers at the Footprints clinic, she had recently been released from hospital and was experiencing ongoing mental health concerns. Susan was also suffering physical abuse and threats from her neighbours—she feared for the safety of herself and her two young children. Through substantive submissions and legal advocacy, QPILCH volunteer lawyers successfully negotiated with the government to secure a 'very high needs' public housing transfer for Susan. This outcome has enabled Susan and her children to escape their violent neighbours, providing them with safe housing to help stabilise their lives.

Impact of advocacy on basic human rights

Max had previously worked in an executive role at a large oil and gas company and often travelled overseas for work. There were a number of stressors in Max's life which contributed to a breakdown. He was subsequently diagnosed with schizophrenia and placed on an ITO. He lost his job and there was a family breakdown. He knew he needed to look after his health and did not believe he needed the restrictions of involuntary treatment. The Mental Health Review Tribunal referred Max to the MHLP after a number of adjournments. Max had letters from his doctor that were supportive of his ability to manage his health voluntarily. The MHLP submitted these to the Tribunal in advance of the hearing along with written submissions that we had worked with Max to prepare to prevent a further adjournment. We also arranged an advocate to assist Max at the hearing. The Tribunal revoked the ITO. Max was extremely grateful to the MHLP for assisting him and he said that that it was a, "really good service, very helpful. They put together a good case, it was really well done."

Were our services provided efficiently?

We provide full representation in other areas of law (unfair debts, tenancy) for people with a mental illness and connect clients with other services where a specialist service exists. Our pro bono lawyers and students attend health settings and participate in our outreach clinics to ensure that the most vulnerable in our community can access our services.

In 2015–16, 277 vulnerable clients with mental illness who could not afford a lawyer and needed help were represented through the MHLP. Advocates provided almost 1,000 hours of pro bono assistance by preparing and attending at Involuntary Treatment Order (ITO) reviews. Pro bono lawyers attended 108 clinic appointments.

Our services were provided efficiently as we facilitated pro bono assistance and travelled to meet the clients in appropriate places. Our assistance through the MHLP for these clients contributes to a reduction of health costs to the taxpayer (for example, assisting people that are well enough to be discharged from mental health facilities). We believe, but cannot yet demonstrate, that our services can reduce community health costs and intend to report on this impact in our next report.

We continue to seek efficiencies in our programs and services. We have identified an efficiency gain for the MHLP and are in the process of developing guides to help people plan for significant life events and to assist people at Involuntary Treatment Order reviews when a legal representative is unavailable.

Representation services

Our performance*

Outcome	Results
Help all eligible self represented litigants (SRLs) who seek our help	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 23 SRLs assessed▪ 18 SRLs represented in alternate dispute resolution or duty lawyer services▪ 3 appellants assisted in the QIRC
Informed choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 3 appointments with volunteer solicitors for further advice
Improved participation and confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 100% general client satisfaction▪ 100% client satisfaction with quality of information we provided
Positive outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 18 debtors assisted▪ 20 duty lawyer services provided▪ 5 negotiated payment plans▪ 18 adjournments for client to comply with court orders▪ 15 assisted to complete statement of financial position▪ 9 negotiations with creditor▪ 8 arrest warrant discharged

*Data for this service is limited because it commenced in April 2016.

Did we provide appropriate representation services for disadvantaged people?

Our services target people in these stressful circumstances where they attend the court or tribunals for a compulsory conference or hearing. We achieved 100 per cent general client satisfaction and 100 per cent client satisfaction with the quality of information we provided—these outstanding results demonstrate that our services are highly appropriate.

Were our services effective?

In the QIRC, all clients represented by a barrister were assisted in having the issues in dispute and evidence required clarified at a compulsory conference. Additional time was granted to allow for further evidence to be obtained. All clients who attended an appointment with a solicitor were assisted in preparing the document required in their proceedings. All clients were provided with advice about the requirement for proving an entitlement to workers' compensation and what to expect in their appeal proceedings going forward.

In the duty lawyer service at the Brisbane Magistrates Court, five clients reached a settlement agreement with the creditor, following advice from the pro bono barrister. All clients were given advice about the enforcement hearing process and granted an adjournment of the enforcement hearing to allow them time to properly comply with court orders or to pay the debt. Our services were rated as highly effective with 100 per cent of clients who responded to our survey indicated that they were satisfied with our help.

Were our services provided efficiently?

These services are provided by barristers on a pro bono basis, representing a very positive return on the investment made by government for the coordination of these services.



Objective 2: To facilitate engagement of the legal profession and community services in pro bono work

Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Skilled pro bono lawyers help vulnerable clients navigate legal processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 28 law firms partnering with HPLC ▪ Around 500 lawyers providing pro bono legal assistance ▪ Over \$4.8 million worth of pro bono services and support and over 13,000 hours ▪ 17 induction and Continuing Legal Education (CLE) sessions attended by more than 400 pro bono lawyers
Front-line workers trained and supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 70 attendees at our annual Caseworker Training Day ▪ 13 in-house training sessions attended by around 300 community workers
Develop and support law students volunteer and clinical opportunities to train the next generation of lawyers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 students trained through the HPLC clinical legal education partnership with the University of Queensland

Were our partnerships appropriate and effective?

Our community is fairer because we support pro bono lawyers to use their professional skills to help vulnerable clients resolve their complex, multiple legal issues. In 2015–16, 28 law firms partnered with the HPLC, delivering over 13,000 hours and more than \$4.7 million worth of pro bono legal services and support to people experiencing chronic disadvantage. Through 17 continuing legal education (CLE) and induction sessions, we trained volunteer lawyers in practical legal advocacy, key areas of law and cultural competencies that relate to the legal needs and circumstances of our clients.

We trained and supported frontline community workers to identify legal issues and make appropriate referrals. In 2015–16, we trained around 70 support workers at our annual Caseworker Training Day and facilitated 13 in-house training sessions which were attended by around 300 support workers. We also continued to develop our Legal Health Check, which is used by legal centres across Australia and maintained its online presence. The Legal Health Check website received over 500 hits each month during 2015–16.

The evaluation of the HPLC conducted by Encompass Family and Community Pty Ltd found:

The HPLC and RCLC have been established and operate consistent with factors identified in research about outreach legal services to homeless and other marginalised people. Feedback through the evaluation about the HPLC and the RCLC was very positive. While there are similarities and differences in the way that the model operates at each agency, there is a tight fit with host agencies' service models and visions. A good working relationship between the clinics and host agencies was identified. Notwithstanding that some host agencies operate drop-in services (i.e. not case management models), service users are assisted to identify legal issues, seek legal assistance through an outreach clinic integrated with other host agency services, and have access to non-legal supports over the legal journey. The evaluation found that the legal assistance is accessible to the target group and that quality services are provided by the volunteer lawyers. While 17.4% of 2009/10 HPLC cases were closed because of difficulties with keeping in contact with clients, feedback was positive about the volunteer lawyers persistently engaging with this hard-to-reach population.

However, the evaluation also identified some room for improvement:

The evaluation identified some areas requiring attention. A core issue relates to a shared understanding by host agencies and volunteer lawyers about the nature and scope of the areas of law for which assistance is available through the HPLC and the RCLC, and the nature of the legal assistance provided. As host agencies view the clinic as part of their overall service, they value volunteer lawyers interacting with staff and service users while at the clinic and taking up other opportunities to be involved in their agency.^x

LegalPod

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Skilled pro bono lawyers help vulnerable clients navigate legal processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 11 law firms involved in LegalPod ▪ Over 100 lawyers providing pro bono legal assistance ▪ 9 new pods established in 2015-16 ▪ 17 induction and CLE sessions ▪ Over \$430,000 worth of pro bono services and support contribution and 1125 hours
Front-line workers trained and supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 70 attendees at our most recent Caseworker Training Day ▪ 2 in-house training sessions attended by approximately 30 support workers

Were our partnerships appropriate and effective?

We increased the number of legal firms and pods during 2015–16 and delivered training to the volunteer lawyers. We also trained support workers in welfare organisations to refer clients to the service. The training increased the capability of our volunteers to address the sensitive issues involved in dealing with this young cohort. We will monitor and evaluate our partnerships and report further in our next annual impact report.

Self Representation Service

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Skilled pro bono lawyers and barristers help vulnerable clients navigate legal processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 25 firms providing skilled and confident practitioners ▪ 8 training sessions to volunteers ▪ 160 volunteer lawyers trained ▪ 4,000 hours of pro bono contribution ▪ 100% volunteer lawyer satisfaction ▪ 27 barristers on representation panels ▪ 13 external referrals to full legal representation ▪ 25 mediators on mediation panels ▪ 2 information sessions to registry staff at courts and tribunals
Inspiring future pro bono lawyers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 student clinic with 8 students attending ▪ 100% student satisfaction ▪ 10 student volunteering positions

Were our partnerships appropriate and effective?

QPILCH supports pro bono lawyers to use their skills for vulnerable people. Lawyers from 25 law firms and 27 barristers volunteered with the Self Representation Service and 160 volunteers received QPILCH skills training in 2016. Our training is designed to educate the legal profession

about challenges faced by self represented litigants and best practice strategies to assist vulnerable clients with complex needs. One hundred per cent of our volunteers were satisfied with their participation.

QPILCH also worked closely with the courts and tribunals and welfare organisations such as the Court network for Humanity to ensure effective service delivery. We maintained strong connections with Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to supervise the Litigation Clinic, which received 100 per cent satisfaction rating from students and positive commendations from QUT.

Mental Health Law Practice

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Skilled pro bono lawyers help vulnerable clients navigate legal processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 law firms providing 70 skilled and confident practitioners ▪ 1,000 hours of pro bono contribution ▪ 30 new lawyers trained ▪ 100% volunteer lawyer satisfaction
Inspiring future pro bono lawyers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 35 new student advocates trained ▪ 4 student clinics, every 6 months ▪ 100% volunteer student satisfaction

Were our partnerships appropriate and effective?

QPILCH supports pro bono lawyers and students to use their skills for vulnerable people. Seventy lawyers from two law firms received QPILCH skills training in 2015–16. Thirty five new advocates were trained and were provided with ongoing professional development by our staff.

We maintained close links with the Mental Health Review Tribunal. We also worked closely with the Mental Health Legal Service at QAI (the only other service dedicated to Tribunal representation) to ensure we reach as many vulnerable people as we can and to avoid duplication.

Pilot Representation services

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Skilled pro bono lawyers help vulnerable clients navigate legal processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 17 barristers on QIRC conference panel ▪ 30 barristers on enforcement hearing roster ▪ 10 barristers on QCAT child protection service roster ▪ 15 barristers trained ▪ 7 law student volunteers
Positive relationships with court and tribunal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20% referral from QIRC

Were our partnerships appropriate and effective?

QPILCH worked closely with the QIRC, the Chief Magistrate, the Magistrates Court registry, the QCAT Registry and the Bar Association of Queensland in establishing these services—all are highly supportive and complimentary of our services. Further data will be gathered and reported on in the next annual impact report.

Objective 3: To undertake research and exercise a responsible influence to achieve systemic change

Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Community and government agencies more responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key policy focus areas, including homelessness, tenancy listings, State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) fines and our clients' criminal justice system interactions ▪ Appearance at parliamentary committee hearing regarding improved tenancy database laws and regulations ▪ 4 submissions about our key policy areas including proposed changes to tenancy databases, SPER's Work and Development Orders, the re-instatement of the Special Circumstances Court and the Inquiry into a Human Rights Act for Queensland ▪ 8 articles to four publications including Proctor and Parity ▪ Consulted through nine stakeholder working groups, including '500 Lives 500 Homes', SPER Stakeholder Working Group, Research Partnership Roundtable, Regional Legal Assistance Forum (Cairns and Townsville), QIRC, Australian Securities and Investment Commission, Residential Tenancies Authority and QCAT Child Related Stakeholder Forum

Were our research and policy development activities timely, practical and effective?

The HPLC advocates for systemic changes to laws which impact on marginalised people. Through evidence-based, legal research initiatives, we campaigned for policy reform regarding database listing rights for tenants, increased options for disadvantaged community members to resolve State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) debts and the introduction of the Queensland Integrated Court Referrals scheme. We also appeared at parliamentary committee hearings on key law reform proposals, made submissions in our research focus areas and consulted in stakeholder working groups, such as '500 Lives, 500 Homes' (a community strategy to address homelessness in South East Queensland).

We also piloted new and innovative forms of service delivery, including a tailored HPLC at an Indigenous health service in Far North Queensland and a phone-based model, which uses the Legal Health Check to connect vulnerable clients from four community agencies in outer Brisbane to HPLC pro bono lawyers.

LegalPod

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Community and government agencies more responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key policy focus areas, including child protection, SPER fines and our clients' criminal justice system interactions ▪ Consulted through stakeholder working groups including G-Force and QCAT Child Related Stakeholder Forum

Were our research and policy development activities timely, practical and effective?

LegalPod undertakes systematic research and policy initiatives, seeking to change laws which impact on vulnerable young people transitioning from State care to independence in Queensland. We were consulted in stakeholder working groups, including G-Force and the QCAT Child Related Stakeholder Forum.

In 2016, we held a Public Interest Address to build awareness of the risk of homelessness if transition from State care is not properly managed. The speakers included the CEO of the Create Foundation and The Honourable Margaret White, former Judge of Appeal.

Self Representation Service

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Accessible court processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Produced 5 new videos to explain court procedures to self represented litigantsUndertook research and prepare proposal to commence McKenzie Friend service in 2017 approved by the Court of Appeal

Were our research and policy development activities timely, practical and effective?

We produced five online information videos to help self represented litigants navigate the system better and to ensure the effective use of resources for this service. We shared by supporting the rollout of our model in all other Federal Courts in Australia, and by hosting a Self Representation Service Reference Group with stakeholders from the legal profession.

There were more than 414,000 page views of QPILCH's website during 2015–16. The greatest number of hits was from people accessing our self-help guides—the second most accessed page after the home page was the SRS 'Drafting a Statement of Claim' factsheet. The majority of the other top 25 page views were of other SRS factsheets. General feedback from people using the website feedback form is that the factsheets were "extremely useful."

Mental Health Law Practice

Our performance

Outcome	Results
Contribute to discussion of needs of people with mental ill health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Submission to government review of <i>Mental Health Act</i>Submission to the Inquiry into a Human Rights Act for QueenslandProduced training materials, guidelines and videos to assist generalist solicitors assisting clients with a mental illness and to work effectively with mental health caseworkers

Were our research and policy development activities timely, practical and effective?

In 2015–16, we commenced a project to develop guidelines to assist mental health caseworkers and lawyers to work collaboratively and commenced training for mental health caseworkers in identifying legal issues.

Pilot Representation services

Our performance

As the pilot representation services commenced in April 2016, there is insufficient data on which to report the progress in achieving this objective.



Conclusion

This report shows that a modest public investment to coordinate our services draws a significant pro bono contribution from the private legal profession in Queensland, which in turn has an enormous impact on people experiencing disadvantage.

Because of the values we adhere to and our reliance on evidence and best practice, we can deliver services that people need when and where they need them.

The feedback and case stories show that QPILCH is getting results for our clients and that our clients are satisfied with the service they receive, irrespective of the outcome. This confirms for us that our approach is working. QPILCH also has the significant benefit of having access to a pro bono pool comprised of Queensland's best lawyers and staff members that are committed to providing sensitive and relevant assistance to our clients.

Each of our programs is continuing to grow and deliver quality outcomes. However, we seek to continuously improve and extend our impact. We are continuing to ensure we have a clear vision of our goals, that our services are targeted, effective and efficient, that we increase the pro bono contribution over time and that we build the evidence base to expand and refine our services.

This is our first annual impact report. In writing this report, we have identified some gaps in our monitoring and evaluation. In conjunction with reviewing our goals and improving our evaluation framework, we look forward to being able to report our impact in greater detail in future annual impact reports.

End notes

ⁱ Encompass Family and Community Pty Ltd, Legal Health Check evaluation, 2014.

ⁱⁱ McDowall, J. J. (2011). Transitioning from Care in Australia: An Evaluation of CREATE's What's the Plan? campaign (CREATE Report Card 2011). Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

ⁱⁱⁱ Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, LAW Survey 2012, Queensland edition, p 68.

^{iv} Ibid, p 193.

^v Encompass Family and Community Pty Ltd, Independent Evaluation phase two: the Legal Health Check approach, Referral Pathway Trials, June 2016.

^{vi} Encompass Family and Community Pty Ltd, Evaluation of Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House Incorporated (QPILCH) Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic (HPLC) and Refugee Civil Law Clinic (RCLC), November 2011.

^{vii} BDO, Cost-benefit Evaluation of the Self Representation Service at the Federal Courts, Brisbane, June 2015.

^{viii} Ibid, June 2015.

^{ix} Pleasance and Balmer, quoted in iii above, p 28.