



IMPACT REPORT 2025

LAW ACCESS

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Law Access

Law Access is a not-for-profit organisation that facilitates the giving of pro bono (free or low fee) legal assistance by the Western Australian legal profession to those who cannot afford a lawyer.

We are a service of last resort for those who cannot get legal assistance from Legal Aid WA, a community legal centre or other legal services.

Law Access considers applications from not-for-profits and individuals in genuine need of legal assistance.

Genuine need is assessed by considering an applicant's financial circumstances, the merit in their case and whether resolving their issue may have a broader positive effect on vulnerable groups in the community.

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1. The Context

1.1 The Department's Legal Assistance Strategy

The Legal Assistance Strategy 2022-2025 released by the Department of Justice provides a roadmap for the provision of legal assistance services in Western Australia, including identifying Priority Areas of Law and Priority Client Groups.

The Department of Justice's Legal Assistance Strategy contains the following focus areas:

- **FOCUS AREA 1**
 - Client-centred services for vulnerable people.
- **FOCUS AREA 2**
 - A strong, sustainable and responsive legal assistance sector which delivers quality services.
- **FOCUS AREA 3**
 - State-wide access to appropriate, timely legal assistance for people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

1.2 The Pro Bono Model in Western Australia

The Western Australian Government sought to encourage pro bono participation by requiring that law firms who provide legal services to government undertake pro bono work for 'Approved Causes' to the value of at least 10% of the total value of each law firm's government contract(s).

Law Access provides:



a pro bono referral pathway from community legal centres to pro bono legal service providers

triage, assessment and referral of applications on warm referral from legal assistance providers

a portal for lawyers to view and express interest in pro bono matters suitable for referral

education for legal assistance providers to facilitate referrals and pro bono engagement

training for practitioners to support delivery of appropriate services to disadvantaged clients

The State Solicitor's Office is currently undertaking a review of the Pro Bono Model, and Law Access is providing information and feedback to that process.

2. Our Impact

2.1 Who sought legal help



1063
General Enquiries

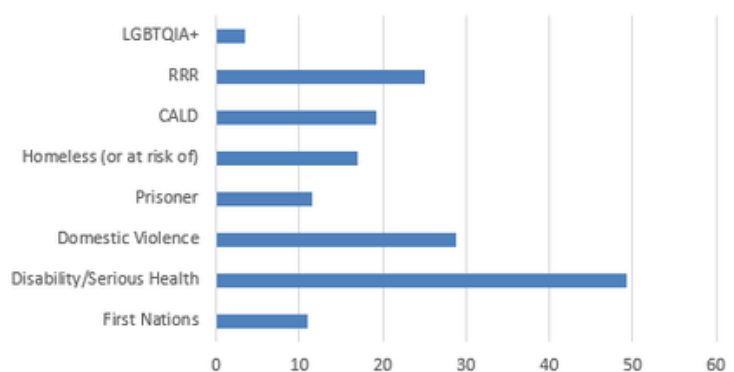


820
Applications

Law Access assisted individuals in genuine need of legal assistance with experience of the following categories of disadvantage:

- 11% First Nations
- 49% Disability/Mental Health/Serious Health issue
- 29% Experiencing/experienced FDV
- 12% Prison/Detention
- 17% Homeless/ At risk of homelessness
- 19% CALD (Culturally and linguistically diverse)
- 25% RRR (Regional, rural and remote)
- 3% LGBTQIA+

Applicant Demographics (percentage)

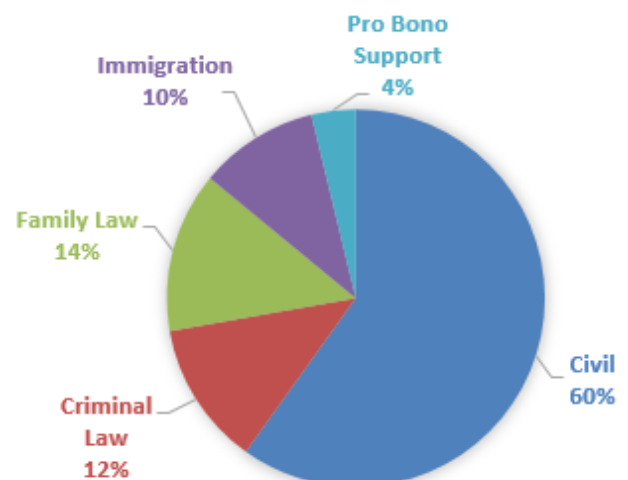


6%

Applicants said they would be assisted by an interpreter

Law Access received the following applications by matter type:

- 60% Civil
- 14% Family
- 12% Criminal
- 10% Immigration
- 4% Pro Bono Support



2.2 Who We Assisted

Successful applicants



167

Matters referred to lawyers



22

Meritorious matters not able to be placed

Ineligible applicants

282

Matters unsuitable for referral

The Application did not meet the eligibility requirements

Law Access referral process



- **Over 90%** of individual applicants said the application and referral process was easy to understand, and
- **Over 80%** said they were kept informed of the process of their application and the referral to their pro bono lawyer went smoothly.

100% of not-for-profit applicants said the process was easy to manage and the referral went smoothly.

I had no where to turn and no idea what to do. So the application process being easy and not stressful helps alot.



Value of legal service provided



4,342*

Estimated total pro bono hours



\$1.6m*

Estimated value of pro bono

* Estimates are based on the pro bono lawyer survey results extrapolated to the number of lawyers who took referrals.

Making a difference for applicants



85% of individual applicants said:

- My lawyer helped me better understand my legal options.
- My lawyer helped me understand how to deal with my legal matters.

... my legal team listened to me, were empathetic and very supportive which put my mind at ease.



Best thing about having lawyers assist

The best thing about having a lawyer assist me was that it gave me the confidence to approach the hearing, knowing I had the right guidance and support.

As for most of us legal matters may as well be written in another language. Having someone explain and have your back to resolve or act on your behalf makes a very massive difference to one's mental well-being.



I am not able to put in words how grateful I am to have the law firm working for me and my plight.

*Fabulous service
fabulous outcome*

My matter is still ongoing however it is being dealt with very professionally and in the right direction hopefully with a positive outcome. My solicitors couldn't be nicer.

Not-for-profit Organisations



The [pro bono] team were incredibly responsive, supporting and diligent in their approach. We never felt like a second-class citizen getting some half-baked support - we felt very well looked after and deeply appreciated their contribution.

Referrer Organisations

Law Access received referrals of individual applicants via Courts, Legal Aid WA, community legal centres, Aboriginal legal services, private lawyers, prisons, advocates and other support services.

Warm referred applicants are more likely to be eligible for pro bono legal assistance and feedback from warm referrers allows us to constantly review our processes to ensure they are effective and accessible.



I found Law Access far more accessible than some services I have tried to refer clients to.

Referrals to the Legal Assistance Sector



54 applicant who had "fallen through the gaps" were warm referred to legal assistance providers

Case Stories

Consumer protection for woman living with a disability

"My experience acting on a Law Access matter was highly positive and rewarding. The referral process was seamless as Law Access provided the key facts, supporting documents, and the client's contact details, which enabled a smooth transition into the matter.

What stood out most was the interpersonal nature of the matter. Unlike acting for corporate clients, I was able to build a direct relationship with the individual, putting a face to the name and appreciating the real impact of the advice. As a law graduate, it was an invaluable opportunity to take greater responsibility and ownership of the matter.

Pro bono work is particularly meaningful to me as it allows me to apply my training and skills to those who need it most. Law Access made the process straightforward, and I would encourage any graduate or lawyer to take on a referral."



Richard Shaw,
Squire Patton Boggs

Elder Rights - interest in home realised



Benjamin Moran,
HWL Ebsworth

"I recently accepted a referral from Law Access to assist an elderly couple with the forced sale of their property under section 126 of the Property Law Act 1969 (WA), a situation further complicated by family disputes. Throughout the matter, Law Access provided invaluable guidance and was particularly helpful in arranging a barrister to assist with the court application.

Working directly with the couple was very rewarding, allowing me to provide practical support during a highly stressful time. The matter also presented a number of complexities that strengthened both my technical legal skills and my ability to manage sensitive client interactions. This experience highlights the significant role of Law Access in facilitating pro bono work, enabling practitioners to make a meaningful impact for those in need."

Enablers and Barriers

Disbursement fund

Law Access maintains a disbursement fund to ensure that applicants can obtain legal assistance and representation without out-of-pocket expenses creating a barrier to access to justice.

Applicants are required to demonstrate the need for the disbursement and that they cannot afford to pay for it.



\$3,767.80

Landgate fees, court search fees and filing fees, transport to a regional court, and two expert medical reports



2.3 Pro Bono Culture

Pro Bono Lawyers

187

lawyers took a
pro bono referral

The lawyers came from

67

Law Firms

31

lawyers took
multiple referrals

90%

Over 90% of lawyers said:
*The process for taking this referral
was efficient*

85%

85% of lawyers said that they:
*recommend to other lawyers that
they take pro bono referrals through
Law Access as the preferred pathway*

*Minimal administrative work, easy to
start on the matter as Law Access
provided documents outlining the
issues/matter and attached relevant
supporting materials.*

*Cases are well triaged, the relevant
documents and information is properly
collated and the scope is well defined.*

The Experience of Pro Bono Lawyers

90%

Over 90% of lawyers said:
*My work on this referral helped me fulfil my professional obligation to give back to
the community.*

*We are all privileged, and we
should give something back.*

*I think lawyers have an obligation to
provide services to people in difficult
circumstances.*



Other Supports



Resources for Pro Bono Lawyers

This year, Law Access assembled a suite of resources for pro bono lawyers in discrimination law. The resources were provided by the Equal Opportunity Commission and by John Curtin Law Clinic. The resources are available via the Law Access Pro Bono Lawyers' Portal.

Students, Secondees, Volunteers



10

student and graduate
interns



27

legal and admin
secondees



4

student / legal / admin
volunteers



717

hours (not included in pro
bono lawyer hours)



1916

hours (not included in pro
bono lawyer hours)



360

hours (not included in pro
bono lawyer hours)

The Experience of Students and Secondees



100% of students said their work at Law Access:

- *helped me better understand what work I am most interested in exploring further*
- *helped me better understand the realities faced by disadvantaged Western Australians*

Learning new things about programming with limited programming tools but still have to solve challenged tasks is fun but challenging.

I enjoyed the support from other lawyers and the ability to discuss cases and possible approaches with other people at Law Access. I also enjoyed the challenge in looking into niche areas of law and questions I had never considered previously.

Education and Careers



Law Access participated in many events with students and graduates during the year to promote pro bono culture in WA.

We partnered with universities and students in academic programs, internships and attended Careers Fairs.

The passion for access to justice within the student and graduate community bodes well for the future of pro bono work through the next generation of young professionals.

Law Access Reward and Recognition

We express our sincere thanks to our pro bono lawyers and other supporters through the Reward and Recognition Project, providing Certificates of Appreciation.



Thank You Event

Our Thank You Event was held on 14 October 2024, hosted by MinterEllison.

We were fortunate to display works by Indigenous artists (courtesy Artitja Art Gallery) and local artists (courtesy WA Society of Arts).

Law Access congratulated the 2024 Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year, Adam Levine.

Thank you again to all lawyers who took referrals and we hope you enjoyed the event.



2025 Walk for Justice



**883 registered
participants**

**Over \$169,614
raised**



Prize Winners for 2025

Top Individuals
Charmaine Tsang
Sharon Gill

Top Team Fundraiser
LAVAN

Top University Team
**Curtin Student
Law Society**

Walk for Justice Sponsors

Principal Supporter

**McCusker
Charitable
Foundation**

Gold Sponsor



MinterEllison



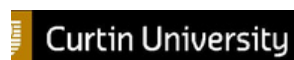
PiperAlderman

Corporate Sponsors

University Sponsors



School of
Business & Law



2.4 Research, Policy, Reform and Innovation

Family Law



Property Steps (our family law project) was rolled-out as the service model for all Law Access referrals for the start of 2025. However, due to the crisis in family law service provision across the private, public and not-for-profit parts of the sector, we were unable to continue with the service. As of 30 June 2025, Law Access ceased accepting family law referrals. From 1 July, Law Access will be focusing on helping community legal centres maintain pro bono support for their family law property clinics.

Sector reform

Law Access plays an integral part in the legal assistance sector, providing a last resort solution for those who fall through the gaps. The referral of vulnerable people to pro bono practitioners also facilitates the leveraging of public funds through the generosity of the profession.

The Department of Justice extended their consultation period for the commissioning process for legal assistance services in Western Australia. Law Access will continue to participate and hopes that all legal assistance services will soon have greater certainty over future funding models.

The State Solicitors' Office also continued its review into the Pro Bono Model. Law Access continues to provide information and feedback on the model to inform the review and recommendations.

Law Reform

Law Access has continued to identify areas of particular need for strategic reform and participates in The Law Society Access to Justice Committee. With the commencement of the tenure of a new Attorney General, we have identified some priority areas for advocacy in 2025:

- Creation of a new jurisdiction in the State Administrative Tribunal for small deceased estates.
- Raising the age of incarceration from 10 years to 14 years.
- Introducing HECS rebate or other financial incentives to graduates who practice in family law or in a regional, rural or remote practice.

Process Innovation

The Law Access Board adopted new [Strategic Plan](#) 2025 - 2028, focusing on:

- Service Delivery
- Stakeholder Relationships
- Organisational Sustainability

Law Access reviewed internal procedures for processing of applications to improve turn-around times for applicants, particularly on urgent applications.

Law Access has streamlined its application, processing and assessment processes, reducing the amount of information initially collected from applicants and implementing a preliminary triage process. Applicant who are not eligible for our service are then referred to other services. Those applicants who may be eligible may need to provide Law Access with further information on their circumstances following triage, so their application can be assessed by a senior lawyer.

3. Celebrating 10 years and looking ahead

This year, Law Access celebrated its 10th year as an independent charitable organisation. From a long-history of pro bono contribution in the legal profession and facilitation of pro bono work by The Law Society, Law Access has continued to uphold this proud tradition.

The need for legal assistance continues to grow and funding pressures and practical limitations on free and low-cost services will mean there is always a place for pro bono.

Legal practitioners in WA continue to be generous with their time and expertise. We thank all those who took a pro bono referral over the last 10 years, and particularly during the last financial year.

A number of firms contributed secondees (legal and non-legal) to both Law Access and to community legal centres. We sincerely thank those firms and practitioners who offered these substantial contributions to front-line service delivery.

We continue to examine the accessibility of our services, from multiple perspectives. This year, we reviewed our internal processes and implemented a new triage system, to reduce turn-around time on applications. We also published our inaugural Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.

Our family law project (Property Steps) was our final effort to contribute to the availability of legal assistance in family law but, sadly, we have had to close that service.

Family law is at a particular crisis point and many Western Australians are struggling with inadequate support in that system. There is an urgent need for investment in this area and we stand ready to respond in any way that pro bono lawyers are willing and able to contribute. This must be an area of particular focus for government initiatives.

The future will see greater opportunities to harness the power of technology in service provision. We encourage pro bono firms to support community legal centres to realise this potential, and particularly to support those services that are attempting to provide access to justice in regional / remote areas.

We hope the legal profession will continue to value pro bono work as both an important community service and as an integral part of the culture of the profession.

Alana Dowley

Chief Executive Officer



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