



Great Southern
Community
Legal Services



ANNUAL REPORT
2025

VISION

Our Vision is **informed, empowered, and resilient** Great Southern communities.

MISSION

Our Mission is to be an **accessible, trusted, and reliable** source of information, advice, and advocacy.

Great Southern Community Legal Services acknowledges the Menang people of the Noongar Nation, the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise our shared history and are committed to walking together in the spirit of reconciliation.

Welcome

This year was about turning strategy into action. Our Horizons 2028 strategic plan challenged us to think beyond traditional service delivery toward building systemic resilience – a resilient Great Southern, a resilient sector, and a resilient team. Twelve months on, that vision is taking shape through the people we serve and the partnerships we build.

A defining shift this year was elevating community education into a strategic priority. We delivered 15 education sessions and created accessible resources that empower frontline workers to identify legal and advocacy issues early. This investment in community capacity building represents our strongest commitment yet to prevention—helping people understand their rights before problems escalate into crises. As we look ahead, this work will grow, recognising that informed communities are resilient communities.

This year saw the start of the Regional Alliance of Justice Associations, a federation of regional Community Legal Centres working together strategically. This creates shared infrastructure, workforce pathways, and collective voice – the ingredients regional services need to navigate reform and advocate effectively.

The heart of our work remains direct service to people facing their most difficult moments. This year we assisted 1,612 people across the Great Southern with legal issues, disability advocacy needs, and tenancy disputes. Behind every number sits a person—someone navigating family violence, fighting for disability support, or facing eviction. Our outcome measures reflect what matters most: 97% client satisfaction and 96% of assessed clients reporting improved circumstances. These results validate our approach and remind us why this work matters.

None of this would be possible without the remarkable people who make up GSCLS. Our team navigates complexity and secondary trauma daily while maintaining excellence. We have invested in our workforce systems this year, enhancing the infrastructure that supports our people doing this challenging work well.

As we look toward the next phase of Horizons 2028, we do so with confidence—because we've built foundations that centre community, support our team, and deliver real change for the people who need us most.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment. Together, we can ensure that our Great Southern communities are informed, empowered, and resilient.

Brodie Lewis
CEO

Resilient Great Southern

Places are different. The broader Great Southern spans more than 70,000 square kilometres across 25 local government areas and over 40 townships. For someone in Jerramungup, accessing legal help in Perth means a round trip exceeding 800 kilometres. For too many people, this cost – a lost day of work, hours on the road, and a motel bill – means justice is out of reach.

Our Resilient Great Southern strategy embeds legal and advocacy services throughout the region, not just in Albany. It combines community capacity building, hybrid service delivery, and strategic regional partnerships to ensure people can access help locally, understand their rights early, and connect to support before crises escalate. This means building knowledge through education, delivering services in regional towns through outreach, and leveraging technology where face-to-face isn't possible.

PLACES ARE DIFFERENT – REGIONAL COMMUNITIES NEED REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

This year we strengthened our northern regional presence with regular services in both Narrogin and Katanning, and we expanded outreach partnerships with Anglicare offices, CRCs, and local community organisations across the Great Southern. We delivered more community education sessions and created accessible resources that empower community workers to identify legal issues early and make appropriate referrals. We piloted CRC-facilitated video appointments in remote coastal towns, trained local facilitators, and built referral pathways with medical and social service providers.

We're now exploring sustainable regional presence in the north of our region, scaling our CRC partnership model, and developing targeted training for health providers – creating justice pathways in every community, whether through physical offices, trusted local partners, or digital access.

85,000

Square Kilometres Served



Local Government Areas



40+
Townships Across the Region

15

Community Education Sessions Delivered

Breaking Barriers For Justice

Breaking Barriers to Justice tackles the barriers regional people face when seeking legal help: where you live, what service you need, who locally can assist, and how to access help remotely. Funded by Impact100 WA, this 18-month pilot tests whether Community Resource Centre partnerships and specialist legal networks can create sustainable, accessible, and dignified access to justice in remote towns.

In September 2024, we launched with community events in Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun, then expanded to Gnowangerup. These CRC partnerships enable local people to attend legal appointments via secure video links in private rooms with trained facilitators, removing the barriers of distance and cost. We built referral pathways with regional Anglicare offices, creating warm handoffs between legal services and family support. We established partnerships with Perth-based specialist community legal centres, ensuring regional clients can access expert advice in employment law, consumer protection, and mental health matters that local practitioners rarely encounter. We trained community workers to identify legal issues early and make appropriate referrals.

An unexpected outcome has been the development of secondment structures supporting the entire regional CLC sector. This year alone, over 1,000 hours of seconded legal work – both pro bono and paid – filled critical vacancies in regional services from the Kimberley to the Goldfields. This workforce innovation emerged directly from Breaking Barriers partnerships and now sustains legal services across rural WA when recruitment proves impossible.

This work has been significantly strengthened by pro bono support from HBA Legal, who seconded a lawyer to GSCLS for twelve months. This secondment provided strategic insight on partnership design, privacy frameworks, and the legal architecture enabling safe, effective regional collaboration. Our next phase develops accredited training for rural medical professionals, creating justice pathways through every regional GP clinic.



1,000

Hours of Pro-Bono Services to Community



1,800+

Kilometres Travelled to Pilot Sites

SOME PEOPLE DIDN'T KNOW WE EXISTED – THROUGH LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, THAT'S CHANGING

Resilient sector

A resilient Great Southern depends on a resilient support network. Regional legal services face distinct pressures that metropolitan centres don't: vast distances, limited workforce pools, and communities where legal need is high but resources are thin. No single organisation can solve these challenges alone. Collaboration isn't just beneficial – it's essential for survival.

Our Horizons 2028 strategic plan positions GSCLS as a leader in building a Resilient Sector across regional Western Australia. This means working with other Community Legal Centres to develop federated models that share systems, strengthen workforce pathways, and amplify our collective voice. It means partnering with other disability advocacy providers to coordinate services for people facing intersectional barriers. It means building the tenancy network to share knowledge and achieve change for renters across the state. It means building the infrastructure that allows regional organisations to operate efficiently at scale while staying deeply connected to place.

This year we advanced collaborative work across multiple fronts. We strengthened our partnerships with disability advocacy organisations statewide to coordinate services for shared clients facing intersectional barriers. We launched workforce development initiatives, including research funded by the Legal Contribution Trust to identify sustainable pathways for a regional legal workforce. We participated in statewide campaigns advocating for enhanced government funding and collaborated with the CLC sector on data collection improvements that build our evidence base.

These investments in shared infrastructure, workforce sustainability, and collective voice position regional providers, including GSCLS, to look to the future from a position of strength rather than fragmentation.

Want to join us?

Your support can make a significant difference in our community.

By volunteering at our office or becoming a member of our association, you join us in advancing our vision throughout the Great Southern.

We encourage you to connect with our team to discover how you can contribute to our mission.

Visit our website at gscls.com.au

Regional Alliance of Justice Associations

What began as informal conversations in 2023 has evolved into something transformative: the Regional Alliance of Justice Associations (RAJA). Through co-design with regional Community Legal Centres across Western Australia, we have built a federated model that enables collective impact while preserving each member's local autonomy and place-based identity.

The challenge was clear. Regional CLCs faced mounting pressure from increasing client demands, alongside increasingly insecure and constrained funding. This demanded efficiency and collaboration, and we lacked the infrastructure to work together strategically. We risked competing for the same limited resources rather than amplifying our collective voice for the communities we serve.

Through a staged approach, we developed a shared governance framework and explored collaboration models. Agreed on the model, we set about building it – creating a shared brand identity, launching workforce research initiatives, and designed the governance structures that would make collaboration sustainable. Earlier this year, we secured commitments from six regional partners to launch RAJA.

With that commitment, we are now moving to implementation, with financial contributions, ongoing participation, and endorsement of the central business unit that will provide back-of-house functions, strategic advocacy capacity, and coordinated responses to sector reviews.

The benefits are tangible. RAJA enables joined up service delivery across regional WA, while preserving the centrality of place based services. It drives cost savings through shared contracts and reporting systems. It builds workforce resilience through cross-regional secondments and professional development. Most importantly, it ensures that regional communities have a united voice and a say on the services and systems that affect and impact them.

This is how we build a sector strong enough to weather change and strategic enough to lead it.

RAJA is funded by contributions of CLC members, with the support of Department of Justice, Legal Contribution Trust and Lotterywest.

Resilient team

A resilient team isn't built by accident. It requires deliberate investment in people, systems and culture—the kind of investment that recognises our greatest asset is the skilled, supported people who do this work every day.

We work across a spectrum of complex client matters, from acute hardship to profound human trauma. Regardless of the issue, our people routinely face secondary trauma and absorb the stress and emotion that can come with intense casework. Ongoing and sustainable service delivery depends on sustainable workforce practices.

This year we strengthened the foundations that support our people. We improved our HR systems by adopting ProcessWorx as our HRIS platform, bringing clearer policies around performance, wellbeing and workplace safety. We enhanced our WHS systems, appointing trained First Aid and Fire Wardens and ensuring comprehensive inductions across the team. We increased our training and development budgets, ensuring all our staff continue to grow and develop in both practice and wellbeing.

RESILIENT TEAM, RESILIENT SERVICE, RESILIENT REGION—EACH ELEMENT REINFORCES THE OTHERS

We also built new capacity for strategic delivery. We convened a leadership team to hold accountability for our strategic plan, involving the broader organisation in strategy delivery and building internal leadership resilience by sharing the load. We purchased a second vehicle to support our team delivering services across the Great Southern. We completed staff appraisals using our new framework, creating space for development conversations and identifying training needs.

These investments strengthen service quality. When our team is supported, equipped and resourced, they deliver better outcomes for the communities we serve. Resilient team, resilient service, resilient region—each element reinforces the others.

Our Board

Strong governance creates the foundation for everything we achieve. Our Board provides strategic oversight through significant growth and change, ensuring we remain financially sustainable while advancing our strategic priorities.

We acknowledge the extraordinary dedication of our volunteers. Board members contribute countless hours of expertise and strategic guidance. Volunteers across our organisation support service delivery, community education and organisational development. Your contributions amplify our impact and connect us deeply to the communities we serve.

Our 2025 Board members are:

Michael Cripps
Chairperson

Jenny Page
Deputy Chairperson

Cameron Andrich
Treasurer

Cory Warren
Board Member

Helen St Jack
Board Member

Peter Brown
Board Member

Looking ahead, we continue strengthening Board composition to reflect the diverse communities across the Great Southern. We're actively recruiting new members whose skills and lived experience will enhance our strategic decision-making. A resilient Board supports a resilient team—governance exists to serve both our people and the communities they assist.

Kate's Story

I'm 72 years young and have worked across different professions and industries. When heading to retirement, I remembered my mum's advice: you don't retire FROM, you retire TO.

During the pandemic I asked my lawyer friend at GSCLS whether relationship pressures were causing rising legal need around family violence. On the basis of many years in pathology and business, I talked my way into a volunteer role here.

I'm not a lawyer or advocate, but I've done back-office work with paperwork. Along the way I've learnt a lot—every profession has new language and acronyms. The complex cloud-based admin system has been impressive (being a former scientist, I love data and organisation!).

I've been volunteering for 4+ years. I stay because it fits my social justice sensibilities. The leadership here is probably the best I've ever worked with. Office culture is also one of the best. So I'm probably here until they chuck me out.

Legal Services

Our legal service empowers people by helping them understand their rights and navigate the justice system. We focus on four priority groups that face significant barriers to accessing justice: people experiencing poverty, family violence, disability or mental health challenges, and housing insecurity. These are the people who need legal help most and are least likely to get it without our support.

This year we assisted 1,025 clients with 1,715 matters, opening 322 new matters and closing 1,404 matters across the Great Southern. Our service model mixes one-off legal advice, duty lawyer support at court, and ongoing casework for the most complex situations. Most people need information or simple advice. Some need more comprehensive support through difficult legal processes.

The most common issues we helped with were family violence restraining orders, parenting and property separation, criminal injuries compensation, and estates matters. Every person's situation is different, but the pattern is consistent: unresolved legal problems cascade. A housing dispute becomes homelessness. Family law uncertainty drives ongoing conflict. An unpaid debt spirals into bankruptcy. Early legal help breaks these cycles before small problems become crises.

EARLY LEGAL HELP BREAKS THESE CYCLES BEFORE SMALL PROBLEMS BECOME CRISES

We delivered over 200 outreach appointments this year, including 44 services in Katanning, 21 in Narrogin, and 47 through our Anglicare partnership. These regional appointments, paired with telephone advice and our Albany office, mean people can access help where they live without long drives or time off work.

Funded by National Access to Justice Program and the Law Society of WA's Public Purposes Trust



Regional Knowledge, Rapid Response

Alan and Shirley came to us after their vehicle was damaged through no fault of their own. The vehicle was critical to their income, and every week it sat broken meant lost earnings and mounting bills. Dealing with a large insurance company felt overwhelming – complex processes, legal terminology, and slow responses that left them anxious about their financial security.

Without legal help, the situation risked deteriorating into debt problems and income loss that could have affected their housing stability. These are the kinds of legal issues that, when unresolved, create compounding harm for people already financially vulnerable.

They sought help from our lawyer based in the region. Our lawyer understood immediately what was at stake – not just the legal technicalities, but the real-world consequences of every day the matter remained unresolved. People in regional communities often lack backup options when essential equipment fails. Quick resolution matters.

Our lawyer obtained instructions, explained their rights in plain English, and contacted the insurance company directly. Their regional expertise meant they knew how to cut through bureaucracy and push for urgent resolution. More importantly, they had the professional contacts and legal knowledge to make it happen quickly.

UNDERSTANDING BOTH THE LEGAL ISSUES AND THE REGIONAL REALITIES

The matter was resolved fast. The vehicle was repaired and back in operation before Alan and Shirley's financial situation worsened. They expressed considerable relief at having someone who understood both the legal issues and the regional realities they faced.

This story illustrates why regional legal services matter. A lawyer working in the Great Southern can respond quickly and personally, understanding not just the legal problem but the practical consequences of delay. Without accessible legal help, Alan and Shirley would have faced expensive private legal fees or tried to navigate the insurance process alone – likely resulting in delays and potential financial harm.

**Names and details changed to protect client privacy.*

Family Safety Project

Our Family Safety work starts early. We meet people at the beginning of their engagement with support services and/or Police, often before they leave a violent relationship. Getting legal advice at this critical moment helps people understand the full implications of leaving—what property they can take, how it affects future parenting arrangements, what options exist for protection orders. Early intervention reduces later legal complexity and empowers people to enforce their rights from the start.

The Family Safety Project, supported by the NAJP, co-locates our lawyers with Anglicare's family violence advocates at the Albany Women's Centre. People access legal help in the same trusted space where they're receiving counselling and safety planning. This integrated model prevents the need for multiple, often triggering, appointments across different services.

Our Court-Based Family Safety Project, funded through the Criminal Property Confiscation Grant Program, brings this same approach into the Albany Magistrates Court. When the Restraining Order and Protection and Care lists run each week, our lawyers provide on-the-day support. This court presence acts as a pathway—connecting people who aren't yet engaged with services and creating opportunities for matters to resolve by consent. Working alongside Legal Aid WA, we've seen increased settlement rates, saving court time and reducing the trauma of trials.

LEGAL SAFETY AND PERSONAL SAFETY ARE INSEPARABLE

Our wrap-around model extends beyond Court. We assist with criminal injury compensation claims, draft property settlements, help navigate tenancy issues connected to violence, and provide disability advocacy where family violence and disability intersect—an emerging area of need. We also continue coordinating the Family Advocacy Support Service when the Family Court circuits to Albany. Legal safety and personal safety are inseparable.

Funded by National Access to Justice Program and the Law Society of WA's Public Purposes Trust



47

Appointment located at Albany Women's Centre

109

Family Violence Restraining Order Matters Assisted



12

Protection & Care matters (year-on-year increase)



A Journey to Safety

Tara was referred to our Family Safety Project by an Anglicare counsellor after disclosing ongoing violence from her partner. Her three children had witnessed escalating abuse, and Tara was terrified but unsure how to leave safely. She had never been to court and didn't know what legal protection looked like.

Our lawyer met Tara at the Albany Women's Centre, where she was already receiving counselling. In that first meeting, we worked together to complete an urgent Family Violence Restraining Order application. Anglicare's family violence advocate helped Tara develop a detailed safety plan for when the order was served, including alternative school drop-off arrangements and emergency contacts.

The respondent contested the order, meaning Tara would need to attend court. The thought of facing him in a public building was overwhelming. Our lawyer prepared Tara carefully, explaining each step of the process and what to expect. On the hearing day, with both our lawyer and her Anglicare support worker present, Tara felt able to give her evidence clearly and calmly. The magistrate granted a five-year restraining order protecting Tara and the children.

HAVING EVERYONE IN THE SAME PLACE, ALL WORKING TOGETHER—THAT MADE IT POSSIBLE

But safety required more than the legal order. While we handled the restraining order, Anglicare connected Tara with financial counselling to address debts accumulated during the relationship, arranged temporary accommodation, and provided ongoing trauma counselling. The children accessed specialised support through the Centre's programs. Legal Aid helped with property settlement matters our service couldn't cover.

Six months later, Tara told us the children were settled in their new school. She'd started part-time work and felt, for the first time in years, like she could plan a future. "I didn't know where to start," she said. "Having everyone in the same place, all working together—that made it possible."

The wrap-around model works because violence affects every part of someone's life. Legal safety and personal safety go hand in hand.

*Names and details changed to protect client privacy.

Disability Advocacy

Our disability advocacy program helps people with physical and mental health conditions across the Great Southern navigate complex systems and access their rights. We work with anyone living with disability—no formal diagnosis required—and their families, providing support that ranges from information and referrals to sustained individual advocacy across multiple life domains.

To maximise our impact, we deliver advocacy in partnership with Sussex Street Community Law Service, People with Disabilities WA and Advocacy WA. This integrated model enables both core advocacy work and specialist representation including Administrative Appeals Tribunal cases, State Administrative Tribunal matters, and complex guardianship applications.

In 2025, we assisted 163 people directly across 249 matters. Disability Support Pension claims remained the highest area of need, with demand increasing as people struggle to meet escalating cost-of-living expenses. NDIS access, planning and reviews followed closely, alongside housing, finance, health and education issues. Our advocates take a holistic approach, understanding that housing stress, financial hardship, inadequate healthcare and lack of support services are often interconnected. We pick up multiple issues simultaneously, referring appropriately or assisting directly to create meaningful impact.

We also work systemically, supporting DSP and NDIS applicants through giving health providers tools to contribute to their applications, and networking with community services to strengthen regional pathways. We are also proud to be part of the network of people that contribute to the annual Great Southern Ability Festival, a celebration of all abilities in our region, held in December each year.

Our advocacy is delivered in partnership with Sussex Street Community Law Service and People with Disabilities WA, supported by the Department of Social Services and the Department of Communities.

163
People Assisted



249
Matters Handled



Top 3 issues:
•DSP claims
•NDIS planning
•Housing

Survival to Stability

Jerry lived in a small outlying Great Southern community, trying to survive on Jobseeker payments while managing trauma that made working impossible. Centrelink's mutual obligation requirements were unachievable, piling stress onto an already overwhelming situation. She knew she should be eligible for Disability Support Pension—it would mean no more fortnightly reporting, no impossible job search requirements, and enough income to actually meet the cost of living. But she had no idea where to begin.

Our advocate sat down with Jerry and walked her through the DSP eligibility criteria and claim process. We explained what evidence would strengthen her application and what the medical reports needed to show. Working together, we gathered the necessary documentation and liaised with her GP to ensure the reports addressed Centrelink's requirements. Rather than doing it for her, we gave Jerry the information and confidence she needed. She lodged the claim herself.

When Centrelink approved the claim without requiring further advocacy, Jerry was relieved beyond measure. No more reporting. No more mutual obligations. A payment that actually covered rent, food, and utilities. The difference between surviving and living. "Where would I be without you!" she told us. Local service matters—we understood her small community, adapted our support to suit, and met her where she was.

The Fight to Stay Home

Carl's situation was more complex. After an acquired brain injury changed his personality and created risk of violence, he could no longer live safely at home. He needed supported accommodation, but was only receiving partnered-rate DSP. When his partner's income increased, his pension decreased—a cruel catch-22 that meant he couldn't afford his accommodation fees. Without full payment, he'd be forced to move to Perth, leaving behind the Great Southern family and community that provided his lifeline.

Working with Welfare Rights Advocacy Services, we built Carl's case carefully. Our advocate prepared a formal submission to Centrelink requesting assessment as single under Section 4 criteria, demonstrating exactly why his circumstances warranted different treatment. After reviewing the evidence, Centrelink agreed. Full single-rate pension restored. Accommodation secured. Family support maintained.

Advocacy creates stability. Government systems are complex, and disability adds layers of barriers. Whether empowering people to self-advocate or providing sustained representation through tribunals, our integrated service model means we can match the support to the need—keeping people housed, financially secure, and connected to community.

WHERE WOULD I BE WITHOUT YOU!

Tenant Advocacy

Albany's rental market remains in crisis. Vacancy rates sit below 0.9 per cent, with listings down 85 per cent since 2019. Rents have surged while emergency accommodation remains scarce. For tenants, this means almost no bargaining power and few alternatives when problems arise. Housing security depends on knowing your rights and having someone in your corner when disputes emerge.

Our Tenant Advocacy service supports renters across the Great Southern facing eviction, bond disputes, repair delays and unfair treatment. Being local matters. Our advocate travels as needed, meeting people face-to-face rather than expecting them to travel hours for help. This means we can respond quickly, build trust with clients, and work directly with property managers and community partners who know the region.

This year we assisted 96 tenants, closing 108 matters. The most common issues were rent arrears, bond disputes and landlord-initiated terminations. We provided advice, negotiated with landlords and agents, prepared court documents, and attended Residential Tenancies Court hearings alongside clients. We also provided duty advocate support at every court sitting in Albany, ensuring tenants without representation had someone to turn to on the day.

Beyond individual casework, we built an array of new education resources – plain-language info sheets covering everything from lease agreements to rent increases, designed for tenants, support workers and community groups. Through systems advocacy, we contributed regional perspectives to state-wide policy discussions on rent caps, minimum property standards and stronger protections against unfair evictions. As rental stress intensifies, demand for these services continues to grow.

Part of the statewide Tenancy Advice and Education Service network, funded by Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety.

96
Tenants Assisted



108
Matters Closed



29

Outreach Appointments Across the Region



Rights change Everything

Paul rented privately for seven years, building a life around his children's school and a supportive community. When his lease ended and he vacated, he expected a smooth exit. Instead, the agent issued a three-page report demanding repairs for items that belonged to the landlord and wouldn't allow him to attend the final inspection. The agent insisted on withholding his entire \$3,200 bond.

Our advocate explained Paul's rights around final inspections and fair wear and tear under the Residential Tenancies Act. We helped prepare his bond dispute, reviewed the agent's list line by line, and challenged excessive claims. The full bond was returned within days.

For Paul, a single parent, that money meant securing his next rental and keeping his children stable. More than that, the experience shifted something. He went from feeling powerless against an intimidating system to understanding his rights and how to use them. "I felt like they were trying to take everything I had," he said. "Having someone explain my rights and fight alongside me changed everything."

Prepared, not Terrified

Katie faced magistrate's court alone over a tenancy dispute. Her landlord claimed significant bond deductions for property maintenance, and the matter escalated to a formal hearing. Katie had never appeared in court before and felt overwhelmed by the process – she didn't know what to expect, how to present her case, or what the magistrate would want to hear.

Our advocate met with Katie before the hearing to walk her through what would happen. We reviewed all the invoices and documentation together, helped her identify the strongest arguments, and coached her on how to present clearly and confidently. Critically, we explained what to say and what not to say in front of the registrar – the difference between strengthening her position and accidentally undermining it.

On the day, Katie was prepared and composed. She understood the process, presented her case effectively, and secured a favourable outcome – the agent dropped a \$700 claim and the registrar encouraged dropping another \$150.

"Walking into that courtroom prepared instead of terrified made all the difference" Katie reflected.

HAVING SOMEONE EXPLAIN MY RIGHTS AND FIGHT ALONGSIDE ME CHANGED EVERYTHING

Education & Prevention

Prevention sits at the heart of our mission. When legal and advocacy problems are addressed early—or better yet, prevented through education—we reduce the cascade of crises that follow. A person who understands their tenancy rights before signing a lease is less likely to face eviction. A person with disability who accesses clear information about NDIS planning can navigate the system with confidence. A worker who knows their entitlements is less likely to experience wage theft. A parent who receives early family law advice can make informed decisions that prevent conflict escalation.

This year, we delivered hundreds of community and stakeholder sessions and created numerous educational resources. This empowers our community to recognise legal and advocacy issues and refer appropriately. These sessions covered family violence, estate matters, tenancy rights, disability advocacy, and navigating the NDIS.

Our approach builds capacity, not just delivers information. When we train a health worker to understand Centrelink and NDIS medical report processes, we multiply our impact across dozens of future applications. When we equip a community service worker to spot early signs of tenancy disputes, we prevent homelessness.

PREVENTION ISN'T JUST GOOD PRACTICE—IT'S HOW WE BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Youth Law Connect exemplifies this prevention model – delivering services where young people already are, before problems compound. This model places our lawyers and advocacy in local youth centres - and we're incredibly proud of the work they have been able to achieve.

Prevention requires sustainable investment. Education sessions need staff time, travel funding, and materials development – all while continuing our ongoing client work. Our Horizons 2028 strategy highlights this - setting a clear goal of balance between prevention and intervention.

Prevention isn't just good practice – it's how we build resilient communities.



Building Self-Advocacy Tools

Education resources extend our reach beyond individual appointments. A well-designed resource empowers people to understand their rights, assess their situation, and take action—often without needing ongoing assistance.

Our **Disability Support Pension Information Package**, developed in 2022, continues demonstrating this impact. The resource guides people through the complex DSP application process, supporting self-advocacy while ensuring they know when to return for professional help. For people facing financial hardship on JobSeeker, this resource can be the difference between navigating the system successfully or giving up entirely. Following its success, we're developing similar resources for NDIS and guardianship matters.

This year, our tenancy service invested heavily in prevention resources, preparing **specialised information sheets** covering everything from bond disputes to repairs responsibilities. These sheets are tailored for regional contexts and designed for multiple audiences—tenants, landlords, and support workers. We also developed and delivered **customised tenancy presentations** for different community groups, partnering with Consumer Protection to reach first-time renters, older renters, and those at risk of homelessness.

Looking Ahead: Buckle Up, Eyes Up

As this report period closes, we're launching an exciting new prevention initiative in partnership with the Road Safety Commission. The Buckle Up, Eyes Up program will deliver community-led education around new traffic camera technology rolling out regionwide—targeting workplaces, trades contractors, remote communities, and people facing disadvantage.

A WELL-DESIGNED RESOURCE EMPOWERS PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR RIGHTS, ASSESS THEIR SITUATION, AND TAKE ACTION

This program exemplifies our strategic shift toward prevention at the regional community level, connecting road safety awareness with legal rights education and demonstrating how early intervention prevents the cascade from infringement to debt to license loss to further disadvantage.

'Buckle Up, Eyes up is an initiative funded by the Road Safety Commission

How Help Happens

Making Contact

People reach us in different ways. Some call after seeing our number on Facebook, or from a referral from Palmerston or Legal Aid. Others walk into our Albany office or connect through a CRC-facilitated video appointment in their local town. No matter how someone makes contact, our Client Services Officers are their first point of help.

The intake conversation is brief but critical. In five to seven minutes, we understand what someone needs, assess whether we can assist directly, or identify the right service to support them. Not everyone needs a lawyer. Some need clear information about their rights. Others need connection to financial counselling, mental health support, or housing services. Our job is finding the right path for each person.

The below stories show what's possible when first contact leads to the right help—whether that's legal advice, warm referral, or both.

A path to help

Denny arrived in Albany determined to improve his mental health but facing overwhelming circumstances: no income, no housing, recent physical disability, and both criminal and family law issues. Our team acted quickly, exploring both legal and practical pathways. Before close of business that day, we'd made referrals to Shalom House, Anglicare, Headspace, Food Bank, and Legal Aid – all confirmed and ready to engage. Denny secured emergency accommodation the next day and accessed mental health support within the week. He told us that for the first time in a long while, he felt "like a human being."

Connecting through barriers

Lori sought help after other services disengaged due to language barriers. Over several patient contacts, we located a specialist firm able to meet her language needs and helped arrange ongoing legal advice. Because of the trust we built, we also connected Lori with the local migrant service, who advocated for interpreter use and linked her with cultural supports, reducing her isolation.

Creating Change

Resolution happens in many ways. A person calls seeking help with a tenancy dispute and, after a 20-minute advice session, feels confident negotiating directly with their landlord. A young person attends Youth Law Connect and is referred to Headspace for mental health support alongside tenancy advice. Someone receives duty lawyer assistance at court, resolving their matter that day without ongoing casework. Another person faces complex family violence and property issues requiring months of casework, court representation, and wrap-around support with Anglicare.

Each of these is successful help. Success isn't always a court outcome—it's about early engagement, appropriate triage, and connection to the right support at the right time. The types of assistance we provide include legal information, advice appointments, duty lawyer support at court, ongoing casework for complex matters, and external referrals to partner services. We measure impact not just by cases won, but by informed decision-making, early resolution, and preventing small problems from becoming crises.

This year, we processed over 2,000 enquiries. We provided information or referrals to more than 1,640 people, with 348 warm referrals where we helped someone connect to the right service—whether legal or otherwise. This reflects our Client Services Team's commitment to ensuring everyone who contacts us leaves with a clear next step, even if we're not the right service to help them.

Duty court work remains important—it's one pathway among many. But the real prevention pipeline is visible in these numbers: when people access help early, they avoid crisis. Our specialist programs take this further, wrapping legal and advocacy support with trauma-informed practice and allied partnerships, addressing the whole person, not just the legal problem.

Resolution happens in many ways. Our job is finding the right path for each person.



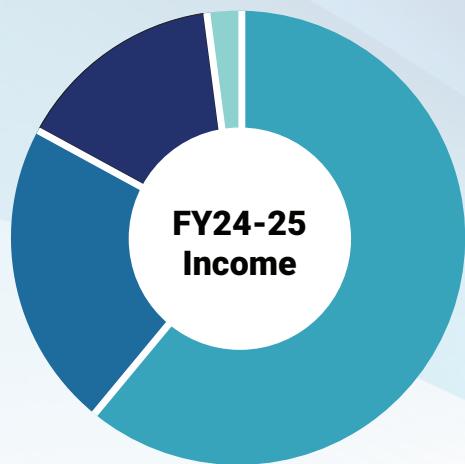
By The Numbers

Financial Health

GSCLS achieved a surplus of \$56,905 in FY25, reflecting careful financial stewardship across both core and project funding streams. Our balance sheet shows continued strength, with net assets now standing at \$446,011 and strong cash reserves providing financial flexibility.

This year we invested in the infrastructure that builds resilience—upgrading systems, strengthening workforce support, and embedding capacity for regional service delivery. We secured multi-year funding certainty with key partners including a four-year extension to our Justice partnership, laying groundwork for sustained planning and impact.

Our funding base has diversified significantly, with both core government programs and strategic project partnerships enabling innovation.



The financial result demonstrates GSCLS is resilient and adaptable. We manage complexity well—balancing multiple funding streams, maintaining strong reserves, and investing strategically. We continue to advocate for the long-term, stable funding our region deserves.

Service Outputs

1,985
People Assisted



2,243
Legal and advocacy matters



85
Duty lawyer services



248
Outreach Appointments



374
Education Sessions attendees



Client Demographics

67%
Women

33%
Men

1%
Non-binary

43%
Living with disability or mental health condition

22%
Experiencing family violence



87%
Low income (under \$49,000 annually)

6%
Under 25 years old

Client Outcomes

95%
Gave positive feedback



82%
Had improved circumstances



97%
Felt heard and understood

This year we assisted 1,985 people across the Great Southern, with 3,115 issues. Our 248 outreach appointments show our regional access model working: people get help in their own communities. Our outcome measures remain exceptionally strong, with 82% of assessed clients reporting improved circumstances and 97% feeling understood by our team — the highest in our evaluation history. These results validate our shift toward resilience-focused, accessible services that meet people where they are.



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