



Annual Report



2020–2021



**Our
Mission** | To advocate for the protection and
advancement of the needs, rights and lives
of people with disability in Queensland.

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	2
About us	2
Our people	3
Our volunteers	4
Our services	5
Who we helped	6
President & CEO report	7
Systems advocacy	8
Presentations & events	11
Human Rights Advocacy Practice	12
Mental Health Advocacy Practice	22
NDIS Advocacy Practice	24
Treasurer report	28
Financial Summary	29

Acknowledgement of Country

Queensland Advocacy respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of this land and recognises their role in our work, in the disability community and in society. QAI acknowledges the impact of colonisation and the continual social, emotional, and physical consequences it has for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

About us



Established in 1987 by a small group of passionate Queenslanders with and parents of people with disability, QAI is an independent not-for-profit advocacy organisation and specialist community legal centre for people with disability. We are first and foremost a systems advocacy organisation focused on changing attitudes and policy to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people with disability.

We started with a small team of three staff and a Management Committee run by a majority of people with disability and have always been an organisation that champions the expression *nothing about us, without us*.

Having grown immensely since 1987 to include the staff and services listed below, we are now an accredited community legal centre, have accredited Economic and Social Council status with the United Nations and run eight advocacy services with around 30 staff. In 2020, QAI became the first organisation in Queensland to voluntarily opt-in to be bound by the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld). In the face of our expansion, we have worked hard to ensure our systems advocacy remains at the core of our organisation and we are now not only guided and informed by the wisdom and lived experiences of our Management Committee, but of our many individual clients as well.

Our people

Management Committee

President	Byron Albury	
Vice President	Fiona Kennedy	
Treasurer	Meriel Stanger	
Secretary	Donna Best	
Committee Members	Brendon Donohue Niki Edwards	Ted Cole Trevor Boone

Staff as of 30 June 2021

Chief Executive Officer	Matilda Alexander	
Chief Operating Officer	Bill Kyle	
Deputy CEO & Principal Solicitor	Emma Phillips	
Principal Solicitors	Carly Dennis	Andrea de Smidt
Information and Systems Coordinator	Megan Pearce	
Senior Solicitor	Vinay Veerabhadra	
Solicitors	Alzena Mariani Beenush Khokhar Dayne Kingsford	Jess Park Saibal Kar
Systems Advocate	Sophie Wiggans	
Advocates	Elizabeth Francis Jennifer Smith Louise Martin	Sara Martin Sarah Thompson Tania Steinmuller
Social Worker & Advocate	Caitlin De Cocq Van Delwijnen	
Paralegals	Eva Thelander	Sonia Oki
Communications & Administrative Officer	Shannon Bell	
Administrative Assistants	Cate Sudbury	Rebecca Howes
Bookkeeper	Helen Della-Ricca	



Our volunteers

We would like to thank all those who have given their time and energy to assisting us in supporting our clients and community. We would not have been able to assist as many people as we did this year, were it not for our invaluable volunteers, pro bono legal support or the legal, social work and other students who choose to complete their placements with us.

Legal Volunteers

- Aaron Parry
- Adrian Ward
- Christine Steinmann
- Maria Gilson-Garza
- Mark Kleine
- Noelle Riikonen
- Priscila Laurent
- Ria Ku
- Ridmi Ambalanduwa
- Sally Newman

Barristers

- Ben McMillan
- Benedict Coyne
- David Cormack
- Joshua Creamer
- Madonna Hayes
- Nanette Noble
- Samuel Lane

Law Firms

- Allens
- Hall & Wilcox

Student Placements

- Alexandria Brown
- Alexia Gee
- Antiga Jones
- Chloe Slater
- Claudia Wilson
- Emily Conran
- Harrison Pie
- Lydia Walker
- Mitch Medcalf
- Olivia English
- Paris Sinclair
- Peter Clarke
- Qian Long
- Rachna Nagesh
- Robyn Martin
- Vishnu Parakkal

Our services

QAI has three Advocacy Practices which provide a total of eight services across various areas of need for people with disability.

Human Rights Advocacy Practice

- DRC Advocacy
- Education Advocacy
- Human Rights Law
- Justice Support Program
- Social Work



Mental Health Advocacy Practice

- Mental Health Law
- LAQ Appointed Matters



NDIS Advocacy Practice

- NDIS Appeals Support
- NDIS Decision Support



Who we helped



99%

were people with disability or experiencing mental illness



17%

were people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



84%

were people experiencing financial disadvantage



11%

were people experiencing or at risk of homelessness



29%

were people experiencing domestic or family violence



32%

were people residing in regional or remote areas



17%

were children or young people



7%

were elderly people

Services delivered

78 Ongoing advocacy services

97 Legal tasks

207 Discrete advocacy services

360 Legal advices

566 General Information given

788 Court / Tribunal representations

1,414 Referrals

3,615

Services provided

3,136

People assisted

President & CEO report



Welcome to the 2020-2021 annual report for QAI. Everyone involved with QAI is congratulated on another year of excellent advocacy for people with disability. Our staff, volunteers, management committee and members continue bold and compassionate advocacy that makes a real difference to our clients and to our society. QAI's advocacy is grounded in a set of values that reflect our identity and also grounded in human rights, in particular the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At Queensland Advocacy, we believe that all human beings are equally important, unique and of intrinsic value. Everyone should be seen and valued as a whole person, first and foremost. Society devalues groups who do not fit within a standard norm. These groups, including people with disability, are socially marginalised. As an organisation we seek to bring about a common vision where all human beings are equally valued. This will result in a society where we all benefit from the inclusion and participation of a diversity of people.

At QAI, we listen to and amplify the stories, thoughts and views people with disability who have been silenced and hidden. We regularly and repeatedly enter closed environments such as mental health wards and the forensic disability service because we believe that accountability and transparency are crucial to the human rights of those who are locked away. We have advocated for more freedoms, reduced restrictions and more autonomy consistent with human rights in the face of restrictive practices and orders limiting rights and freedoms. This year, we have struggled to keep pace with the number of people seeking to

challenge NDIS decisions; needing help getting reasonable and necessary supports to live lives that are free and equal. We have tirelessly advocated to enhance and recognise the capacity of people through guardianship and administration matters, which have also seen a stark increase in legal need. We have maintained our commitment to Queensland's Human Rights law, by signing on to them ourselves and by representation for our clients.

Through work such as this we have helped 3,137 people with 3,615 services. But important changes often require strategies for change that are bigger than individual wins. QAI is committed to advocating for changed systems to create a world which is truly inclusive.

This year, under new leadership, we have had the opportunity to reflect on our past, present and future, taking a fresh look at what we are doing and how we describe it. A strategic planning session in May with staff and management committee formed the basis for reviewing key identity and operational matters. We have undergone a restructure to better align and support the diverse services we are funded to provide. As you can see from this report we have bundled together existing services into three categories, Human Rights, NDIS and Mental Health advocacy practices. This restructure has allowed us to deliver targeted services in a holistic way and provide better care to our clients.

Through all of these internal changes, we continuously advocate for the protection and advancement of the needs, rights and lives of people with disability in Queensland. We do this in a way that matters. We do this in a way that empowers and builds capacity to self-advocate. We do this in a way that wins cases and causes significant changes to systems. We do this to build a better society for all of us.

B.C. ALBURY  

Byron Albury & Matilda Alexander



Systems advocacy

2021 has been a busy year for our Systems advocacy team, particularly in the context of proposed reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme that threatened to fundamentally alter the nature of the Scheme. As well as campaigning on the changes to the NDIS, our Systems team has advocated across a broad range of issues. The following is a brief snapshot of some of our work.

QAI has become increasingly concerned by the increase in guardianship and administration applications that has correlated with the rollout of the NDIS in Queensland. These applications are often submitted by NDIS service providers in relation to the people they support. Applications are often unsubstantiated, and some are occurring in situations where the provider has a conflict of interest and seeks financial gain. Whilst this may be an unintended consequence of the rollout of the NDIS, it is nevertheless a deeply concerning trend that has significant human rights implications for people with disability. QAI provided a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Read our submission [here](#).

Also on the topic of guardianship, in November 2020 key reforms to Queensland's guardianship laws were introduced. The changes represent a significant strengthening of the legal protections currently in place. Of particular significance is the further entrenchment of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) into the legislation's general principles and healthcare principles. To help explain these important reforms, QAI created a fact sheet which can be accessed [here](#).

QAI acknowledges the significance of Australia's first National Disability Strategy, not just in enshrining the principles of the CRPD into Australian policy but as a means of creating a fully inclusive society where all people

with disability live as equal members of the community. Whilst progress has undeniably been made, with the Strategy taking a whole-of-government approach to policy making under the CRPD, people with disability continue to suffer systemic oppression and experience poorer outcomes compared to people without disability. The new Strategy must contain a greater emphasis on implementation and accountability if meaningful change is to be achieved. Critical to this is ensuring the voices of people with disability are heard and remain at the forefront of all discussions. Read our submission on the development of the new Strategy [here](#).

Much of the 2020-21 however, will be remembered for the proposed introduction of Independent Assessments into the NDIS and the significant activism of people with disability, their families and representative organisations in opposing these reforms. Under proposed changes, people with disability would have been forced to undergo a generic, one-off assessment with a stranger. The outcome of the assessment would have determined whether the person met access or how much funding they received in their plan. QAI was strongly opposed to the introduction of mandatory Independent Assessments, raising concern that they undermined the human rights of people with disability and threatened to fundamentally alter the nature of the scheme. QAI wrote submissions to the National Disability Insurance Agency and to the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS and gave evidence at the Joint Standing Committee's public hearing in Brisbane. QAI also collaborated with a number of stakeholders to hold the 'NDIS Reforms: Pause, Reset, Co-design' forum where Queenslanders with disability, their families and supporters came together to speak about the reforms and provide feedback directly to the Minister for Seniors and Disability Services, the Honourable Craig Crawford.

Stand with us! Campaign

In March 2021, QAI joined a partnership of 15 independent disability advocacy organisations to form the Queensland Disability Advocacy Alliance and launch the Stand with us! campaign. The Alliance came together to campaign for ongoing funding for disability advocacy services in Queensland, which were then funded only until June 2021.



Over a number of weeks, Alliance members actively campaigned by:

- Holding meetings with several Members of State Parliament
- Sending letters to all Members of State Parliament
- Launching a dedicated campaign website, inviting community members to pledge their support by signing up to the campaign
- Holding rallies on Wednesday 24 March, 2021, with supporters gathering outside Queensland Parliament House in Brisbane and the local MP's office in Rockhampton.

On Wednesday 24 March, 2021, the Queensland Disability Advocacy Alliance welcomed the announcement made by the Palaszczuk Government to commit to base funding for two years to continue advocacy services in Queensland. The Alliance is continuing to work with the Queensland Government to ensure we have a sustainable advocacy sector that will continue to uphold the rights of people with disability in our community.



Systems advocacy

Submissions

Topic	Submitted to
Disability Services and Other Legislation (Worker Screening) Amendment Bill 2020 (Qld)	Queensland Government July 2020
Inquiry into the National Disability Insurance Quality and Safeguards Commission	Joint Standing Committee on NDIS July 2020
Inquiry into the National Disability Insurance Scheme Market in Queensland	Queensland Productivity Commission Aug 2020
2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education	Department of Education, Skills and Employment Sep 2020
Support Coordination	National Disability Insurance Agency Sep 2020
National Disability Strategy	Department of Social Services Oct 2020
Restrictive Practices	Disability Royal Commission Dec 2020
NDS and NDIS Outcomes Frameworks	Department of Social Services Dec 2020
Inquiry into the NDIS Market in Queensland – Draft Report	Queensland Productivity Commission Feb 2021
Access and Eligibility Policy with Independent Assessments & Planning Policy for Personalised Budgets and Plan Flexibility	National Disability Insurance Agency Feb 2021
Independent Assessments	Joint Standing Committee on NDIS Feb 2021

“Great advocacy today at the Joint Standing Committee!!!
Good teamwork thinking on your feet in response to the questions.
I’ve been listening in and was so impressed with your collective capacity
to withstand the questions and come up with excellent responses.
A masterclass in advocacy!”

Presentations & events

Presentations

Topic	Presented to
Disability Advocacy and Human Rights	Bond University Law students
The Human Rights Act Community Legal Education Showcase	Community Legal Centres Queensland State Conference
Using the Human Rights Act to Protect the Rights of Students with Disabilities in QLD	Community Resource Unit Online Workshop for Parents
Disability Advocacy and Human Rights	QUT Social Work students

United Nations event

It all begins with education:
Realising inclusive education in Australia and the roadmap to change



Together with our colleagues at Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA), QAI hosted an online side event to the 13th Session of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). During the event, a diverse panel of guests, including several young people with disability, reflected on Australia's progress under the Convention and highlighted the changes needed to ensure inclusive education becomes more than just a mirage, but a reality.

The event is now available for public viewing on the Queensland Advocacy YouTube channel. QAI thanks the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Department of Social Services for their support in making this event possible.

Human Rights Advocacy Practice

QAI's Human Rights Advocacy Practice is a broad Practice comprised of a legal service, three non-legal advocacy services, a social work service and systems advocacy. These diverse services are united by the strong human rights focus which underpins all of the Practice's work. The service areas work separately and collaboratively, with internal referrals frequently made between services, to provide appropriate clients with wraparound support. There is a strong, positive relationship between our individual and systems advocacy work, with insights gained through the provision of our individual advocacy informing our prioritisation and understanding of systemic issues.

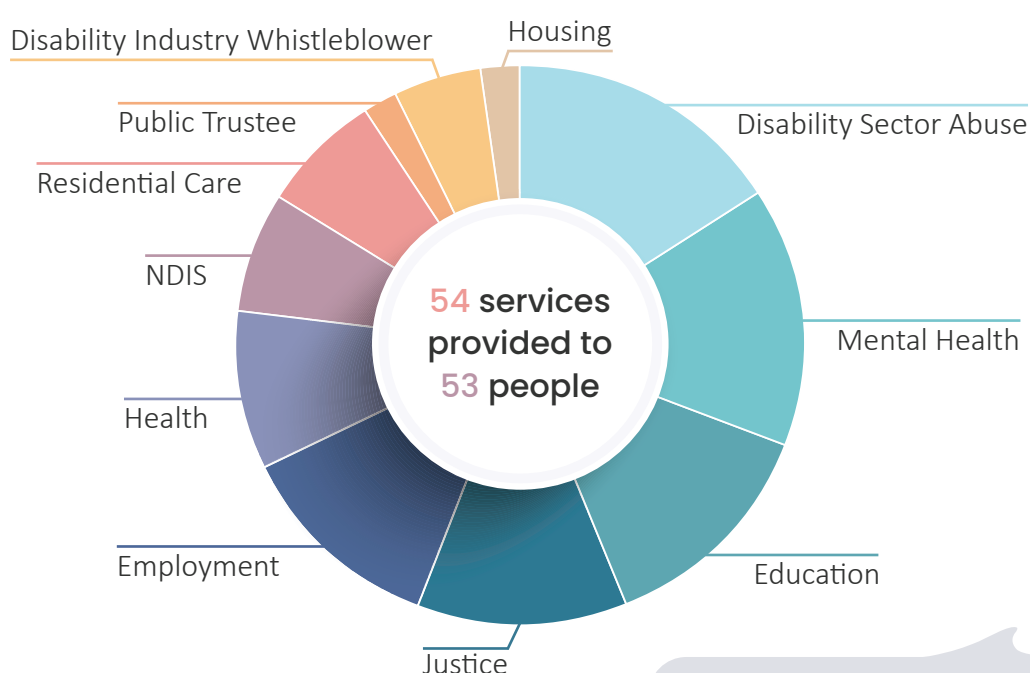
Disability Royal Commission Advocacy

What we do

Disability Royal Commission Advocacy provides advocacy support for people who wish to engage with the Disability Royal Commission and need help planning how best to tell their story, communicating their support needs to the commission and engaging in a session.

Client Focus Areas

Please note clients can have more than one focus area.



"You are always welcome in my home Tania. Your support and empathy has been a great comfort to me. I will be forever grateful for all your efforts... Your service is so valued it is beyond measure. Thank you will never be enough."

"Without Tania I could not have done my submission. She went above and beyond to support me throughout the entire process, as she was there for every step of the way. I couldn't have done this with any other person... she is absolutely outstanding."

"I very much doubt that I would have gone ahead with a submission to the Commission without your help in preparing and presenting it. Not much point in having a Commission without independent professional advice as I, and expect everyone else, this was a novel experience."



Case Study - Alice

Alice* has lived with mental illness for most of her adult life and has had to navigate the mental health system for twenty years. Over such time, Alice has been forcibly hospitalised and medicated; chemically and psychically restrained (including straight jacketed); placed in solitary confinement; and abused by staff and other mental health patients.

During an episode of involuntary detention at a mental health facility, Alice believes she was raped by a hospital staff member. As she was heavily medicated at the time, Alice was unsure of the identity of the person/s involved. Attempts to further elucidate details, via Right to Information applications, proved futile with the provision of scant and/or heavily redacted information from Queensland Health. Alice provided a formal statement to the police in relation to the matter, however without further evidence there was a general unwillingness to pursue formal investigations. Alice believes that as a person with mental illness and a history of hospitalisation, she is no longer being 'fully heard by anyone' nor believed.

Alice bravely wished to convey her lived experiences with full transparency to the Disability Royal Commission (DRC), including naming the names of her abusers; and speaking to specific episodes of neglect and exploitation at the hands of certain professionals and institutions within the mental health system. Mindful of the sensitive nature of this story, and the resultant privacy and confidentiality issues involved, Alice readily agreed with the Advocate's recommendations that a Private Session was the most appropriate setting to share her story with the Commission.

Alice was fully supported by the Advocate during the Private Session process. Alice worked closely with the Advocate to compile and submit supporting materials and draft a statement listing 23 recommendations, together with comprehensive annotations. Alice was hopeful that her insights would be considered by the Commission and shed light on the plight of those living with mental illness. Alice commented in her statement that: *"It is my hope that this and other people's suggestions and stories will bring about real change in the Mental Health Area and a restoration of People's rights and dignity and freedom too."*

At Private Session, the Commissioner was moved by Alice's story and most grateful for her suggestions. The Commissioner praised Alice for her strength and fortitude in coming forward and contributing to the important work of the Royal Commission. Alice came away from her Session, feeling empowered, proud and relieved. Alice conveyed the poignant comment at the Session's end: *"I feel like I have finally been heard"*.

*Name has been changed, stock image used.

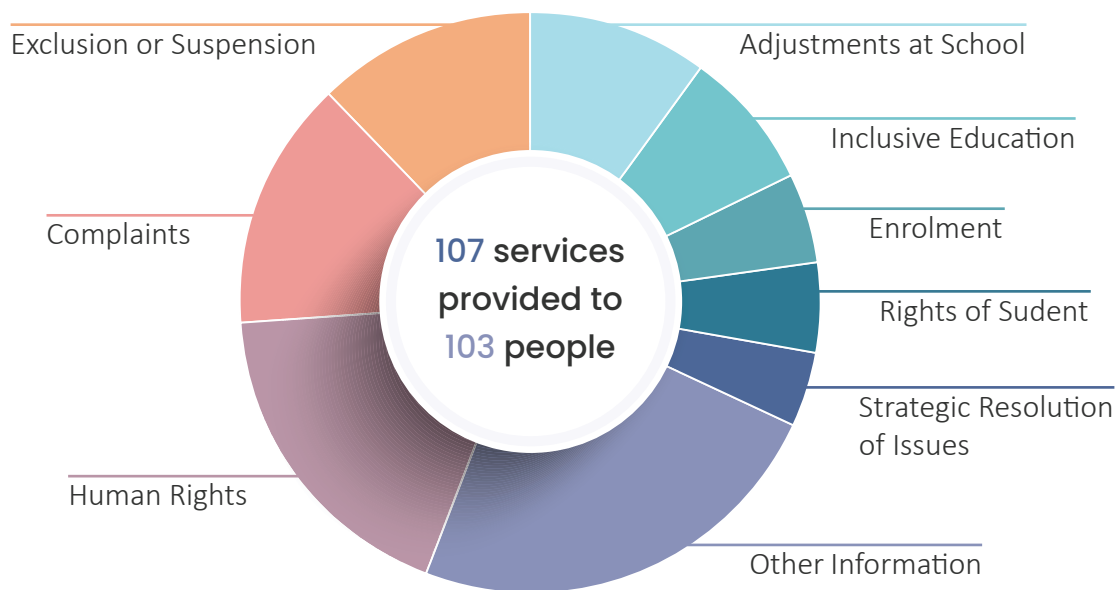
Education Advocacy

What we do

Education Advocacy is for people in the state school or home-schooling system, who need advocacy support to resolve a complex or protracted complaint at the Internal Review stage with the Department of Education.

How we assisted

"A lot more funding needed for advocacy services to support families within the education system. So incredibly grateful for QAI's ongoing support."




"Caitlin and all your staff have been absolutely amazing, helping me and advocating for me."

Case Study - Andy

Andy* is a young indigenous student in year eight who had been permanently excluded from his school in North Queensland following an incident of verbal and physical escalation. Andy and his mother felt that the incident occurred as a result of a disruption in his daily routine and a lack of preparation around the changes. These are known triggers for Andy due to his disability – intellectual impairment and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Despite the COVID related disruptions in 2020 Andy and his mother considered that his





Andy's mother was referred to EAS by the Autism Hub for assistance to appeal the exclusion decision. Initially we assisted by;

- discussing the situation and reviewing documentation, correspondence and support plans;
- providing information around the process to appeal the decision;
- drafting a letter of appeal;
- discussing the Principal's response to the appeal; and
- drafting a further response to the Principal's response.

The Principal's decision was amended to an exclusion from the school for a period of four (4) months.

Unfortunately, when the exclusion period ended, Andy was not able to easily re-enroll at the school, due to concerns of teachers at the school. Very limited educational support and tools were provided to Andy during this period, and he missed 4 months of schooling.

Andy's mother contacted the EAS after several weeks of communicating with the Regional Case Manager about Andy's education moving forward. The EAS spent another 23 hours working with Andy, his mother, the Autism Hub and the Assistant Regional Director to negotiate Andy's enrolment, appropriate supports and transition to a new school.

Andy is at a new school and has made a new friend. His hours at school are still reduced and his mother is working closely with the school to ensure he is included and has access to appropriate supports at school.

Andy's* mother has provided the following feedback:

"I really can't thank you enough for all the help and assistance you have provided not only to me by to Andy in being able to finally attend school and get the education he deserves. I will definitely reach out in the future if need be, I'm hoping that's not the case and Andy can succeed at school."

The following feedback was provided by Department staff following the resolution of Andy's* matter:

"Just ringing to let you know that Andy has successfully enrolled at [the new school]. He started school yesterday. He had a wonderful day of all reports. I just wanted to thank you for your support in what's been a really challenging time. We wish all the best for the young person and hope he does well there. The region and both schools have put a lot of support and planning into his transition to this new high school. We wish you all the best for him and his family. Thank you for your support."*

*Name has been changed, stock image used.

Human Rights Law

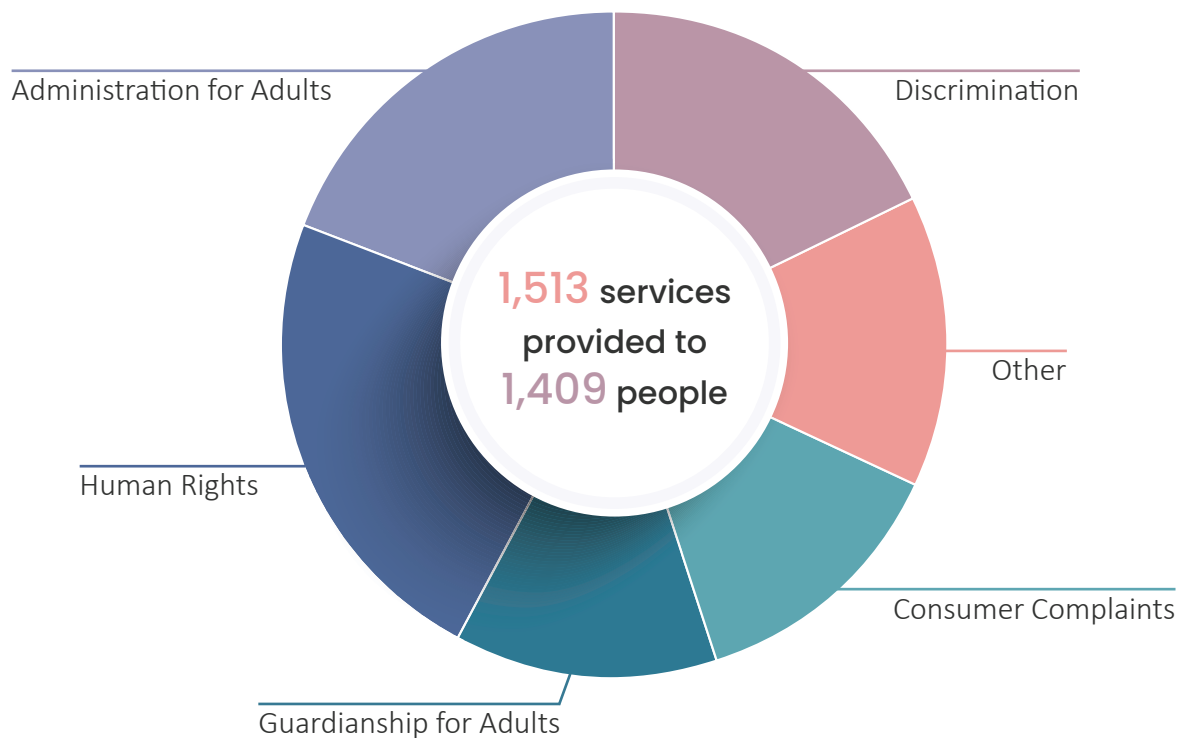
What we do

Human Rights Law provides legal advice and representation for people with disability who need legal assistance to protect their human rights and covers, guardianship and administration, restrictive practices, forensic orders disability, discrimination, and human rights violations.

How we assisted

"I was highly satisfied with the services I received. The legal jargon was put in simple, easy to understand language that allowed me to be more involved in my QCAT proceeding."

"Thank you for your kind and professional representation last Thursday. We are so very grateful for all your work and effort to assist [client] and support us through conciliation. Please also extend a warm thank you to your team... we appreciate the support from QAI."



"I cannot thank you enough for everything yesterday and all your extensive preparations leading up to conciliation. I was extremely lucky to have such an intelligent, supportive and well prepared team in my corner."

"I note the excellent results regarding your client satisfaction. It is a testament to the excellent service provided by QAI, as always."



Case Study – Amber

Amber* is a 38-year-old woman with significant disability, who requires a wheelchair for access at all times, has small stature and shortened limbs. Due to health issues associated with her disability, Amber is required to frequently access a Brisbane-based public hospital for specialist treatment.

Amber's small stature and shortened limbs makes accessing automated ticket machines in commercial car parking facilities impossible. Amber lives independently with minimal support, and drives herself in a modified vehicle to all healthcare appointments. While an NDIS participant, her funding does not extend to cover travel to medical appointments by taxi.

Amber had been utilising designated disabled parking bays in the basement of the Hospital for a number of years, in order to attend her specialist appointments. This arrangement was facilitated by her specialist. Access to the basement parking is regulated by security guards.

In recent months, Amber was denied access to this parking by a security guard on each occasion she sought entry, notwithstanding that there were multiple available spaces visible at the time of each refusal. There was no reasonable explanation provided for this denial, only a direction that Amber instead use a disabled carpark adjacent to the hospital. As this carpark only featured a single car park and is situated on an uphill incline, it was not accessible for Amber. This inability to park in an accessible carpark was restricting her ability to access the health services that are essential for her to maintain her health, and to live.

Amber sought QAI's assistance when her attempts to resolve this matter directly with the liaison officer through the Hospital's complaints process was unsuccessful. QAI wrote to the Complaints Coordinator of the Hospital, reminding the Hospital of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld) and expressing concern that the Hospital had not given proper consideration to Amber's human rights in making the decision to deny her ongoing access to appropriate parking. We sought reinstatement of her access, along with the introduction of protocols to ensure these access rights were respected by all relevant staff.

QAI's letter prompted an immediate response and, within 10 days, our client received a telephone call from the Hospital Director who offered a sincere apology for Amber's treatment and an assurance that the matter had been addressed and appropriate training introduced to ensure staff were aware of their obligations. Amber was also provided with details of a direct contact person within the Hospital to contact in the event of any problems. Amber has not experienced any further barriers to accessing this parking.

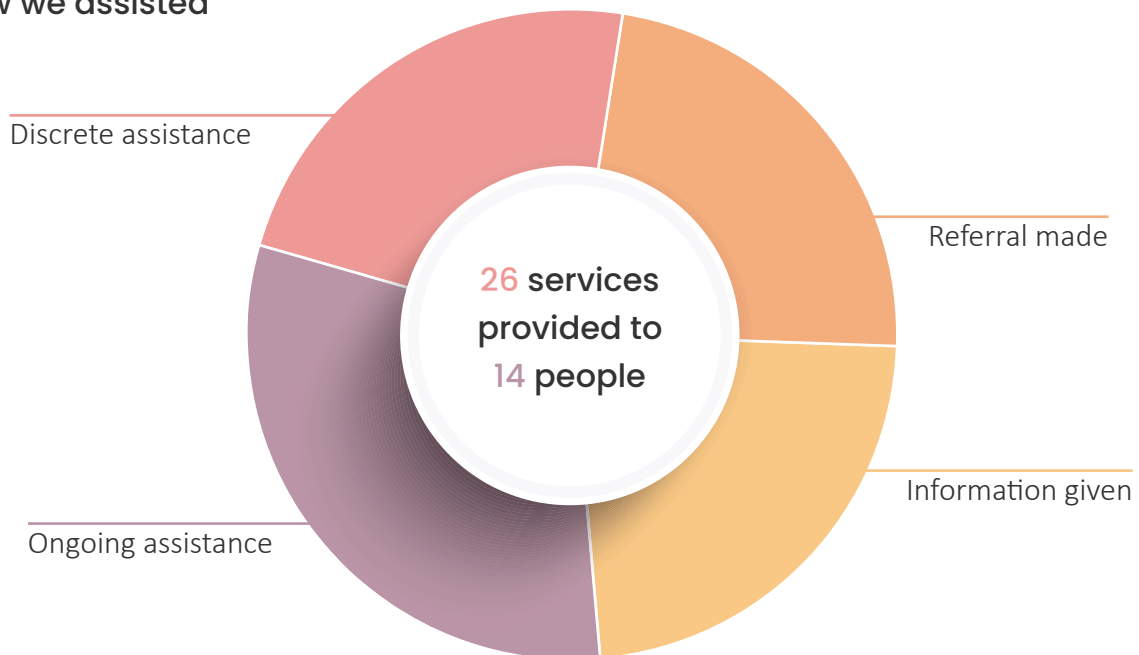
*Name has been changed.

Social Work

What we do

QAI's Social Work assists people engaged with another QAI service, primarily Human Rights Law, who may need further support to navigate systems or processes to increase their quality of life.

How we assisted



71% of social work clients were experiencing or were at risk of domestic or family violence

Case Study - Mary

Mary* lives with her carer in a rural regional Queensland town. Mary has a diagnosis of schizophrenia which she has been managing independently for many years. Following the passing of her husband, Mary's siblings were concerned about a decline in her mental health. Mary's siblings contacted the hospital and Mary was admitted to hospital for 11 days. During this time Mary's siblings applied to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) seeking an urgent interim order appointing them guardian and administrators. In accordance with the application, QCAT made an interim order appointing Mary's sibling for decisions related to all financial matters and personal matters, specifically accommodation; with whom Mary has contact and/ or visits; health care; and the provision of services, such as NDIS, for a period of three months. Mary was not involved in the hearing of the





Prior to the QCAT order Mary didn't have much to do with her siblings and they all lived a number of hours away from her. Since the appointment of Mary's siblings, their relationship dramatically declined. Mary felt as though she had lost all privacy, autonomy, and control over her own life. At the same time, Mary did not feel that her siblings were helping her, and Mary sought her own support.

Mary became a participant in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and began receiving therapeutic and skill building supports. Mary engaged well with her mental health treating team and they reported significant progress.

One of the biggest points of tension for Mary was her finances. Mary's Disability Support Pension and payout from her late partners estate were now being managed by her siblings. Mary was only receiving \$600 per fortnight from her siblings and was struggling to pay all of her bills, despite having previously asked for an increase.

Mary received initial advice from Human Rights Law (HRL) in relation to the Guardianship and Administration order. Mary was also referred to the Social Work Service (SWS) for assistance around capacity building, budgeting, negotiating with her guardians and administrators, obtaining relevant medical and psychological evidence for a QCAT review, and developing a personal statement provided to QCAT, outlining Mary's capacity and the impact the order had on her.

When Mary's order was due to be reviewed, Mary was referred back to HRL for ongoing legal assistance and advice to follow-up a review hearing date, obtain further medical evidence clarifying previous reports, prepare for the proceeding, as well as legal representation at QCAT hearing. At the review hearing, the Member considered Mary's evidence and her wishes. QCAT considered that as Mary did not have any decisions to make a Guardianship order was not necessary. The Member further considered the strained relationship between Mary and her siblings and Mary's history of managing her income and paying her bills. QCAT changed the order for Administrator appointing the Public Trustee of Queensland for Mary's assets except for her Disability Support Pension. In addition, the Member granted a confidentiality order for the reports provided by Mary's Psychologist.

Mary is very happy with the outcome and feels she has regained her independence. Mary hopes to re-build the relationships with her siblings one day.

*Name has been changed, stock image used.

"Caitlin has been extremely helpful throughout this entire process; we are very appreciative."

"Really good, especially Caitlin, who was kind and helpful to talk to."

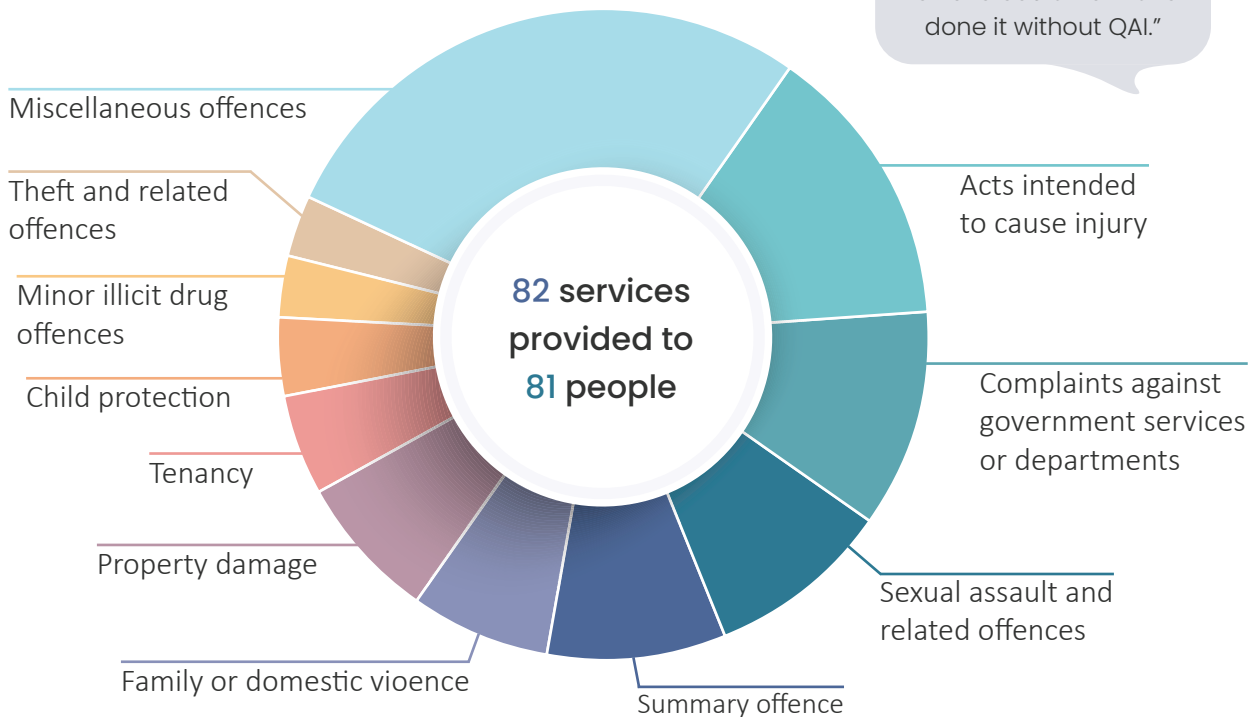
"Absolutely amazing, Caitlin is so lovely. She made me feel so at ease about the situation."

Justice Support Program

What we do

Justice Support Program provides non-legal advocacy support for people with cognitive impairment who are involved in the criminal justice system. We help to understand and navigate the system, achieve a fair outcome, and address social and personal causes.

How we assisted



"Very good help and felt she could not have done it without QAI."

"I was extremely happy with the services that I received; Liz did an excellent job."


"Very grateful for the help, it was also very empowering."

Case Study - Thomas

Thomas* is fifty years old, has mild to moderate intellectual disability, autism and mental illness. He has been bullied for most of his life, particularly since 2016 by members of a family living nearby.

Recently Thomas was quite brutally assaulted by a group led by the eldest child of that family. The police did not charge the youth because Thomas's disability reduced the credibility of his identification of the offender. It was difficult for Thomas to cope with this, as he had always been taught that he would get into trouble if he hurt another person and he perceived that the Police failed to act when another youth hurt him.





Thomas twice spat on shoppers at the local shopping centre. He was charged with two counts of common assault.

The JSP Advocate accompanied Thomas and his mother to Court and arranged for the Prosecution to assist Thomas to adjourn to allow time for his Legal Aid application to be processed. JSP also assisted by explaining to Legal Aid about an incorrect entry in Thomas's application form so that aid could be approved.

A local law firm was assigned to represent Thomas and the lawyer was very thorough, keeping Thomas and his mother up to date as to what, where and why the next step of the legal process occurred. However, the lawyer was rarely available to take calls and it was the Justice Support Program that Gary and his mum turned to if they were unsure or had forgotten what the lawyer had said.

The JSP Advocate helped Thomas and his mother navigate each step of the criminal justice process, meeting them at each of five appearances at Court, keeping Thomas calm and explaining in simple terms why he had to be there and what was likely to happen.

Thomas realised very soon that he should never have taken out his anger on the strangers and he vowed never to let himself get to that stage again, however he never really learned anything from being arrested or going to Court. His overriding impression was fear that he would be taken off to jail while he was there.

Thomas's charges were eventually dismissed on the basis that he would never be able to understand what happens at Court or how to defend himself. The process took 12 months to finalise, much longer than usual because of a radical change in Court process during that time.

Throughout that year, the JSP Advocate assisted by reminding Thomas that his lawyer did not think he would be sent to jail, reassuring him that the Court staff were actually on his side and were there to protect his legal rights, reminding him that it was important he behaved himself while he was at the Courthouse and encouraging him to reach out and talk to someone about his troubles in future, rather than expressing his concerns through his behaviour.

Even though Thomas' case was quite time consuming, it was extremely satisfying for the JSP Advocate. Thomas and his mum were very grateful for the support they received, which was instrumental for them, as the lawyer may not have realised the extent to which Thomas' disability limited him from understanding or coping with the most basic aspects of the criminal justice process.

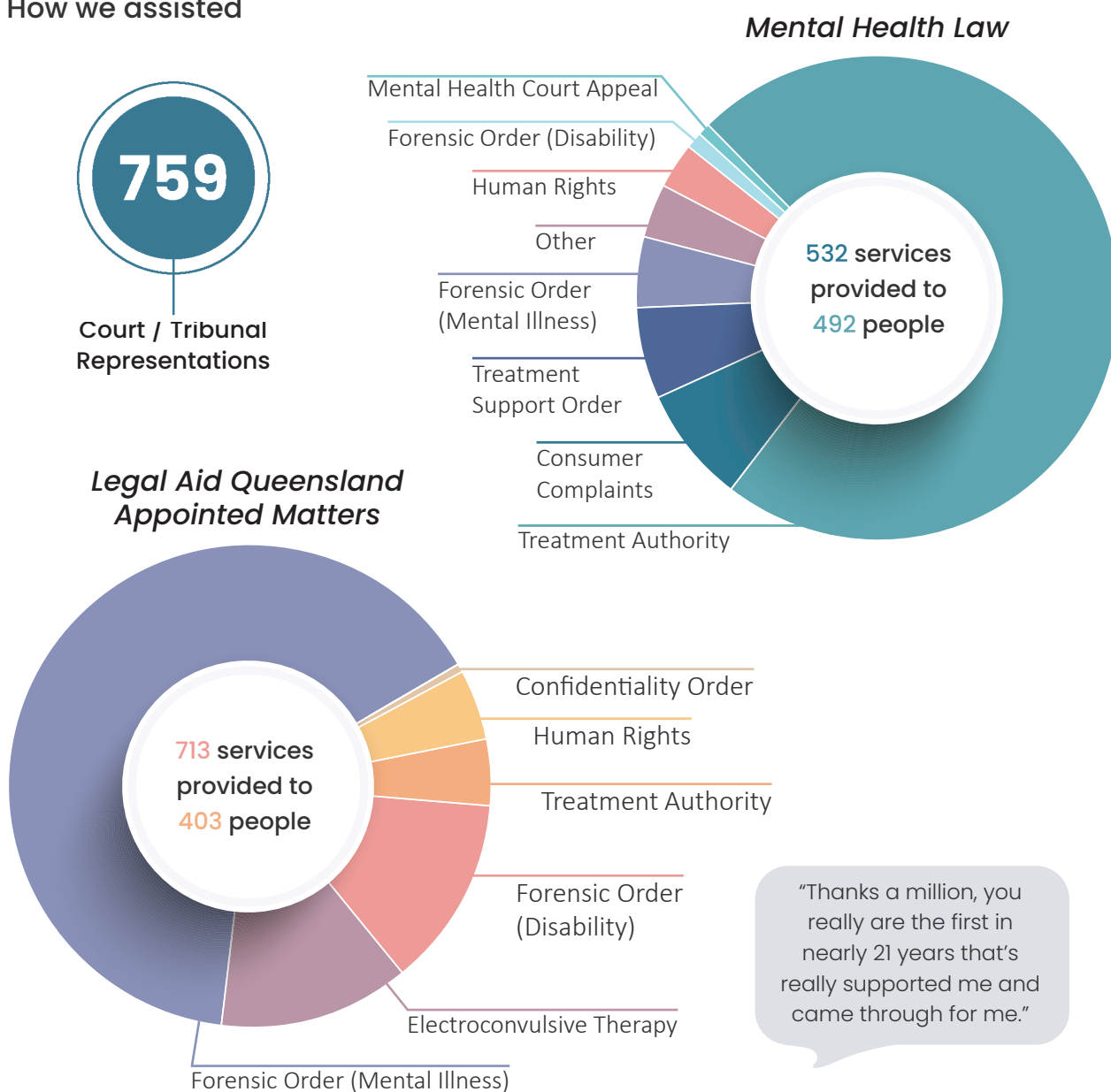
*Name has been changed, stock image used.


Mental Health Advocacy Practice

What we do

The Mental Health Advocacy Practice helps individuals receiving involuntary treatment for mental illness in Queensland. We provide legal advice for matters arising under the Mental Health Act 2016 (QLD) and representation before the Mental Health Review Tribunal for people subject to treatment authorities, forensic orders (mental health or disability), applications for electroconvulsive therapy, fitness for trial reviews, confidentiality order applications and applications for transfers. In exceptional circumstances we provide legal representation before the Mental Health Court for appeals of Mental Health Review Tribunal Decisions.

How we assisted





"It is inspiring to come across fellow professionals who demonstrate great skill and personal qualities as they extend themselves for the benefit of those who seek their help."

Case Study - Mary

Mary* was placed on a Forensic Order (Mental Health) and had been subject to involuntary treatment for (8) eight years for offences related to Aggravated Assault Occasioning Bodily Harm and Public Nuisance. Over the years Mary has been able to build insight into her mental illness and understand the need for treatment to ensure she remains well. Due to this, Mary has maintained stability in her mental state for an extended period of time, despite some ongoing substance use.

QAI provided representation before the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Mary's review hearing. At the time of the hearing, Mary's treating team initially recommended that the Forensic Order be confirmed to allow for more consistent engagement with the treating team.

Mary had been working hard and had requested to be treated on a less restrictive order in acknowledgement of her mental stability. The treating psychiatrist had recommended a continuation of the Forensic Order although oral evidence presented at the hearing by the extended treating team supported a less restrictive approach to treatment. QAI made submissions to the Mental Health Review Tribunal expressing the client's views, wishes and preferences but also noted that it would be open to the MHRT to consider a revocation of the Forensic Order and a step down to a Treatment Support Order as the assertive case management was not due to any risk to the community. The MHRT decided to revoke the Forensic Order and replaced it with a Treatment Support Order.

*Name has been changed.

"I really appreciate your service. You were always well prepared, had great communication, welcoming, understanding, and strategic in your verbal and written interaction. It was always easy to understand the process and what to expect next. I couldn't have had any one better working with me."

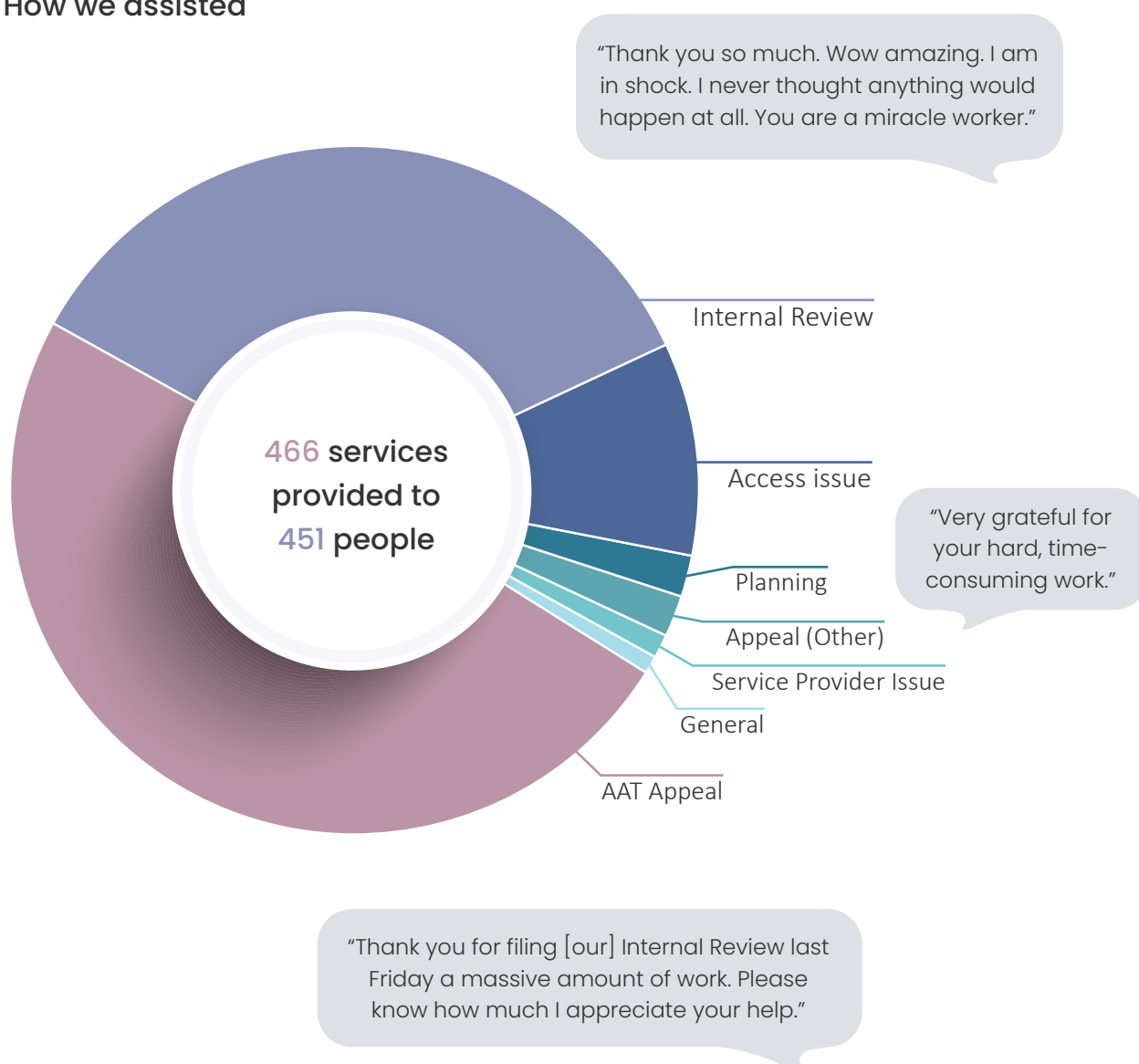
NDIS Advocacy Practice

NDIS Appeals Support

What we do

NDIS Appeals Support is for people wishing to challenge a decision made by the NDIA who need an advocate to guide and support them through the internal review or external appeals process. We provide both ongoing support to clients through the appeal process and discrete advice appointments on a weekly basis to provide information, templates and advice to clients to pursue their appeal independently.

How we assisted





Through the year, the NDIS Appeals team supported a number of clients to access the NDIS. Our clients have included people on refugee re-settlement programs, where interpreters were required and people with extremely limited family support. A huge challenge for the team has been obtaining medical and allied health reports which address the access criteria. In one case, once the appeal commenced the team were able to access the attorney general's disbursement fund and commission a pain specialist report to support a claim. In another, the team were able to facilitate the use of an interpreter to improve the quality of a report.

The team is now seeing less access appeals but disputes about support is increasing. These disputes can be very complex with 10 or more supports in dispute common. They can take a significant amount of time to resolve often leaving our clients with insufficient support whilst these supports are under review at the AAT. In one case a client was left with no support due to a change in the management of her plan (done without cause). As she was in a regional area finding NDIA registered supports suitable to meet her needs was particularly challenging. While her matter is still in dispute at the AAT, the advocate was able to have the management of the plan changed urgently through persistent and effective advocacy. This at least has provided the client with some limited support whilst the dispute continues.

"Hi Sara, Thank you so much for been patient with me as you have made this so much easier. It does mean a lot that you can relate to somethings as you would see it and it's just a struggle each and everyday. Thank you again."

"Thank you for caring as it does mean more then you know as it's so scary everyday knowing I have no one that really cares and I know you get paid for it but it means a lot that you are their."

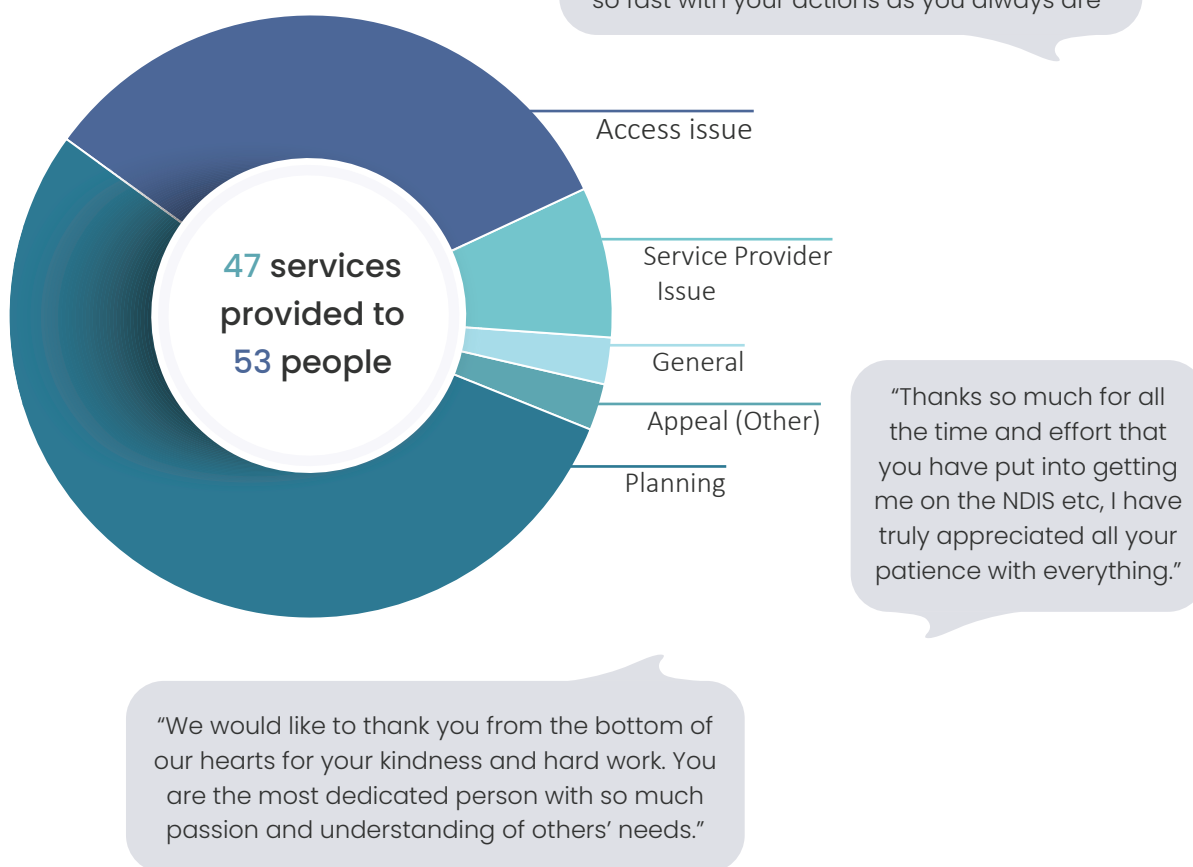
"Hi Sara, Thank you for compiling all of this for me - that's no small amount of work. Thank you also for getting this all together in time for my weekend appointments - I greatly appreciate it. The information you have provided, while a little overwhelming, is also very helpful. I have read through the majority of it, and found it to be detailed and concise."

NDIS Decision Support

What we do


NDIS Decision Support is for people aged between 18 and 65 who have limited informal or formal decision-making support, limited decision-making capacity, and require assistance to engage with NDIS processes. Both discrete and ongoing support is provided, and intense support may be provided in certain circumstances.

How we assisted



Case Study - Alison

Alison* has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and an Acquired Brain Injury that has caused substantial memory loss. Prior to the Covid 19 Pandemic, Alison had lived in various boarding houses, before becoming homeless. During the pandemic, Alison was taken onto a government program for homeless people and transferred to hotel accommodation, hundreds of kilometres away. With assistance of a housing organisation, Alison moved into a unit of her own. Alison does not recall making any of these decisions.



Alison was referred to QAI by the housing organisation to assist her to access the NDIS. At this point, Alison did not have any supports other than the housing organisation.

Alison had no personal documentation and no supporting evidence. At that time, our Decision Support Advocate worked to facilitate a warm referral to ART (Access Referral Team). This was via Queenslanders with Disability Network NDIS Targeted Outreach Project. ART specialise in NDIS access and were able to undertake assessments and reports for Alison. Two-way referral is well established between our Decision Support team and QDN/ART and an option to refer Alison back to QAI when the NDIS Access process was complete was agreed.

Early this year, Alison was referred back to QAI's NDIS Advocacy Practice for decision support. Alison was living some distance from the QAI offices but because of her limited memory, and lack of any technology including a phone, it was necessary to travel for appointments.

Alison required decision support advocacy to understand the NDIS process and pre-planning, interact with the NDIS and support during her NDIS Planning Meeting.

As Alison was unable to remember what had happened at prior appointments, we agreed to a process where the advocate would reiterate what had been said at the appointments and check in that Alison's wishes were being followed. Although Alison did not remember previous conversations there was often an overall thread of consistency, where Alison would express the same or similar choices time after time.

One of these choices concerned reconnecting with family after losing touch for many years. Alison was worried that her family would not want to see her and did not want to impose.

Reconnecting with family was incorporated as an NDIS Goal in Alison's NDIS Plan, and was often discussed with Alison. Alison received sufficient supports within her first NDIS Plan, but this needed to be carefully implemented as Alison was unused to having any type of support, did not want a phone and would not remember appointments. An occupational therapist was engaged, and made friends with Alison in a professional way.

After three attempts, a suitable Support Coordinator was found. This Support Coordinator connected with Alison and supports were gently established. A close family member was located who really wanted to reconnect with Alison and although they live a distance away, they are again a part of Alison's life.

Alison's life living with PTSD and Acquired Brain Injury took her on a journey that she was not equipped to navigate. we hope that as the NDIS evolves from here, Alison will truly be able to choose her own direction.

*Name has been changed

Treasurer report

It is with great pleasure that I present QAI's Financial Report for the year ending 30th June 2021. I would like to thank Haywards Chartered Accountants for the preparation of the Audited Financials and their services throughout the year.

In 2020-21 QAI commenced a new five-year funding agreement encompassing a twenty-five percent increase in base funding with Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) which includes funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services. New two-year agreements were started with the Department of Social Services (DSS) in relation to our NDIS Appeals, Systems Advocacy and NDIS Decision Support programs as well as an increase in funding for the continuation of our Disability Royal Commission Advocacy agreement. I would like to thank DJAG, DSS and the Commonwealth Attorney-General for their continued support as well as the one-off initiatives provided to support QAI and other legal assistance services around the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the year.

2020-21 saw QAI invest heavily in equipment and infrastructure in response to the demands placed on the organisation by COVID-19. Telecommunication, internet and computer support services underwent major upgrades

in the year. There was also a substantial investment in computer equipment which has resulted in staff now being flexible in how they work and well placed to continue the delivery of QAI's services despite lockdowns and other COVID-19 restrictions.

QAI's income in the year increased by over twelve percent to nearly three million dollars. Despite the demands placed on the organisations resources by COVID-19 QAI was still able to finish the year with a small surplus. I am confident that QAI is well placed to continue delivering quality services and meet its ongoing financial commitments in the future.

I would like to thank QAI's financial staff, Helen Della-Ricca and Bill Kyle for their work throughout the year and their assistance and guidance in enabling me to perform the role of Treasurer. I would also like to thank the Management Committee and all QAI staff for their support and commitment to advocating for and supporting people with disability in Queensland.

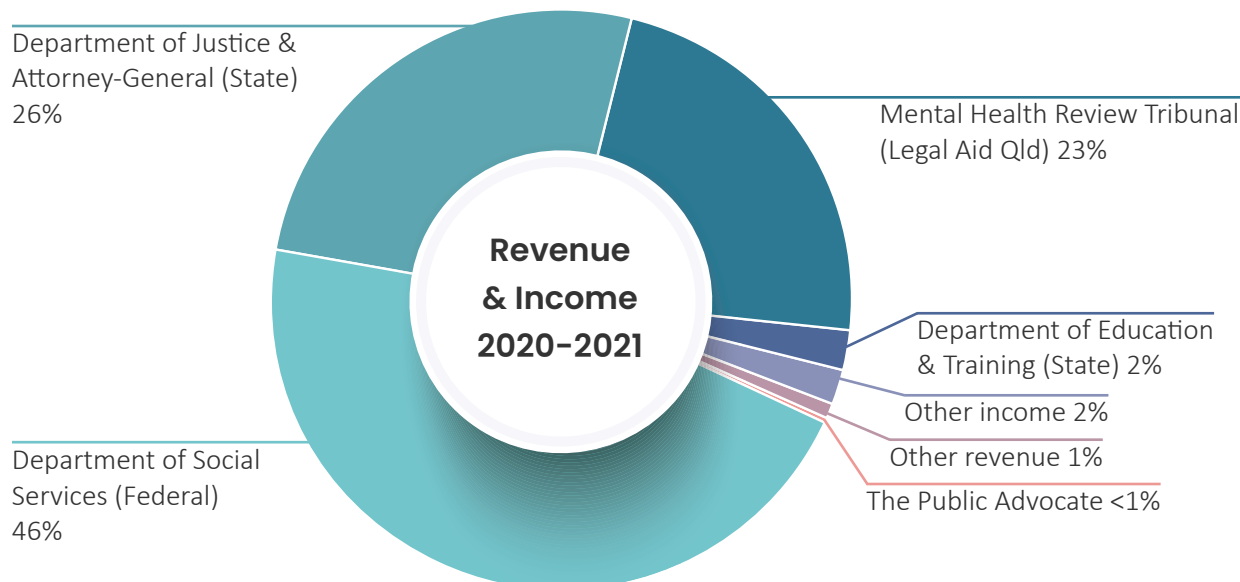


With love

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Stanger'.

Meriel Stanger

Financial summary



Profit and loss summary

Total revenue	\$2,906,477.03
Other income	\$66,150.61
Total expenses	- \$2,921,896.07
Net surplus	\$50,731.57

The full audited financial report is available upon request.

Funding bodies



**Queensland
Government**



Australian Government



9am-4:30pm Monday-Friday



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