



Annual Report 2021 – 2022



Seniors Rights Service



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Seniors Rights Service is a proud member of



Always was, Always will be, Aboriginal land

Seniors Rights Service recognises and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Australia's First Nations Peoples and their ongoing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders – past, present and emerging.

Welcome to our Annual Report 2021 – 2022

Protecting and advancing the rights of older people

Seniors Rights Service supports older people to know their rights and be empowered to assert these rights by providing free specialist legal services, aged care advocacy and information across the breadth of NSW. We are a not for profit community organisation that is independent of government and has been supporting older people for over 36 years.

Our Vision

A society that respects and upholds the rights of older people.

Our Purpose

The purpose of Seniors Rights Service is to raise awareness and empower older people to activate, uphold, extend and defend their individual rights. We foster communities to respect and value seniors and their rights. We achieve our purpose by providing accessible and confidential legal services, aged care advocacy and information.

Our Service Principles

In all of its endeavours, Seniors Rights Service will:

- empower older people as rights holders and active contributors to society
- provide high quality, appropriate and timely services
- provide equitable access to services for seniors, regardless of race, nationality or ethnic origin, gender, marital status, disability, religion, political beliefs, sexual preference or any other characteristic
- support capacity development of staff to ensure they can deliver high quality services
- collaborate with other organisations in pursuit of common goals
- work with broader civil society to foster respect for older members of society and their individual rights

Our Priority Populations

Seniors Rights Service prioritises engagement with older people who:

- are disadvantaged and vulnerable
- are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- reside in regional, rural and remote locations
- are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or other

At a Glance

Our Services

Total enquiries

11466

Legal

2462

Advocacy

5700

Intake referrals

1353

Aged care navigator

390

Community engagement

1017

information sessions at expos,
conferences, and webinars

Social Media and website



Facebook Followers

2865

Engagements, up from 263

482



LinkedIn Followers

725

Engagements, up from 72

363



Instagram Followers

897

Engagements, up from 53

158



Twitter Followers

1315

Engagements, up from 27

159



Site traffic is up

26%

Time active on site up

15%

Comparing July 2021
to July this year

Our Board

Seniors Rights Service thanks all our Board members for their guidance and thoughtful contributions over the year. Ours is a voluntary Board and we acknowledge the time they generously give to the organisation.



Margaret Duckett
President

Margaret has held various senior roles including Director of the NSW Office of Ageing. Her career has been primarily in the health and social sectors, building on her science background in terms of health promotion, advocacy and policy development. Margaret has extensive experience in government and political processes, and strategic policy development and implementation.



Elaine Leong
Vice President

A career governance and legal professional to the for-purpose sector, Elaine holds a portfolio of professional, pro bono and volunteer roles. Elaine is the general counsel and company secretary of Australia's oldest charity, The Benevolent Society, and partner in a boutique law firm with a focus on making the law accessible to individuals, families and charities.



Ross Halfacree

Ross has held senior roles in both government and corporate sectors, most recently with large US, Danish and Swedish medical device manufacturers. Primary roles have involved business strategy design, risk management, sales and marketing strategies. Ross is on the fundraising and marketing sub-committee of Odyssey House, and supports his local community with pro-bono mentorship and coaching for small businesses and individuals.



Barbara O'Neill

Barbara is a Dunghutti woman and an Indigenous Trauma and Recovery Practitioner, who specialises in the support of care leavers from institutions and the Stolen Generations. Barbara is an Aboriginal Support Worker at the Junction Neighbourhood Centre in Maroubra. Untold Stories, her DVD and presentation at the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference, drawing on her own post-graduate research, provided unique perspectives on the impacts of ageing on Aboriginal people.



Andrew Byrnes

Andrew is Emeritus Professor of International Law and Human Rights at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), an associate of the Ageing Futures Institute and the Australian Human Rights Institute at UNSW, and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and of the Australian Academy of Law. He has served as President of the Australian and New Zealand Society of International Law and Vice-President of the Asian Society of International Law, as well as external legal adviser to the Australian Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights and as a member of the Human Rights Committees of the NSW Bar Association and the Law Council of Australia.



Barbara Anderson

Barbara's professional background is in health information management and she has extensive experience in ageing and the care of older people. At NSW Health, her roles included principal policy adviser in the Aged Care Unit, Health and Social Policy Branch. Barbara also ran her own business as a quality improvement, accreditation.



Hakan Harman

Hakan is the Chief Operating Officer of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, he holds a Master of Public Administration and Bachelor of Commerce, is a Fellow of CPA Australia and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Hakan has over 30 years experience as a senior executive across public, commercial and not for profit sectors. He has a strong community focus, commitment to social and cultural justice and a deep passion for sustainability, inclusive leadership and social cohesion.



Rob Lake

Rob has worked and volunteered in the NSW community sector for over 30 years since arriving from New Zealand in 1987. He has worked in community development, service delivery, policy and advocacy. Rob has a passion for advocacy and for Home Care programs and services that support older people to live well at home and in their communities. Rob has been a Director of the AIDS Trust of Australia, NCOSS, Active Job Services as well as Parramatta and Marrickville Legal Centre.

President's Report



Margaret Duckett
Board Director, President

As I write my final annual report as President of Seniors Rights Service, I am both heartened and gratified at the resilience and strength of the organisation I am leaving, but also somewhat apprehensive about the work that still lies ahead to ensure that the rights of older people across NSW are recognised, respected and acted upon. We have come a long way since the organisation was founded over 36 years ago, but there is still a long journey ahead before we can claim we live in a society that truly upholds the rights of older people.

I first joined the Board of Seniors Rights Service in 2013 and became President in 2018. Since that time the organisation has grown substantially from a staff of 17 to close on 50 Aged Care Advocates and Solicitors spread over a dozen locations across NSW today. Our income has also grown from under \$3M to over \$9M, most of this growth being in the past two years. This welcome expansion has largely been fuelled by the adoption of some of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and various government responses to the often heartbreaking experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Certainly, it is gratifying that increased funding reflects the government's and community's trust in our organisation and the services it provides.

It has allowed us to reach more older people across NSW. However, the effects of the pandemic on older people within the community and in aged care has laid bare the precarious position older people still inhabit in our communities and has starkly reinforced the need for the legal and advocacy services offered by Seniors Rights Service.

In coming to Seniors Rights Service, my driving passion has always been that older people be afforded the same human rights as all people and it is the work we do to foster and advocate for these rights that I am most proud of. Our society's whole approach to ageing needs to be challenged.

The Royal Commission provided evidence of the failings in our current aged care system, whether in residential facilities or in home-based care. The people who seek out our services every day also bear witness to these failings.

“Seniors Rights Service has long called for a total rethink of aged care, away from a commercial service model to a person-centred rights-based one where the wishes and rights of older people are paramount.”

Seniors Rights Service has long called for a total rethink of aged care, away from a commercial service model to a person-centred rights-based one where the wishes and rights of older people are paramount. We know that most people do not want to reside in increasingly large, institutionalised residential facilities. Most want to stay in their own homes and receive tailored support. We must keep fighting for new models of aged care that respect the rights of older people to live their lives in the way that they want. Yes, there has recently been a greater emphasis on home care services and yet we are still seeing a system where home care services are simply inadequate and far too long in coming for many people. For some in regional areas the services they need just don't exist.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the vulnerability of older people into sharp relief being shockingly reflected in the case numbers and deaths from the virus. We have seen older people being stripped of their autonomy and prevented from connecting with their loved ones for weeks and months at a time. The only way to prevent these violations in the standard of care for older people is to have an aged care system that is driven by human rights at its very core and a culture that deeply respects and values older people.

There are many things I am proud of that have occurred during my stewardship of the organisation. In 2018 we hosted the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference and it galvanised our commitment to confront and respond to all aspects of elder abuse. The conference attracted over 570 delegates. It was a massive undertaking for our small organisation and its success a significant achievement. Given the estimate that close to 15% of older people will suffer one or more forms of elder abuse in their lives, it is clear that the abuse of older people in all its forms will continue to be a key focus for our services in coming years.

Another key development was the establishment of the Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN) in 2017-18 in which I played a key role. In bringing our state and territory counterparts together under one banner we were able to facilitate greater collaboration and bring more consistency to advocacy services nationally. Being a united, strong and consistent voice to the Government has also allowed us to garner significantly more resources for our work. I have represented Seniors Rights Service on the OPAN Board since its inception, and I want to thank the OPAN Board Directors who have ensured that OPAN continues to support its member organisations and drives the growth in our sector. The demand for our services across Australia continues to rise, and through OPAN, we have been much better resourced to respond.

There are many other people I wish to thank for their support, advice and encouragement over the years of my presidency. I want to thank my fellow Board members over the years who have supported me and provided the organisation with their sound advice, strategic thinking and excellent governance, all voluntarily.

I acknowledge and thank our funders who have provided increasing resources to the organisation to help us meet the rising needs of a population that is ageing and we are extremely grateful for the trust they have put in us.

I especially want to thank the Seniors Rights Service staff for their tireless commitment to supporting older people and their families. The last few years have been particularly difficult and they have continued to meet the challenges with compassion and sensitivity. I also want to acknowledge our CEO, Shannon Wright who has taken up the leadership of the organisation with determination and passion and established firm foundations that will support the organisation as it continues to grow in coming years. I have very much enjoyed working with Shannon and I am confident that she will continue to deliver the organisation's purpose with her energy and drive.

I am extremely proud of the work of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Committee of which I am a member. Under the leadership of Dunghutti woman Barbara O'Neill, our First Nations Board member, we have achieved most of the commitments in our Reflect RAP and are close to finalising our new Innovate RAP. Encouraging the input and engagement of First Nations communities and ensuring that we are reaching our most vulnerable older people with culturally safe and appropriate services will be a focus of our new RAP. Fostering a lively, stimulating and impactful engagement with First Nations Peoples across NSW has been one of my most ardent objectives as President. The commitments made in our Innovate RAP will ensure that the voices of older First Nations Peoples will be heard and that we will be better able to respond to their needs and empower them to achieve their human rights.

As I leave the organisation I am hopeful that it will not be too long before we have a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People that will provide an enforceable international framework to ensure that the human rights of older people are respected and enacted across all aspects of Australian society. Playing a role in its development as part of the UN Open Ended Working Group on Ageing has been a great privilege of my position.

Looking to the future, I believe that the landscape of aged care is poised to change for the better with a new rights-based Aged Care Act on the horizon and a more vocal commitment to address the ageism within our community and the issues impacting the lives of older people. The lived experiences of older people are valuable and can help guide us through the many challenges that, as a society, we are facing. I am confident that I am leaving an organisation better positioned than ever to play a leadership role in ensuring that the rights of all older people are the driving force of change. I wish the organisation strength, resilience and ongoing success in meeting these challenges in the years to come.

Thank you for the privilege of leading this great organisation.

Seniors rights are human rights!



Chief Executive Officer's Report



Shannon Wright
Chief Executive Officer

This year Seniors Rights Service's focus was on growth, extending our reach and expanding our services. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and its recommendations highlighted this much needed positive change in the ageing sector.

Providing services to more people, more often and in more places has been the hallmark of the past year. Through an expansion of our advocacy services we have been able to more than double our number of aged care advocates across NSW and to set up a new hub in Newcastle with a further two planned on the South Coast and Western Sydney. In addition, we will be providing a new home care check in service for older people in the Hunter region and two financial aged care advocates who can help older people who receive aged care services to understand the overly complex financial requirements involved in various aged care arrangements.

Our legal services have also grown with additional resources to support an extensive outreach program to people living in supported accommodation including Retirement Villages across NSW. This project has included developing resources outlining the key issues raised by people living in supported accommodation on our newly designed and more accessible website. We have also been fortunate to have received additional funding to support and expand the legal team's work with older women who are the victims/survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence.

Quality improvement in our systems and processes has been at the forefront in supporting this growth and much of my focus has been on ensuring we have the right technology and systems in place to drive productivity and innovation. Adopting a platform to manage all employment related activities, upgrading our finance system, developing and customising our client management software and ensuring that our staff across the state can access fast and reliable digital telephony and IT support has underpinned and facilitated this growth.

Systemic advocacy has remained an important part of Seniors Rights Service's work and we have contributed to several reviews and enquiries including a response to the NSW Trustee and Guardian's Discussion Paper regarding increases to fees charged for its services and a submission to the NSW Law Reform Commission and Sentencing Council Department of Communities and Justice on sentencing for fraud and fraud-related offences. We had input into the NSW Womens Alliance's election platform and contributed to the Community Legal Centres NSW policy platform. We called for an end to cold call telemarketing of all financial products and argued for law reforms that would address the lack of accessible, timely and affordable responses to the abuse of older people living in aged care facilities, including extending the powers of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to hear and make findings in such cases.

I want to acknowledge and thank the Board for their time, support and expertise over the past year and especially want to give a heartfelt thanks to our departing President, Margaret Duckett, for her tireless commitment to our organisation and for the wise counsel and guidance she has provided to me. Margaret's passion for ensuring the rights of older people are upheld and that seniors are able to live the fullest lives possible has been our guiding principle. She has brought a deep understanding of ageing to our processes and championed seeking out and hearing the voices of older people. I wish her the absolute best for her future.

Our goal is to reach older people in our communities who need our services and I am confident that with our Board and our amazing staff, we are well up to the task.

My closing comment is a sincere thanks to all the staff here at Seniors Rights Service. I really want to thank the incredible staff who have worked tirelessly during the pandemic. Change can be challenging, but they have brought energy and enthusiasm every day, continuing to provide compassionate, client centred and rights based services. They are key to everything we deliver for the sector and our clients.

Our Funders

Seniors Rights Service gratefully acknowledges the funding we receive to support our work.

Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care through the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) – National Aged Care Advocacy Program

Community Legal Centres Program administered by Legal Aid NSW

NSW Fair Trading – Supported Accommodation and Strata Legal service

NSW Department of Communities and Justice – Digital Innovation Fund

NSW Department of Communities and Justice Ageing Peaks Program.

Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care through the Council of the Ageing (COTA) – Aged Care Systems Navigator Pilot Program

Multicultural NSW – support for our financial abuse video projects

Our Aged Care Advocacy Service

Extending our regional reach



Pat Joyce
Manager, Aged Care
Advocacy Services

In February, the Federal Government announced a substantial increase in funding for the National Aged Care Advocacy program that will allow us to expand our advocacy services across the state over the next three years, greatly expanding both our regional and metropolitan reach. This funding boost was the result of the government's response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. Our aim is to ensure that any older person who needs and wants our services, is able to access them and this funding boost will help us to achieve this.

Our team of aged care advocates has more than doubled this year and that has enabled increased advocacy services in the Newcastle, Illawarra and Far West regions.

Despite the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, our aged care advocates have continued to provide much needed support and advocacy services to over 5700 older people, their families and their carers in the past year.

The impact that COVID-19 continues to have on our clients cannot be underestimated and has resulted in more complex cases and ongoing stress and anxiety for some of the most vulnerable in our community. In this context, the role of aged care advocacy has never been more important.

Although public health orders were relaxed across NSW this past year, many aged care facilities still have in place strict visitation rules with separation from family and loved ones, and isolation for many older people very much a daily reality.

The Role of an Aged Care Advocate

Aged care advocates assist older people to understand and exercise their rights and to have their voice heard as they move through the aged care system in Australia. These rights include the right to safe and high-quality care and services; the right to be treated with dignity and respect; the right to live without abuse and neglect; the right to make choices about care; and the right to be listened to and understood. Advocates can stand beside older people and be their voice in raising concerns and getting their issues addressed. For many older people, speaking out if something is not right with their care can be difficult especially if they feel vulnerable and do not have the support of family or friends. They may fear the consequences of speaking up for themselves. An advocate is able to empower them to do so by providing information about their rights and the standards of care and services they can expect and should receive and by helping them to uphold their rights.

Delivering a holistic service

With the increasing complexity of issues raised by older people, our advocates are able to refer to our legal service to assist our clients when their issues involve a related legal matter.

For example, a service provider contacted our Advocacy Service to make a referral on behalf of a person who was concerned about potential abuse of their friend who was in a residential aged care facility.

The facility was restricting visitors to the older person at the request of their Guardian although it was noted that the older person was currently part of an application before NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal regarding the current guardianship arrangements. In addition, there were not any Access Functions on the guardianship order that would prevent people from visiting the older person.

Through the initial assessment process the Advocate was pleased to note that our Legal Service was already supporting the client and had been actively involved with them in recent months. After a case conference it was determined that the best course of action was for our Solicitor to advise the manager of the residential aged care facility that the Guardian did not have the authority to restrict visitors as there were no Access Functions in place.

Due to the holistic nature of our service response the older person's right to visitors was restored.

Seniors Rights Service's aged care advocates accompany solicitors to appointments with older people where aged care is involved. The advocate is able to identify rights related issues and assist the older person to uphold their rights.



Margaret Crothers
Manager, Advocacy and
Regional Services

"I want to thank all our aged care advocates and navigators for their dedication and hard work this past year. It has been challenging, it has often been heartbreaking, but it has also been rewarding. Seeing the difference we can make to people's lives makes any challenge worth our efforts. Empowering older people, in particular with information so that they can advocate for themselves, is especially gratifying"

Coreene Horenko, Senior Manager, Service Delivery

Our Aged Care Navigators

The aged care system is a complex and multifaceted system that can be confusing and difficult to understand for many people. Accessing and understanding information about the system can be a challenge for some people, especially those living in rural and remote areas where access to the internet and even access to mobile network coverage is limited. Our Aged Care Navigators are part of a National Aged Care Navigator Trial and are there to help people, before they receive aged care, who want to know what the options are and how to go about getting care appropriate to their needs. Our Aged Care Navigators who are based in Dubbo and Batemans Bay provide free, confidential and independent services to older people, their families and carers including registering with My Aged Care, identifying the local services available to them and understanding how the Aged Care system works.

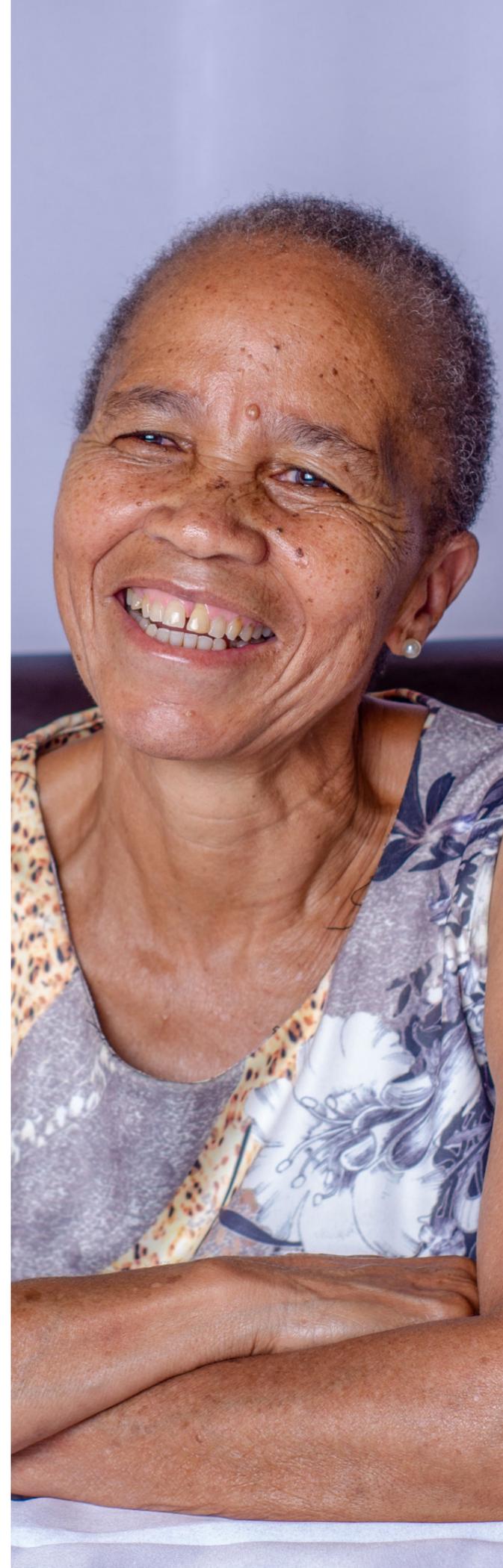
Helping people to register with My Aged Care and finding appropriate and available in-home services may mean people can remain at home and live independently with the right level of care. For others finding a suitable residential aged care facility might be the better option.



The most common issues raised

During the year, our advocates supported clients with a range of complex issues and situations, including distressing concerns about the impact of COVID-19. These issues included:

- Families and loved ones not being able to visit a resident who was receiving palliative care
- Visits to loved ones in residential aged care facilities being restricted including limited visiting times, limits on the number of people who could visit and no access to window visits
- Concern over lockdown directives from local Public Health Units which meant that residents were restricted to their rooms or to sections of the facility
- Uncertainty about the impact of changes to the SCHADS Award for the Home Care Packages Program and the lack of staff to provide appropriate services
- Closure of some aged care services in remote areas



Advocacy in Action

The isolation and distress felt by residents, their loved ones and families when an aged care facility went into lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic was the most common reason for calls to the Advocacy Service over the past year.

One resident contacted an advocate very concerned that her two daughters, who had chosen not to be vaccinated, were unable to visit her and she was frightened she would die or lose the ability to remember them before she might see them again. The caller had lost her sight so video calls were not a solution - she really wanted to be with them.

The advocate contacted the facility and after a lengthy period of negotiation a garden visit was organised for both the daughters and grandson who was not eligible for vaccination at that time. All visitors were required to observe strict COVID safe conditions.

The caller was elated when given the news but her hopes faded when she realised that rain was predicted on the day of the visit. Again the advocate negotiate with the aged care home and a safe isolated undercover space was set up for the family.

This is an example of how an advocate can work closely with an aged care facilities to support residents and their loved ones to connect in a variety of innovative ways. The advocate was pleased to receive a 'selfie' of the family and the caller taken during the visit.

Our Work with First Nations Peoples

Seniors Rights Service acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters of New South Wales. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past, present and emerging and acknowledge their continuing connection to land, spirit and culture. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the call for a Voice to Parliament.

Always was, Always will be, Aboriginal land

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are one of Seniors Rights Service's priority populations. As a rights-based organisation, we are committed to ensuring that First Nations seniors rights are upheld and they are fully engaged in all our services and activities.

Our current Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was launched in 2019. Since then it has provided focus to our engagement with First Nations people across NSW in all aspects of our work. Our Reconciliation Action Committee is chaired by Seniors Rights Service Board member Barbara O'Neill, who is a proud Dughutti woman. The Committee meets bi-monthly to review and assess our progress against the commitments we have made in our RAP.

This year, we have begun the process of deepening our reconciliation work by undertaking the development of a new Innovate RAP. Developing more formal collaborative relationships, through peak bodies, First Nations health and aged care organisations and community groups will be a priority of this RAP.

This past year we were extremely proud to have been selected as one of only three community legal centres to host a First Nations cadet under the Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW) pilot Legal Cadetship program. This program aims to provide First Nations students in their final two years of studies with hands on experience in a community legal centre. Fully funded by CLCNSW, our first cadet, Oliver Williams has worked alongside our Aboriginal Solicitor, Brian Attard and has contributed substantially to work we are doing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients including our outreach work at Redlink, Mens Cave, Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service, Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation in Blackett, Maari Ma AMS in Broken Hill and the Far West Community Legal Centre also in Broken Hill. We also worked with Kinchella Boys Home and ABSEC (NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation).

This past year we have assisted First Nations clients with a broad array of legal needs including:

- advocating for public housing tenants needing repairs to address untreated mould, or requiring handrails and other aids installed so that clients with mobility impairments can continue to live independently
- assisting clients struggling with fines or debt to waive, reduce, or arrange payment plans, so that clients can continue to access essentials such as food, utilities and health care
- advising on options for clients experiencing family violence or other forms of abuse and supporting allied professionals to identify these issues and respond appropriately
- responding to financial issues including same day pay lenders and family debt

The collapse of the funeral insurance company Youpla, formally the Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund, has gravely impacted thousands of vulnerable First Nations people across the country and we have provided advice and support to many effected in NSW. For decades, this company sold funeral insurance and funeral expenses policies marketed solely to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers though unsolicited sales techniques in First Nations communities. Despite its name and marketing, this company was not Aboriginal owned. In March 2022, the company went into liquidation and its policy holders, the vast majority of whom were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lost all their funeral benefits. Most of these policy holders had been contributing to the funeral insurance for many years and they find themselves with nothing to show for years of premiums. Many families could no longer afford to bury their loved ones and others feared they would be thrown into debt in order to do so. Seniors Rights Service advocated strongly with CLCNSW for the government to intervene and provide all policy holders with compensation through a redress scheme as well as providing individual advice and support throughout this crisis.

Seniors Rights Service's First Nations solicitor is a member of the Aboriginal Advisory Group Committee for NSW Community Legal Centres as well as a member of the Board of the NSW Community Legal Centres. He is also part of the Closing the Gap initiative, steering committee member for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Funeral Insurance reform as well as the Redlink Community Consultation Group on housing. These positions allow Seniors Rights Service to support an Aboriginal voice and lobby for positive outcomes for disadvantaged clients across the sector and the wider community.

Cultural safety, building trust and operating from a position of respect is the foundation of our engagement with First Nations people and communities. Our Cultural Safety Plan and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols provide guidance to ensure respectful communications and relationships.





During the COVID-19 pandemic we actively increased our communications through social media channels.. We featured outstanding Elders including Uncle Wes, a Bigambul man, who received the Member of the Order of Australia, and Uncle Jack Charles and Dr Lois Peeler AM, Elders of the Year 2022, National NAIDOC Awards.

We have also promoted First Languages Australia, Close the Gap, National Sorry Day, Call it Out, Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC 2022 and the NSW Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme. Beyond just showing support, we have meaningfully engaged by creating content that promotes and encourages understanding and visibility of First Nations cultures. We have also included social media posts that have foregrounded Aboriginal place names, language and history.

Finally, in our new premises in Sydney, we have a welcome wall in reception that proudly proclaims our office is on Gadigal Land - Always was, Always will be

Aunt Wendy's story

Wendy* is a proud Aboriginal woman who was referred from Redfern Community Health Centre and Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) regarding an incident that resulted in a major hospital banning Wendy from visiting her critically ill partner. She was denied access to see her partner of 19 years for a period of five weeks. Her partner was due for critical neurological surgery within 48 hours.

Wendy lives with schizophrenia, among other chronic health conditions and the stress of not being able to see her partner was contributing to a deterioration in Wendy's health and wellbeing. Wendy attended RedLink legal outreach clinic with support from a Redfern AMS social worker and was frustrated that the hospital was unable to provide any updates on her partner's condition.

Our First Nations solicitor was able to negotiate an urgent teleconference with the Aboriginal Health Team from the hospital and that afternoon the restriction was lifted and she was invited to visit her partner at the hospital.

During this period Wendy had a bail condition of reporting to the Police twice weekly, however, due to the critical situation with her partner's health Wendy did not report to the Police Station and realised that she may be in breach of her bail conditions, resulting in incarceration.

Wendy spoke to us about her concerns and our solicitor contacted the Aboriginal Health Team at the hospital to provide a letter confirming that Wendy was unable to report to Redfern Police Station due to the critical situation with her partner. When Wendy returned from the hospital with the supporting letter, she came into Seniors Rights Service and our Aboriginal solicitor accompanied her to Redfern Police Station where she received a warning. Wendy was very emotional and overjoyed that we had provided culturally safe legal and emotional assistance. Her partner is on the road to recovery and undertaking ongoing treatment with Wendy's support.



Sally's story

Sally* is an elderly woman living in a Housing NSW property. Sally's daughter, Samantha*, lives in a two-bedroom public housing property close by with her young son. Samantha is her mother's full-time carer.

Sally has several severe medical conditions that require her to use a breathing machine and mobility walker. Sally experiences great difficulty using the stairs to enter and exit her unit and is often confined to her unit for months at a time. As a result of Sally's inability to exercise, she has developed clots in her legs and lungs and has been hospitalised on a few occasions. Due to the increasing seriousness of Sally's conditions, Samantha has had to give up work to care for her mother. This has placed Samantha's family in financial stress.

Sally and Samantha made an application to Housing NSW to be transferred together to the same property. Housing NSW approved their transfer application and placed them on the priority list until a suitable property becomes available. As an interim measure, Samantha made enquiries to Housing NSW about other options that may be available to Sally. Sally and Samantha were not eligible for private rental subsidy or any other schemes as they were current social housing tenants.

Sally lodged a discrimination complaint to the Anti-Discrimination Board, which was successfully conciliated with the help of Seniors Rights Service's solicitors. Housing NSW completed minor modifications to Sally's current property, which has helped her enter and exit her unit and use the shower, more safely.

Charter of Aged Care Rights

All people receiving Australian Government funded residential care, home care or other aged care services in the community have rights.

I have the right to:

1. safe and high quality care and services
2. be treated with dignity and respect
3. have my identity, culture and diversity valued and supported
4. live without abuse and neglect
5. be informed about my care and services in a way I understand
6. access all information about myself, including information about my rights, care and services
7. have control over and make choices about my care, and personal and social life, including where the choices involve personal risk
8. have control over, and make decisions about, the personal aspects of my daily life, financial affairs and possessions
9. my independence
10. be listened to and understood
11. have a person of my choice, including an aged care advocate, support me or speak on my behalf
12. complain free from reprisal, and to have my complaints dealt with fairly and promptly
13. personal privacy and to have my personal information protected
14. exercise my rights without it adversely affecting the way I am treated.



Our Commitment to Inclusion and Diversity

Our service has a commitment to the following principles:

Inclusion: All seniors across NSW should have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the services, programs and activities of Seniors Rights Service.

Respect: Seniors Rights Service will respect the beliefs, cultures, languages and issues faced by older people across NSW and ensure our services, programs and activities reflect this diversity.

Access: Seniors Rights Service will ensure that older people have the opportunity to access our services, programs and activities and will endeavor to remove any barriers identified.

Recognition: Seniors Rights Service recognises the importance of diversity as fundamental to the development of an inclusive organisation that is highly valued by the communities it serves.

Seniors Rights Service is committed to a culture of inclusion where diversity is recognised, valued and embraced. Diversity and inclusion is fostered through targeted and appropriate initiatives that will increase the number of older people from diverse communities accessing and using our services and ensure our workforce is representative of the diversity in our community. Seniors Rights Service has in place a Cultural Safety Plan that commits us to ensuring a supportive workplace that respects and values diversity of customs, culture and beliefs; to ensuring that our services are delivered in a manner that respects and values the customs, culture and beliefs of our clients; and that prevents harassment or discrimination of any kind.

We listen to the voices of older people from diverse backgrounds so that we can improve our understanding of their specific needs and respond appropriately.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion will be monitored to ensure that we can respond to any changing needs, feedback and circumstances. Ongoing monitoring of the demographic data of our clients will allow us to identify how diverse our client base is, where the gaps in service reach are, and will help us to plan and develop our service response to meet future demands.



Advocates in Action

A small family run home care service in metropolitan Sydney had been operating for two years.

Seniors Rights Service advocates became concerned when three separate calls relating to the same provider were received in one week.

One client who made contact with us complained that she had transferred to a new aged care provider but none of the funds she had left in her package had been transferred. The advocate contacted the provider who stated that they were not aware that they had to transfer funds.

Another client called asking if she could get a financial statement from her aged care provider because she didn't know what funds she had available in her package. The advocate clarified that she should be getting a statement every month. The client said she had never had a statement so the advocate contacted the provider and was told that their accounting software couldn't handle monthly accounts and that's why they didn't send them. This caller also stated that she became concerned when her neighbour told her that she had received a letter from the same provider saying she had overspent her funds by \$18,000 and had to repay that amount. Money she didn't have.

These issues were escalated to the Team Leader who referred the three complaints to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission who immediately investigated all concerns and, after reminding the provider of their obligations under the Aged care Act, is working with the provider to rectify their accounting and communication deficiencies.



Our Legal Services



Tom Cowen
Principal Solicitor,
Manager Legal Services

Seniors Rights Service delivers legal support and advice across NSW through a number of focussed programs including a generalist legal service, a service for people in supported accommodation including retirement villages and a service assisting older people living in strata units. Despite the ongoing challenges of the past year with COVID-19 restrictions, we were still able to deliver much needed legal services to some of the most vulnerable older people across NSW, 26% of whom resided in rural, regional or remote NSW.

Our generalist legal service continued to provide support on a range of issues of concern to older people such as wills and estates, Powers of Attorney and Enduring Powers of Attorney and issues arising from guardianship arrangements. Our solicitors assisted clients experiencing family violence and elder abuse including financial abuse, physical abuse and neglect.



Mitchell S Harvey
Acting Principal Solicitor

We assisted clients with NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) proceedings in the Guardianship Division and participated in the Guardianship Division Consultative Forum, where we provide the perspective of our clients.

We gratefully acknowledge the funding of Community Legal Centres Program administered by Legal Aid NSW that supports our legal work with older people in the community.

Aged Care Supported Accommodation Legal Service

With funding from NSW Fair Trading, our legal service provides support and information to residents (and prospective residents) in retirement villages and other supported accommodation. Supported accommodation residents may be vulnerable for reasons that include old age, health, physical disabilities, lack of knowledge of their rights, responsibilities and available options to resolve disputes. Our advice can improve the quality and standard of living for these residents through the provision of information, advocacy and educational programs.

The primary issue of concern for residents has been issues with retirement village management, in particular, where the operator is proposing to close or redevelop the village and the residents do not know or understand what their rights are. COVID-19 has reduced the amount of redevelopment that has occurred over this period and this could be one of the reasons for the slightly reduced requests for support this past year.

We gratefully acknowledge the funding from NSW Fair Trading for our Aged Care Supported Accommodation Legal Service.



Strata Legal Service

Many of our strata clients are vulnerable people or pensioners whose only significant asset is the unit in which they live. When faced with problems regarding strata issues they cannot afford private legal advice and are often confused about the remedies available to them. Our Strata Service assists them in understanding their options and can draft suitable correspondence and this first step often resolves the issues quickly, avoiding a protracted dispute that can cause increasing frustration and anxiety.

COVID-19 restrictions have meant that some of the activities that give rise to people seeking our advice have not been undertaken due to building and supply chain issues. For example, in repairs and maintenance or raising special levies to deal with developments.

We gratefully acknowledge the funding from NSW Fair Trading for our Strata Legal Service.

Service Outreach and Community Legal Education

Our legal service has many partnerships that help us to extend our reach. Our First Nations solicitor works with Sydney based organisations to extend our reach into First Nations communities including outreach with Redlink, Men's Cave and the Dental Hospital that continued to assist Aboriginal Elders from the Redfern area and surrounds.

Our solicitors were happy to get back to conducting face to face legal educations around Sydney in the past year. We were able to deliver 26 community legal educations during the period before further lockdowns and other COVID-19 restrictions affected our face to face activities. To mitigate against the effects of the pandemic on our education program, we promoted our series of information videos covering various topics including planning ahead, granny flat arrangements and estate planning.

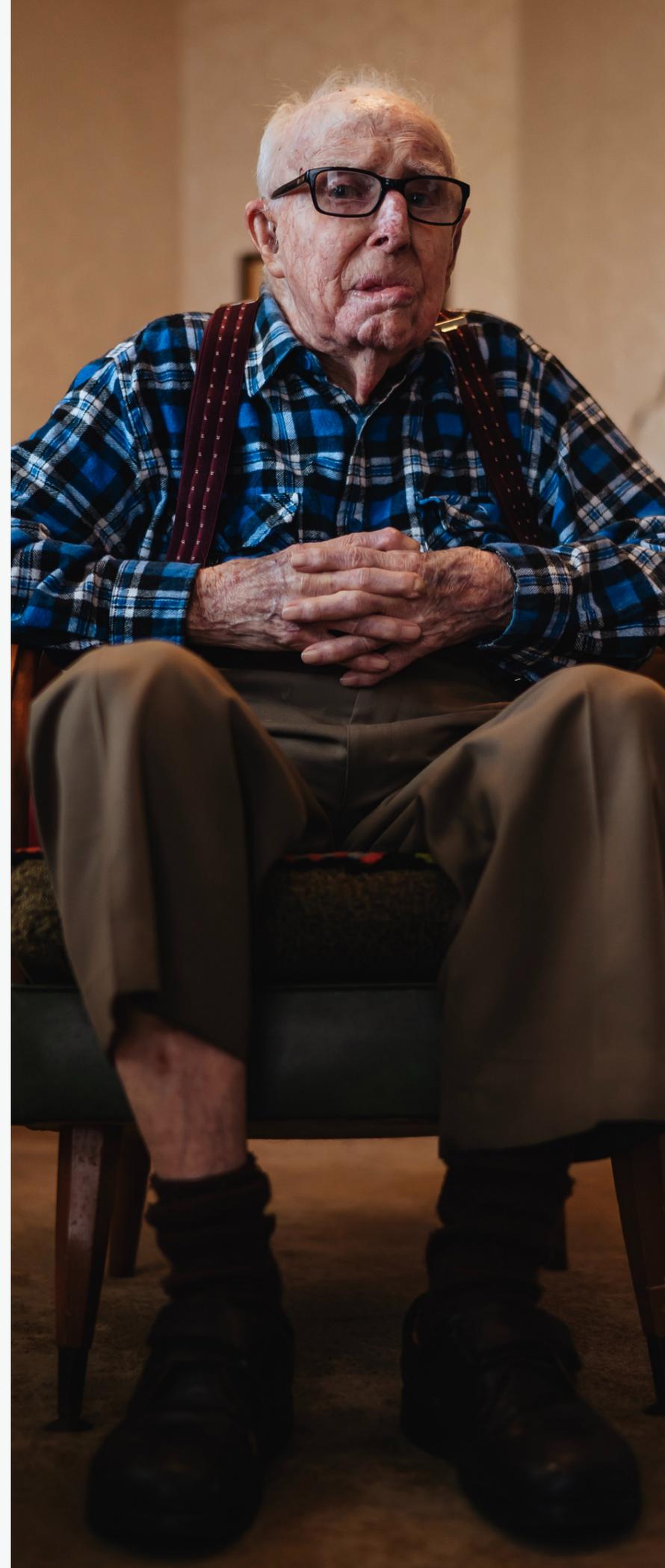
Pro bono assistance and volunteers

We have continued working with Baker McKenzie, Dentons, Hall & Wilcox, Holding Redlich, and Wotton + Kearney in our pro bono clinics. We have been very fortunate to receive assistance from several firms specifically for our First Nations clients. Hall & Wilcox, Sparke Helmore and Gilbert + Tobin have all provided solicitors to draft wills and other planning ahead documents for First Nations Elders from across NSW. Clayton Utz have been assisting our clients to make Victims Services claims and to pursue complaints against funeral insurance providers. DLA Piper has been assisting Elders to obtain key identification documents, such as birth certificates, whilst Lander & Rogers are looking at assisting with credit and debt matters.

Client feedback

As part of CLCNSW quality assurance and accreditation program, we participated in the annual client survey that collects information on the quality of our service provision and the feedback from clients. The results of this survey were extremely pleasing showing that across the community legal sector 96% of clients stated the centre helped them understand how to deal with their legal problem and 95% of clients stated that the service helped them understand their rights and responsibilities.

We also conduct regular client feedback surveys where clients can provide feedback on their experience of our service. This feedback is collated and analysed to focus future service delivery and for quality improvement purposes.



Advocates in Action

Max was a client with early onset Dementia and lived in an aged care facility. As Max had difficulty communicating, his sister would often speak for him and make decisions for him but not all of the sister's decisions were in line with Max's wishes. In particular, Max wanted to go on bus trips and to have his own spending money for snacks. His sister would not allow this because she was concerned for his safety and felt Max would not buy 'appropriately healthy' snacks.

The aged care manager contacted Seniors Rights Service's advocacy team and suggested Max could benefit from the support of an independent advocate. Our advocate visited Max at the aged care home and asked Max if he would like the advocate's support during a roundtable conversation between Max, Max's sister and the aged care manager, which Max said he did.

Our advocate attended and supported Max during the meeting to enable him to make decisions about things that were important to him by asking Max yes/no questions. By framing questions in terms of yes or no and with the support of our advocate, Max was able to communicate his wishes to the aged care manager and to his sister, including that he wanted to go on bus trips.

The aged care facility supported Max by purchasing a special clamp which enabled Max to use his specialised wheelchair safely secured in the bus.

He also got his snack allowance.

Our Policy work

Ensuring the voices of older people inform our policies and their needs are not forgotten

Through our systemic policy work, Seniors Rights Service can represent the concerns and priorities of older people, ensuring that the diverse voices of our clients and communities are heard and represented to government across a multitude of policy areas. Too often the perspectives and experiences of older people are missing from policy debates and platforms. Older people become invisible, their needs forgotten. Our policy positions are founded on the lived experiences of the people we see everyday through our services.

This past year we have prepared a number of submissions to parliamentary and other inquiries. Our submission to the NSW Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into homelessness amongst older people aged over 55 in New South Wales focused on older women, as the fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness in NSW. Our submission presented the causes of this homelessness including older women's lower socioeconomic status, their experience of elder abuse, in particular domestic and family violence and financial abuse.

Our submission was followed up by a presentation at Parliament as part of the inquiry's public hearings.

We prepared a submission to the NSW Trustee & Guardian's (NSWTG) discussion paper regarding increases to NSWTG fees arguing that any increase in fees would disadvantage people who were already extremely vulnerable and financially insecure. We also made a submission to the inquiry into sentencing for fraud and fraud-related offences in New South Wales undertaken by the NSW Law Reform Commission and Sentencing Council Department of Communities and Justice. The focus of our submission was to ensure that any sentences should take into account the particular vulnerability of many older people who are the victims of fraud and for whom financial fraud could have a significant impact.

Seniors Rights Service is part of the NSW Women's Alliance, a group of over 20 organisations working with women across NSW. Through this representative body we have provided input into the revision of the NSW Government's Women's Strategy and a policy platform outlining the key policy focus for women that we would like to see over the next three years.

We have also contributed to Community Legal Centres NSW's policy platform Change Takes Community: Actions for a fairer future.

We were excited to be included in the Vision for Justice issue of The Law Reform Bulletin published by Community Legal Centres NSW. We were asked to write about what law reforms we would like to see achieved in the next few years. We outlined those areas of reform that affect our clients the most—the need for a new Aged Care Act that enshrines the human rights of older people, several reforms needed to address the lack of accessible, timely and affordable responses to abuse of older people and for cold call telemarketing to be banned for all financial products.

We have also engaged the Australian Institute of Family Studies to partner with us on an exploratory research project investigating the isolation of older people and the barriers to accessing services. This research will offer insight into the key factors and dynamics behind the causes and effects of isolation. We are aware that connecting with many older people who need our services and support is challenging due to isolation. While we believe that isolation is possibly a factor that has always been prevalent amongst older people, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation for many. Seniors Rights Service is wanting to investigate how we can address these barriers to reach older isolated people more effectively.

We must move away from a culture where we see older people as dependents who we have to manage for their own good, and start seeing individuals who we should stand beside and empower
Margaret Duckett, President Seniors Rights Service

As a rights-based organisation, we are interested to look at which rights are complicated by the failure or inability to provide certain services adequately to older people who are relatively isolated and what rights-based advocacy would follow from finding that there were rights shortfalls. This project is funded by NSW Department Communities and Justice under the Ageing Peaks program.

On 14 June 2022, the day before World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAD), we joined the campaign that asks the world to listen to older people who report sexual assault. One of the unacceptable issues to have been uncovered by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety concerned the sexual abuse of older women in aged care facilities. It found that there were at least 50 sexual assaults every week in these facilities. The Ready To Listen campaign calls for dementia and aged care leaders to help raise awareness of the importance of listening, the first step in support and prevention.

Our advocacy for older people to be afforded the same human rights as all people has also continued with our ongoing involvement in the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older Persons that is calling to the establishment of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older people and our participation in the International Federation on Ageing.

The United Nations International Day of Older People is held on 1 October each year.

This year's focus was on Digital Equity for All Ages and the need for access and meaningful participation in the digital world by older persons. Seniors Rights Service provided two perspectives on this theme: one directed specifically to the digital divide and the other focussed on the need for our society to recognise the human rights of older people. Seniors Rights Service is calling for our government and our sector to ensure that all older people are provided with the means to engage in our increasingly digital world in line with the call from the United Nations to tackle ageist stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. It is also important to ensure older people are protected from cybercrime and misinformation as they access digital technologies and we need strategies developed and implemented to ensure vulnerable people are protected from online scams and crime. We cannot leave older people out of the digital world. Inclusion in all aspects of civil society is their right. Ensuring access to the digital world is part of that empowerment.

Supported Accommodation Extension Project

Our Supported Accommodation Extension Project consisted of four regional visits across NSW. Our team held a number of community sessions in the South Coast, the Central West, the Hunter Region and the Mid North Coast.

As regional visits have been on hold due to the COVID 19 pandemic it's been wonderful to be back out in the wider community again.

The first visit undertaken by Solicitors, William Maynard and Rob Lollbach and Project Manager Penny Robins included Nowra, Batemans Bay, Moruya, Dalmeny and Narooma providing community education to a mix of retirement villages, individual legal advice sessions and a lively session with a land lease community. We also offered private advice at clinics held in Nowra, Moruya and Narooma and gave a community education address with the Retirement Villages Residents Association in Worrwong Heights.

In June we visited the Central West with solicitors Nalika Padmasena and William Maynard, led by our enthusiastic Dubbo based Navigator, Lisa Johnston. The trip through Dubbo, Orange and Parkes addressed the residents of a number of different retirement villages in each town.

William said "I think the trip went very well. The RVs had a variety of size and prosperity level, but each of them provided a good attendance and the attendees were interested, asking questions".

Nalika reported getting great feedback from the communities we visited.

Lisa noted that the information sessions were received well, with everyone engaged and eager to ask questions at the end of each presentation.

Our visit to the Hunter Region included Maitland, Newcastle, Port Stephens and Cessnock. William and Rob again provided valuable legal advice to members of Retirement Village Communities, Land Lease Communities and older people living in Strata buildings assisted by advocates Philip and Angela.

On the Mid North Coast our team held two open information sessions in Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour providing general information to residents and answering questions. We also held sessions in retirement villages and land lease communities in Toorima and Coffs Harbour providing information to residents about the legal framework of living in these communities as well as general law on issues such as Planning Ahead documents.

These visits not only provide personalised and general legal information but are also a valuable opportunity to spread the word about the range of assistance and support we can provide.

Another component of the project involved developing a number of video resources covering common issues experienced by residents in retirement village communities.

The videos were developed by our legal and advocacy teams based on their experience of common issues and questions.

Topics covered include:

- Rights and obligations living in retirement villages
- Retirement village operators' responsibilities
- Retirement village dispute resolution
- Leaving a retirement village

Our thanks to project manager, Penny Robins and all involved.

The Supported Accommodation Extension Project was funded by NSW Fair Trading.



Social media review

Relevant information



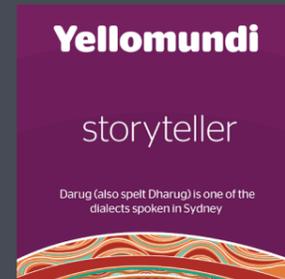
What we do



Like minded organisations



Relevant dates



Positive stories



Our strategy

The focus this year has been to increase organic reach and engagement. Organic reach allows us to inform more of our target markets about our services at no external cost. While engagement verifies the relevance of our content and, due to how social platform algorithms are designed, greatly increases the likelihood of our messages being delivered to a wider relevant audience.

To achieve these goals we developed a multi pronged approach across four key content pillars.

On weekdays:

- Share relevant information
- Share what we do
- Share like minded organisations
- Align with relevant dates

On weekends:

- Share positive stories
- Align with relevant dates

To date the strategy has proved succesful, posts have more than doubled on most platforms and we have achieved 3x better engagement on Twitter and LinkedIn and 2x better on Instagram and Facebook. Reactions, Likes, Shares, and Retweets have all improved across the board, over 200% in most cases.

Likes, Shares, and Retweets have all improved across the board, over 200% in most cases.



Financial Report Year Ended 30 June 2022

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS & OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

		2022	2021
	Note	\$	\$
Income			
Revenue	3	5,358,087	4,116,864
Expenditure		(80,964)	(130,871)
Advertising expenses	4	(11,500)	(10,000)
Auditor's remuneration		(63,513)	(183,904)
Depreciation and amortisation expenses		(4,046,409)	(3,128,412)
Employee benefits expenses	5	(625)	(7,864)
Finance costs		(282)	
Lease expenses		(926,969)	(548,964)
Other expenses		227,825	106,849
Surplus for the year	5	227,825	106,849
Total comprehensive income for the year		227,825	106,849

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

	Note	2022	2021
		\$	\$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	6	3,779,941	1,935,023
Trade and other receivables	7	70,345	27,913
Other current assets	8	15,226	2,041
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		3,865,512	1,964,977
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	9	1,280,733	77,310
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		1,280,733	77,310
TOTAL ASSETS		5,146,245	2,042,287
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	10	2,730,346	885,140
Provisions	11	711,256	558,141
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		3,441,602	1,443,281
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	10	790,151	
Provisions	11	199,781	112,121
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		989,932	112,121
TOTAL LIABILITIES		4,431,534	1,555,402
NET ASSETS (LIABILITIES)		714,711	486,885
EQUITY			
Retained earnings	12	714,711	486,885
TOTAL EQUITY		714,711	486,885

Full financial report
is available at:
report.SeniorsRightsService.org.au

DIRECTORS' DECLARATION

The directors of the company declare that:

1. The financial statements and notes for the year ended 30 June 2022 are in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012

and

(a) Complying with Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013;

and

(b) give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the company.

2. In the directors' opinion, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.

Director:



Margaret Duckett

Director:



Hakan Harman

Dated this day of 28 October 2022

MHW

MEAGHER, HOWARD & WRIGHT
CERTIFIED PRACTISING ACCOUNTANTS
ABN 42 664 097 441

Ken WRIGHT J.P. M.Com. F.CPA
Greg MIDDLETON B.Comm. G.Dip FP, CA
MaryJane HARDY J.P. B.Bus
John HOWARD OAM, J.P. F.CPA, B.Ec
Emma DIAMOND B.Bus

Suite 506
Level 5 / 55 Grafton Street
BONDI JUNCTION NSW 2022

PO Box 653
BONDI JUNCTION NSW 1355

Phone: 02 9387 8988
greg@mhw.net.au

Auditor's Independence Declaration To the Directors of SENIORS RIGHTS SERVICE LTD (A Company Limited by Guarantee)

In accordance with the requirements of section 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, as lead audit partner for the audit of the financial report of Senior Rights Service Ltd for the financial year ended 30 June 2022, I declare that to the best of my knowledge and belief, that there have been

- (i) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- (ii) no contraventions any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

MEAGHER HOWARD & WRIGHT
Certified Practising Accountants



Ken Wright
Partner

Date: 15th October 2022



Your Rights Your Voice

Legal | Aged Care Advocacy | Information



Seniors Rights Service

Gadigal land
Suite 201 / 418A Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010
info@SeniorsRightsService.org.au
1800 424 079 | 02 9281 3600
SeniorsRightsService.org.au

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