



Welfare Rights Centre

A community legal centre specialised in social security law and its administration by Centrelink

ABN 76 002 708 714

Annual Report

July 2014 to June 2015

Prepared for the 2015 Annual General Meeting

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Introduction

The Welfare Rights Centre is an independent, not for profit, community legal centre which provides specialist legal advice about social security and family assistance law. Advocacy with a rights-based approach is a hallmark of the Centre.

The Centre undertakes casework and represents clients at the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (now called the Social Services and Child Support division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal) and the General Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The Welfare Rights Centre also advocates for clients with Centrelink. This early intervention can often resolve matters preventing the need for further appeal.

The Centre regularly assists includes people with disabilities, people who are unemployed, families and carers, older people, people experiencing homelessness, people with a mental illness, students and single parents.

The Centre's goals are to alleviate poverty and to help people in need to stabilise income support, participate where possible in the paid workforce and relieve pressure on other service delivery agencies in NSW.

Much of our work is related to debt waiver. Our initial work involves investigating the circumstances around the debt to establish if a mistake has been made by Centrelink. In other cases we investigate and advocate on behalf of a client and their special circumstances to establish if their circumstances warrant the debt being waived. The Centre provides a direct economic benefit to the state of NSW by ensuring that accurate Commonwealth social security payments are paid to NSW residents.

The Centre is staffed by paid workers and volunteers. We could not operate without our dedicated volunteers.

The Centre has also undertaken its own income generation activities to supplement our state-wide services. Examples of these activities included quarterly bulletining and production of *The Independent Social Security Handbook* online for lawyers and community workers and our trade union program to assist casual workers and people who have lost their jobs.

During 2014-2015, the Centre hosted and project managed the secretariat of the National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN). The work of the NWRN is comprehensively outlined in its 2015 Annual Report which can be found at www.welfarerights.org.au.

Affiliations: In 2014-2015 the Welfare Rights Centre was a member of the Australian Council of Social Services and the NSW Council of Social Services. The Centre's peak national organisation is the National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN) which undertakes policy development and law reform work on behalf of its members and their client bases. The Centre is also an accredited member of the National Association of Community Legal Centres and Community Legal Centres NSW.

1. Casework

1.1. Information, advice and casework service

The Welfare Rights Centre provides legal information, advice and casework services to people with income support problems related to social security and family assistance law and to agencies assisting people with such problems. The aim of the Centre’s casework service is to achieve beneficial outcomes for individual clients and for classes of clients.

The casework service comprises a telephone advice service, research, assistance with self-advocacy, interventions directly with Centrelink, written advocacy on behalf of clients and written or personal representation before the Social Services and Child Support Division and General Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), or the Federal Court in some cases. Advice is given on almost all aspects of social security and family assistance. Further representation may be provided in complex cases particularly where children are at risk, matters of wide application, and matters where the client has no money at all or where they may not adequately represent their own interests.

Throughout 2014-2015 telephone advice and assistance for the public was available four days per week for a three and a half hour shift per day. Ongoing clients may contact the Centre at all times between 9am and 5pm. The Centre has a toll free number to facilitate access for clients in country and outer-metropolitan areas and a TTY for people with hearing impairments. Initial advice is generally provided by telephone; however, the Centre has an access and equity policy to ensure that people unable to obtain assistance by telephone are not disadvantaged.

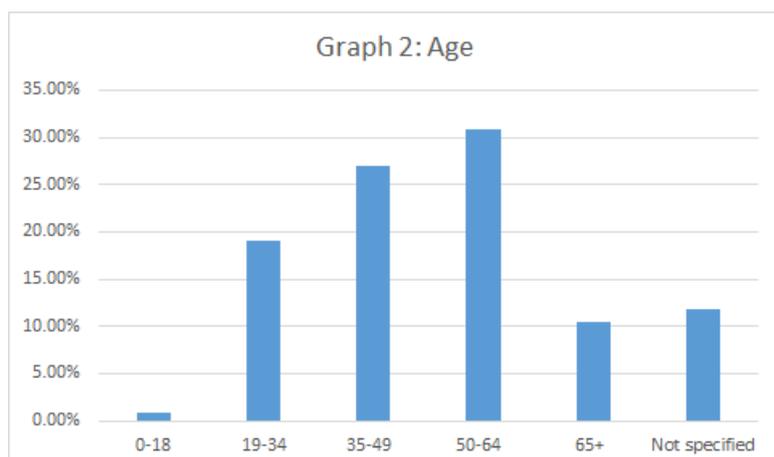
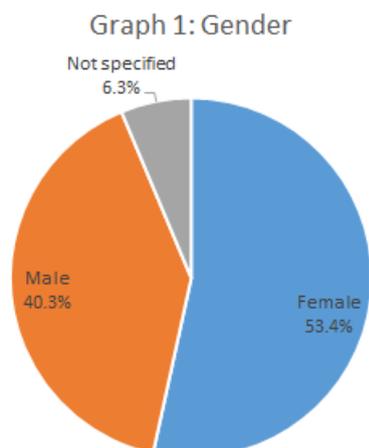
The Centre’s casework service could not function without the valuable contribution of unpaid volunteer workers. Their contribution is gratefully acknowledged in section 6.3 of this Annual Report.

1.1. Casework statistics

The following statistics are compiled from information provided to us by our clients. Some clients choose not to provide some of their personal information. The percentages are calculated on the total number of people volunteering particular information and may not represent the complete picture. Nevertheless, they provide a good overview of the casework of the Centre.

Number of clients

From July 2014 to June 2015 the Centre provided assistance to 2735 clients. We provided 5150 advice activities and ran 737 cases throughout the period. Advocacy included representing clients in internal Centrelink reviews and with appeals Social Services and Child Support Division and General Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. More than half the Centre’s clients were female as shown in Graph 1. Graph 2 represents the age range of clients. The average age of clients was between 50-64 years old.



Clients of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background

In 2014-2015, 4.6% of all clients identified themselves as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. This has increased since 2013-2014, from 4%.

Payment types

The most common payment types for matters over the period and the proportion of total advice matters were:

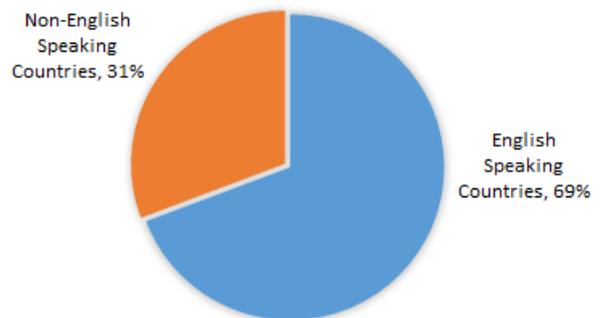
Disability Support Pension	31.1%
Newstart Allowance	19%
Age Pension	6.9%
Family Tax Benefit A	5.5%
Payment Other	4.2%
Parenting Payment (Single)	4.1%
Carer Payment (Adult)	3.7%
Carer Allowance (Adult)	2.6%
Austudy Payment	2.3%
Family Tax Benefit B	1.7%
Special Benefit	1.7%

Country of birth

The most common birth countries stated by clients and the proportion of total advice matters were:

Australia	46.7%
New Zealand	2.5%
China	1.95%
Lebanon	1.8%
United Kingdom	1.73%
Philippines	1.29%
Iraq	1.29%
India	1.24%
Fiji	0.89%
Iran	0.8%

Graph 3: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse



1.2. Casework issues during 2014-2015

Casework trends

The Centre provides advice and representation with respect to all aspects of social security and family assistance law. This extends from assistance to vulnerable clients in dealing with Centrelink prior to or at the time of the original decision, to representation at all levels of internal and external appeal. The Centre also provides assistance to clients facing prosecution by conducting administrative review and making representations to the Commonwealth Department of Public Prosecutions in certain cases.

The practice is integrated where all caseworkers advise and represent at all levels of appeal, which feeds back into the quality of advice and representation to clients.

A telephone advice service is available 4 days per week, for 3.5 hours per day. There is a toll free number to facilitate access for outer-metro and outside Sydney clients. There is a nation-wide toll free number for clients referred by HESTA.

Caseworkers, according to the guidelines, decide which cases to take on for further assistance (either minor assistance, such as providing help with preparing evidence or writing submissions, or representation). Cases are triaged in accordance with guidelines which aim to focus our additional assistance and representation on cases where legal help makes a substantial difference to the outcome. Exceptions are made for vulnerable clients or where we believe there is a public interest in the issue.

This results in the following broad profile of our casework:

- compensation preclusion period cases;
- income maintenance period cases;
- constant care in relation to carer payment cases
- member of a couple debts over \$10,000, with most of our casework focussed on debts between \$50,000 and \$150,000;
- family tax benefit maintenance debts;
- income related debts, with most of our casework focussed on debts which are being prosecuted, or where there are reasonable prospects of administrative review (e.g. existence of administrative error, major mental health or capacity problems);
- student debts arising from loss of qualification;
- income maintenance period cases;
- eligibility for special benefit;
- waiting period cases, including newly arrived residents waiting periods; and
- youth allowance cases where it is 'unreasonable to live at home'.

The Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) amalgamated with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) on 1 July 2015. It is now called the Social Services and Child Support Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This is the first tier of review with the second tier being the General Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This report refers to the pre-amalgamation Tribunals.

Advice regarding disability support pension is a significant area of our practice. We provide advice regarding the appeal of disability support pension decisions from the original decision maker and authorised review officers at Centrelink as well as advice in relation to their appeals at the AAT.

We have created self-help resources for clients to provide to their health practitioners to assist the practitioner address the relevant criteria for the appeal. These are in the form of treating doctor reports which greatly assist the decision maker as a comprehensive analysis of a person's disability contained in one document. As Legal Aid NSW provides representation in the AAT we have a limited service in relation to representation of disability support pension qualification appeals.

Tribunal Representation

The Centre represented clients at the SSAT on 44 occasions and made 34 appearances at the AAT during 2014-2015.

In making a decision to represent, the Centre applied its casework guidelines as to the merits of the case, the material difference involvement from the Centre could add, and the client's ability to self-advocate effectively. For this reason, representation often took place for clients with intellectual and physical disabilities, clients who are very young, elderly clients, clients experiencing mental health problems, from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities, people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people experiencing homelessness or other life crisis.

Most tribunal representation was at the SSAT and these cases were generally in the priority areas identified above.

The Centre regularly appears at the AAT. The Centre's appearances at the AAT have notably increased from previous years. Our appearances include appealing unfavourable SSAT decisions or in cases where the client first contacted at that level, as well as representing clients in appeals by the Secretary of the Department of Social Services.

The Centre does not represent in cases where only a commercial settlement is likely to be achieved (e.g. a 20-30% commercial offer to reduce a debt), but regularly provides advice and assistance to clients with reasonable prospects about this.

Other trends

The main areas of work remained consistent with previous years, especially:

- large debts, especially student, single parent and carer debts;
- income maintenance periods; and
- establishing constant care in relation to carer payment eligibility.

The Centre is continuing to run a series of cases intended to establish unlawful or unduly narrow aspects of Centrelink's approach to income maintenance periods. The policy and legislation relating to this area remains unchanged and there are many clients whose matters cannot enliven the discretion to waive a harsh period of preclusion as a result of a redundancy or termination lump sum.

The Centre has seen an increase in the number of Departmental appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal especially in relation to carer payment cancellations relating to whether constant care is provided. This is directed at care receivers being children with disabilities who attend school. The Centre is waiting on decisions from the Tribunal in relation to two matters but there has been related and unfavourable Tribunal decisions recently handed down regarding constant care when a child with a disability attends school.

The Centre continues to see cases where students studying through OTEN (Open Training and Education Network) are failing to meet the activity test requirements for student payments as they are not full time students. The legislation does not cater for students studying through self-paced learning modes. The definition of satisfactory full time engagement in study can never be ascertained at the beginning of an OTEN course, only at the end of a 12 month period. However payments are granted at the start of a course and

debts are raised after 12 months once a student's study loan is determined by OTEN. The ideal outcome would be to determine a more suitable payment for students of OTEN. This is a NSW focused issue.

1.3. Case studies

Compensation Preclusion Period

Cole was severely injured in a workplace accident in 2004. His arms were crushed in a wool press. He suffered debilitating injuries and had extensive surgery to reconstruct his arms and regraft skin. Following the injury, Cole lost use of his arms and was in ongoing pain. Cole was permanently unable to work. Cole received weekly workers compensation until his compensation case was settled for a lump sum amount in January of 2013.

Cole and his partner decided they would move closer to their family after a familial tragedy. They decided to purchase a house with Cole's lump sum compensation. Cole's partner received the disability support pension (DSP). As neither Cole nor his partner could work they made enquiries about purchasing a house with compensation money and the effect this would have on Centrelink. Cole and his partner inquired at their local Centrelink office numerous times about whether this would impact any eligibility to a payment. On each occasion a Centrelink officer informed them that they would be eligible for social security payment if they used the compensation payout to purchase a house. Cole's partner enquired at a larger Centrelink office who affirmed the prior this advice.

Cole and his partner purchased their property in July 2013. After the couple paid for the deposit price of the property, they received a letter informing them that Cole was subject to a compensation preclusion period lasting December 2012 to August 2017. As Cole was unable to read, Cole's partner received and read this mail. She did not understand its effect on Cole's social security payments.

In August 2013 Cole lodged a DSP claim with Centrelink. His claim was rejected because of the compensation preclusion period. Cole appealed this decision to Authorised Review Officer (ARO) who upheld the decision. Cole and his partner were in severe financial hardship and living on one partnered rate of DSP. They appealed the ARO's decision to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT). In June 2014 the SSAT made a decision to set aside the Centrelink decision considering Cole's special circumstances including his severe physical injuries, his drug and alcohol abuse and the partner's recent stroke. The SSAT also considered the issue of the property and found that it was not reasonable to expect Cole and his partner to sell the house due to their special circumstances. Their house was modified for both people's disabilities. The SSAT's decision ended the preclusion period from the date of the decision.

Centrelink appealed the decision of the SSAT to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). Cole sought advice from the Welfare Rights Centre. The Welfare Rights Centre assisted Cole in compiling evidence and preparing submissions. The Welfare Rights Centre successfully assisted Cole in negotiating a settlement with Centrelink. The assistance of Welfare Rights assured that Cole would be eligible for a DSP and would not be required to wait until the end of his compensation preclusion period in 2017 to receive payment.

Cole's compensation preclusion period ended in February 2015. He was restored to a DSP in February 2015. This outcome alleviated the severe financial and emotional pressure on Cole and his partner.

Youth Allowance and OTEN debt

Jasmine received youth allowance from February 2012 when she enrolled in a Certificate III in Aged Care. Jasmine was studying via Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) through TAFE NSW.

OTEN is a self-paced distance education program. There are no semesters or holiday periods and students enrol for 12 month periods. Jasmine had personal and mental health issues during this period which meant OTEN courses were more suitable to her.

In March 2014 Centrelink found that Jasmine did not satisfy the full time study conditions of youth allowance as she had not submitted a sufficient number of assessments between February and July 2012. A debt of \$5671.40 was raised. By 2014, Jasmine was enrolled full time in a university course and working casually.

During the debt period, Jasmine believed she was a full time student, and completed 20 hours of study per week. She was unaware that assessment submission would be the test used by Centrelink to prove full time study.

The appeal to an Authorised Review Officer was unsuccessful and Jasmine contacted the Welfare Rights Centre. The Centre represented Jasmine at the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT). Welfare Rights submitted that the entirety of the debt should be waived due to Centrelink's administrative error in initially allowing the client to receive youth allowance when the course did not satisfy the full time requirements, and due to the lack of clear communication with the client and OTEN students generally about their ability to meet the study requirements for youth allowance.

The appeal at the SSAT was partly successful. Due to the Centrelink's administrative error and Jasmine's special circumstances the outstanding debt was waived. However the SSAT decided that no refund of the amount already paid by the client would be made due to their partial responsibility in failing to submit assessments on a regular basis.

2. Policy Report

The Australian social security system is complex and is acknowledged as one of the most highly targeted of the developed nations. The Welfare Rights Centre has a clear set of goals to guide its important law reform and policy activities. Those goals are to develop and advocate proposals for reform of social security legislation, administration and Government policy in order to minimise hardship and poverty in Australian society in general, and for social security recipients and their children in particular.

Our policy work seeks to ensure the social security system is:

- based on rights and entitlements, responsibilities and obligations which are clearly stated in legislation and enforceable;
- administered under clear, publicly accessible policy guidelines;
- characterised by a robust review and appeals system that allows individual decisions to be challenged; and
- to promote fair and accessible administrative law particularly in the field of income support.

The Welfare Rights Centre Sydney undertakes the majority of its policy and media work in conjunction with its peak body, National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN), to facilitate a strong national presence. Please see the policy and media section of the 2014-15 NWRN Annual Report at www.welfarerights.org.au for details about submissions produced, inquiry hearings attended, community engagement and other work undertaken by Welfare Rights Centre (NSW) staff working within the Network.

In addition, we have outlined in this report work either entirely or primarily by the Centre.

Community and stakeholder engagement

The Centre maintained strong engagement with community sector organisations from diverse backgrounds such as the Sydney CBD Lions Club, an address to CLC NSW sector development meeting, a meeting with Susan Ryan, Age Discrimination and Disability Discrimination Commissioner, an address to the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association Annual Conference, a Liaison meeting with SSAT and the NCOSS

AGM. WRC staff participate in NWRN committee meeting teleconferences, regular attend CLC NSW Co-ordinators' meetings, and regularly attend FONGA (organised by NCOSS).

The Centre is also a member of the peak community body for the community and social services sector, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS). WRC's Policy and Media Officer is an ACOSS policy adviser on social security and employment issues.

Other Centre activities

Caseworkers made major contributions to the policy and advocacy work of the NWRN by contributing their expertise and casework experience to submissions on proposed changes by the current government. The Centre's staff made active contributions to a number of submissions by the NWRN, including a response to the Government's proposed changes to social security and in response to the McClure Review into welfare reforms. The Centre was also the NCOSS cost-of living reference group, and we provided a submission on the paper, which included comments from the Centre. WRC staff drafted the NWRN submission into changes to payability of income support payments to persons in psychiatric confinement and attended a meeting with DHS seeking reform of the administration of student payments to TAFE OTEN students. The Centre has written to the NSW Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, to call for registered nurses to be maintained in aged care facilities and attended a roundtable of community groups and unions to defend Medicare

The WRC was instrumental in convincing the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner to initiate an "own motion" inquiry into the preparation of documents for Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) hearings by Centrelink and the omission of critical documents.

Information to the community

The Centre continues to produce facts sheets and other information for people receiving social security payments. We also started a blog, which can be found at: www.welfarewrites.org

WRC also has a twitter account: @welfare_rights

3. Community Legal Education and Community Liaison

3.1. Long term goals

The community legal education and training goals are:

- to provide high quality, accessible and targeted community legal education; and
- to provide specialist support to other NSW community agencies.

3.2. Education and community liaison

In 2014-15 the Centre continued to target disadvantaged groups for education, by delivering education to those groups directly and by providing targeted social security training to community workers that support disadvantaged groups.

Particular focus this year was on continuing to expand our outreach to regional NSW and build relationships with regional community organisations. The Centre travelled to Port Macquarie for a week of legal education and outreach delivered in partnership with Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre. We delivered training to community organisations, private lawyers, community lawyers and government agencies, as well as conducting several outreach clinics. The Centre received excellent feedback from all sessions, and has noticed an upswing in clients from the region since. The Centre travelled to the Central Coast to deliver two training sessions in partnership with Central Coast Community Legal Centre. The Centre delivered several sessions to

community organisations including Mission Australia, participated in the Strathfield Council Domestic Violence Prevention Forum and presented at a Youth Interagency meeting.

Throughout 2014-15 the Centre continued to participate in the National Multicultural Advisory Group (on behalf of NWRN), NSW Centrelink Homelessness Reference Group, the NSW Homelessness Community Alliance and the ACOSS Board.

4. Publications

4.1. Long term goals

The Welfare Rights Centre's overall publication goals are to produce and distribute clear, informed, effective and targeted information and policy material designed to:

- increase accessibility to the social security system;
- educate and increase community awareness about social security issues, payments and rights; and
- improve the social security system in Australia.

In pursuit of these goals the Centre's key publications for 2014-15 were:

- the *Independent Social Security Handbook*;
- Factsheets and self-help guides;
- The "Welfare Writes" blog; and
- Website

4.2. The Independent Social Security Handbook

The Centre published the quarterly editions of the *Independent Social Security Handbook* in 2014-15 and continued to publish the online edition quarterly. The primary purpose of the Handbook is to inform community workers about social security law and Centrelink administrative practices and to assist them to better advocate for their clients with regard to social security payments.

Due to constraints of funding and staffing, the Centre made the decision to suspend the quarterly online edition of the handbook. The final edition was published in June 2015. The Centre plans to revisit this decision in 2016, but absent considerable additional funding, it will likely remain unchanged.

4.3. Factsheets and resources

The Centre produces and maintains factsheets to assist and inform people about social security matters. In 2014-15, these resources were updated to reflect changes to the law. The Centre is engaging in discussions with the National Welfare Rights Network and its other member centres to coordinate various factsheet publications, and make them available Network-wide. This will allow for greater efficiency and avoid unnecessary duplication.

The Centre received pro bono assistance from Herbert Smith Freehills in 2015 for a redesign of the Centre's publications. The project covered the factsheets, business cards, Welfare Rights Centre promotional postcards, and all stationery items. HSF also printed a run of 400 postcards for the Centre. The Centre will arrange for printing of the remaining items in 2016.

4.4. Blog and Website

The website continues to operate as the Centre's primary online presence, and contains copies of the Centre's factsheets and self-help guides, annual reports, staffing and board profiles, updates on law reform activities, news and events, as well as our contact details, advice times and a request for contact form.

The Centre's blog, *Welfare Writes*, was updated regularly for most of 2014-15 and received considerable attention, including citations in Senate and Parliamentary Committee Reports on the *Social Security Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Job Seeker Compliance Framework) Bill 2014* and the *Social Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2015*.

The Centre's former principal solicitor Matthew Butt published the blog, and since his resignation no new entries have been published. The Centre believes the blog is highly worthwhile and intends to recommence updating it when staffing and workload permit.

5. Funding

5.1. Major funders

Funding for the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 was received from:

- Commonwealth Government – Welfare Rights Program - \$241,409
- Commonwealth Government separate grant - \$100,000
- NSW Government Community Legal Centre Funding Program - \$134,879
- NSW Government Social and Community Services Equal Remuneration Order - \$10,713

The Commonwealth Government provided a separate grant of "one off" amount of \$190,000 on 27 May 2013 which was provisioned for the 2013-14 and the 2014-15 financial years in order to help the Centre cope with the decision of NSW Family and Community Services to defund the Centre as of 30 June 2013.

In June 2015 the Centre received an additional \$60,000 for 2015-2016 to be used for community legal education and/or co-location costs. The Centre intends to pursue further discussions about co-location with other community legal centres.

5.2. Welfare Rights Trade Union and HESTA programs

Throughout the year the Centre continued to provide service to and receive support from the following unions involved in its Trade Union Welfare Rights Program:

- NSW Independent Education Union;
- NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association;
- NSW Teachers Federation;
- NSW Branch of United Voice;
- Public Service Association (NSW); and
- Police Association of NSW.

The Centre would also like to acknowledge the generous decision by the National Tertiary Education Union, the Centre's landlord, to reduce rent on the Centre's office premises in the face of the decision by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services to defund the Centre as of 30 June 2013.

In addition, the Centre has continued its service arrangement with HESTA, under which HESTA members who are injured or ill and without income support, are provided with advice and assistance in relation to their social security entitlements and income protection.

The Centre is appreciative of this support and the opportunity the Trade Unions and HESTA program provides the Centre to assist low income working people. Throughout 2014-15 the main features were:

- advising and representing trade union and HESTA members with regard to their social security matters;
- providing quarterly bulletins to each union with updates of changes to social security law; and
- writing articles in trade union journals to inform readers about their social security entitlements.

5.3. Income generation

In addition to the revenue from HESTA and the trade unions detailed above, the Centre also generated further income through sales of the newsletter (*Rights Review*), the *Social Security Reporter* and sales of the *Independent Social Security Handbook*.

5.4. Auditor's Report

The audit for the period was conducted by Steven J Miller & Co. The Auditor's Report forms part of this Annual Report. See section 7 of this Report for more details

6. Management

6.1. Board of Directors

Throughout the period the following people played the very important role of strategic planning, governance, risk management and overseeing the Centre's work in their capacity as members of the Board of Directors.

The Directors who held office at any time during 2014-2015

- Estelle Adamek (retired in October 2014)
- Liz Biok
- James Campbell (retired in August 2014)
- Diana Covell
- Tony Eardley (retired in August 2014)
- Carol Howard
- Meghan Carruthers (retired in February 2014)
- Terry Mason (Chairperson)
- Cristina Pebaque (retired in October 2014)
- Stella Topaz

6.2. Staff Members

The Centre employed the following staff at the end of June 2015:

Alice Jones-Rabbitt	Administration Officer (employed on a casual basis)
Carolyn Odgers	Acting Principal Solicitor (3 ½ days per week)
Jessica Raffal	Acting Assistant Principal Solicitor / Community Legal Education Coordinator
Danny Shaw	Senior Caseworker (part time)
Claire Stimpson	Solicitor
Sharissa Thirukumar	Solicitor
Gerard Thomas	Policy and Media Officer (1 day per week)

In addition the Centre hosted and project managed the National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN) during 2014-2015. On behalf of the NWRN, the Centre directly employed the following staff:

Amie Meers	Executive Officer (3 days per week)
Gerard Thomas	Policy and Media Officer (4 days per week)
Alice Jones-Rabbitt	Administration Officer (2 days per week)

The Centre sadly farewelled Maree O'Halloran from her role as Director, and Matthew Butt as Principal Solicitor. We thank Maree and Matt for their dedication to the Welfare Rights Centre and their many years of service.

This year we also said goodbye to Phil Wardle, Michele Izzo and Julia Hong and similarly thank them for their service to the Welfare Rights Centre.

6.3. Volunteer Workers

The Centre's success could not have been achieved without the help of our volunteer workers throughout the 2014-2015 year. At any given time the Centre has about 14 volunteers who provide an invaluable service each week on and off our advice shifts. These volunteer workers perform their duties with style, diligence, patience and much skill.

The casework volunteer workers have the challenging task of direct contact with people who contact us for advice or referral. They assisted the Centre to interview over 2000 clients throughout the year. They displayed excellent communication and interpersonal skills in assisting many highly distressed clients. Their dedication and enthusiasm proved an inspiration to all of us at the Centre. Administrative volunteers assist the Centre with administrative duties, data entry, as well as paralegal and research tasks.

The Centre gratefully acknowledges the role played by all our volunteer workers.

These workers contribute services to the Centre valued at over \$200,000 each year. We hope they enjoyed being at the Centre as much as we have enjoyed having them and we look forward to their continuing involvement with the Centre. To those who left us in 2014-2015 we wish them well in their future endeavours and thank them for their years of service.

The volunteer workers at the Centre in 2014-2015 were:

- Selma Bekric
- Sonya Campbell
- Chris Chiam
- Xavier Fenera
- Lily Fung
- Joanna Garvin
- Kate Griffiths
- Patrick Griffiths
- Ainsley Halbmeyer
- Julia Hong
- Ali Hookmani
- Amber Hu
- James Jankulovski
- Sarah Kim
- Bobby Kok
- Cynthia Lam



- Samanta Lestavel
- Alena Malyugina
- Taylor Mihell
- Nikita Rose
- Petrina Slaytor
- Sophia Stanley
- Khushaal Vyas

7. Auditor's Report

The Auditor's Report, prepared by Steven J Miller & Co, is part of this Annual Report. It is available on request.