

Indigenous Engagement

Our commitment to reconciliation

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land. We acknowledge the ancestors, elders and families of the Kulin nations. We pay our respects to the deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and custodianship of Country. We acknowledge this land as a place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal, and that the Kulin peoples' living culture has a fundamental role in the life of this region.

As we work to achieve a just and fair society we acknowledge that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and underrepresented in relation to access to justice and fairness within our legal framework. We will continue to address this inequity and provide a culturally safe place for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients to access legal services, education and enhance their human rights.

We have developed an Indigenous Engagement Strategy and we are embarking on our first Reconciliation Action Plan. Our aim is to deepen our understanding and impact. We will work with the communities to determine how we can direct our services to address unmet legal need and injustices and inequities within our legal system.

Impact Areas

1. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

We recognise that culturally and linguistically diverse people experience particular disadvantage as a result of arrival in Australia and circumstances of their settlement.

Aim: Our aim is to assist and empower these communities to identify and enforce their legal rights and understand their responsibilities through case work, community development and education. Our case work and educational programs provide the evidence for our reform agenda and systemic impact work.

Key Priorities:

- Address implied and express racial discrimination, with a focus on racial and religious profiling.
- Expose the practices of organisations, people and systems taking advantage of vulnerable and newly arrived people and advocate for change.
- Correct the systems causing financial exclusion and disadvantage of newly arrived people.
- Identify and address labour exploitation and unsafe workplace practices.
- Provide a culturally safe and accessible services for our client groups.

Accessibility: We understand the importance of providing a culturally safe environment for our client groups, and we offer services in a flexible manner to enhance accessibility.

2. People experiencing gender-based violence

We recognise that gender-based violence is a serious community concern that disproportionately affects women, gender diverse people and children.

Aim: Our aim is to enable and assist these groups to be in a position to respond strongly to family violence and its effects. This includes providing targeted legal services, addressing injustice in systems and institutions, and engaging in evidence based systemic advocacy.

Key Priorities:

- Advocate for a fairer and more equitable justice system by addressing the current inadequacies and negative environment of the family violence legal process.
- Prevent misidentification and criminalisation of victims as perpetrators.
- Address economic abuse and restore financial safety and independence for women experiencing family violence.
- Provide early intervention opportunities with a focus on particularly vulnerable people.

Accessibility: We understand that people experiencing family and gender-based violence find it difficult to access support so we will provide a safe, innovative and flexible service delivery models to meet their needs.

3. Young People

We recognise that young people (up to and including 25 years) are marginalised and often excluded from the legal system and youth support services.

Aim: We aim to offer holistic, youth centred, multidisciplinary services as a response to a system that is often not appropriately designed for our youth. We support young people to exercise their agency and legal rights in their family life, community, and society. Our case work and educational programs provide the evidence for our reform agenda and systemic impact advocacy.

Key Priorities:

- Divert young people away from the criminal justice system, including raising the age.
- Advocate for a fairer and more equitable system which includes better access to services and enhanced agency to effect reform and system improvement.
- Address discrimination, with a focus on racial and religious profiling.
- Advocate for a fairer and safer community whereby our young people are treated with dignity and respect.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to maximise potential for positive life outcomes for young people.

Accessibility: We deliver placed based programs through multidisciplinary partnerships at education providers, youth hubs, out-of-home care facilities and in custody.

4. Economic Vulnerability

We recognise that we have an intrinsically inequitable economic and legal system, a consequence of which includes the criminalisation of poverty.

Aim: Our aim is to help people navigate and enforce their rights within the justice system and improve the system fundamentally. Our case work and educational programs provide the evidence for our reform agenda and systemic impact advocacy.

Our priorities:

- Explore methods by which to advocate for a fair and generous safety net.
- Investigate pathways to promote and protect fundamental human rights including the right to safe housing, access to food and utilities.
- Assess ways to improve equitable access to state and federal benefits.
- Challenge organisations that take advantage of vulnerable and newly arrived people.
- Enhance agency to improve people's ability to navigate financial systems.

Accessibility: We aim to provide 'in situ' services at targeted locations - this may include public housing, Centrelink, community services, community health centres, and the courts.

Review and consultation

We acknowledge that our limited resources prevent us from addressing all relevant areas of legal support, education and systemic impact. We will endeavour to continue to be informed by the needs of our communities and we will review our priorities and impact areas annually.