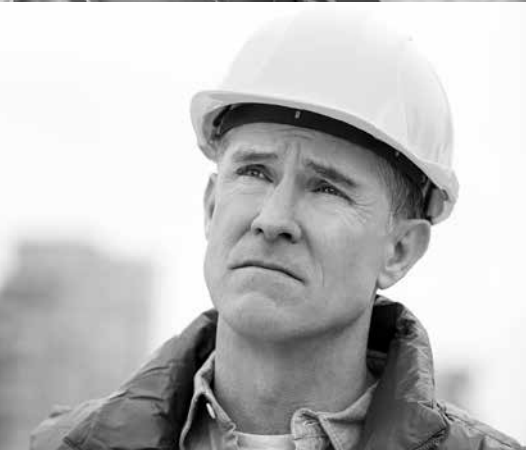




Basic Rights  
Queensland Inc.  
SOCIAL SECURITY & DISABILITY  
DISCRIMINATION SERVICES



# A voice for fairness

Annual Report 2015-2016

States Parties shall prohibit all discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantee to persons with disabilities equal and effective legal protection against discrimination on all grounds.

*UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities Article 5*

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including...the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25*

## Contact Us

### Telephone Advice Line

Between 9.30am and 4.00pm weekdays  
07 3847 5532 | 1800 358 511 (free call)

### Administration Line

Between 9.00am and 5.00pm weekdays  
07 3421 2510

### Fax

07 3421 2500

### Postal Address

PO Box 293  
Fortitude Valley Qld 4006

**Email** [brq@brq.org.au](mailto:brq@brq.org.au) | **Website** [www.brq.org.au](http://www.brq.org.au)

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## Contents

BRQ Strategic Plan 2015-2018	4
About us - What we do	5
Client story – Marco	6
President and Director's Report	7
Client Story – Catherine	10
Who we help	11
Client locations	12
Client story - Jenny	13
Client Services	14
Client story - Tom	18
Community Legal Education	19
Law reform from client experience	20
Supporters and Donors	21
Our people	22
Staff	23
Volunteers and Students	24
Treasurer's report	25
Financial report	26



# BRQ Strategic Plan 2015-2018

## Our Strategic Priorities

- Organisational sustainability and responsiveness
- Leaders in social security and disability discrimination rights
- Effective stakeholder relationships
- Recognised service excellence

## Our Purpose

- Providing high quality, independent advice, legal services and community education
- Upholding rights to social security entitlements and freedom from discrimination
- Advocating fair and just outcomes for vulnerable people

Our Vision  
Basic rights  
for a just  
society

## Our Values

### Fairness

We act with integrity, ensuring our resources are targeted equitably while prioritising the most vulnerable.

### Access

We are committed to enabling access to justice through innovative service provision and making the complex comprehensible.

### Inclusion

We are non-judgemental and we embrace diversity.

### Transparency

We are clearly accountable for our actions so as to maintain trust with our clients, the wider community, and funders.

### Respect

We respond to all who need our assistance with compassion and understanding, maintaining a non-judgemental perspective.

### Responsiveness

We provide our clients with an objective assessment of their situation while also being empathic to the difficulties of their situation and the challenges of dealing with it.

### Expertise

Through continually developing our in-depth knowledge of complex areas of law, we provide expert, evidence-based advice to our clients.

## About us - What we do

Basic Rights Queensland (BRQ) is a state-wide specialist community legal centre, providing free advice, advocacy and legal services to people having problems with social security or disability discrimination.

- BRQ's specialist services are accessible via a freecall number from anywhere in Queensland
- BRQ's client work focuses on vulnerable and disadvantaged people:
  - Over two-thirds of our clients are people with disability
  - One-quarter of our clients are experiencing mental illness
  - 89% of our clients have an income of under \$500 a week
  - 10% of our clients have no income at the time of contact
- BRQ's social work services are offered to clients in need of brief counselling or linking in with local supports
- BRQ's plain English factsheets support understanding of the law, how to access rights and any relevant responsibilities
- BRQ's capacity-building training assists community, private sector and government workers to understand the law and how to assist their clients
- BRQ's law reform activities arise from the client work; they focus on informing government of the impacts of laws and policies on vulnerable people and on offering positive alternatives
- BRQ has been operating for over 30 years with the support of volunteers, sponsors, donors and pro-bono assistance



## Client Story - Marco

Marco\*, who has a cognitive impairment, had been employed for many years by a large national chain through an Assisted Employment Program. He had moved into a unit close to his workplace some years before so that he was able to live independently and walk to and from work. Marco was unable to use public transport unaided and taking taxis was unaffordable.

As the result of a directive from head office, Marco's work hours were changed so that he had to commence much earlier than previously. This directive, it was advised, was relevant to the type of duties he performed.

Marco and his parents were concerned that his safety was at risk as he would now have to walk to work in the dark. Significantly, being able to get himself to and from work independently was of great importance for Marco.

Marco requested a later start time, but his manager refused to grant this. Marco's Assisted Employment Program representative was unwilling to become involved in this issue in case it affected other clients employed by the same company.

BRQ contacted the company's state human resources manager to explain Marco's case. The HR manager accepted BRQ's argument that an adjustment to Marco's start time was the appropriate (and lawful) course and she advised Marco's manager accordingly. The change was effected and Marco and his family were greatly relieved that the issue was quickly resolved and Marco could remain in his job and living independently.

(\*Marco is not the client's real name)



# President and Director's Report

## Lurline Comerford and Georgina Warrington

Basic Rights Queensland promotes people's access to fundamental rights to social security and freedom from discrimination by providing legal and social services.

This year BRQ has provided expert advice and assistance to vulnerable people from all across Queensland – for the figures at a glance see "Who we help". While it is necessary to count clients and services, it's important to remember that behind those numbers are real people with real needs, people we've assisted and whose lives have touched ours. People like the young man living rough in a tent on a riverbank, whose youth allowance had been suspended because he failed to attend his employment service appointment or the child with autism whose school was refusing to make reasonable adjustments to enable her to participate in school as other children do.

Developments in BRQ's operating environment continue to impact on service delivery. The increasingly harsh media and government attitude to people in receipt of social security payments, in conjunction with the tightening of eligibility requirements has resulted in an increase in the numbers of people who are in despair when they contact us. Contrarily, there have been positive developments in the disability field, with excitement in Queensland about the possibilities of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, now in the early stages of roll-out in Queensland. We are hopeful that some of our clients will be able to benefit from this in future and we have been examining how advocacy can work to ensure access to the NDIS.

### Access to justice - new initiatives

During this year BRQ has undertaken two new ventures exploring different ways to reach vulnerable people to provide needed legal services. In collaboration with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, Child Support and Social Services Division, BRQ ran a fortnightly AAT Duty Lawyer Clinic,

providing pre-hearing advice to vulnerable clients referred by the AAT. The evaluation of this pilot project has shown it is beneficial for all concerned – clients, the AAT and BRQ. Given such positive outcomes, the decision to continue with the Duty Lawyer Clinic was easily made.

With two-thirds of our clients being people with disability, BRQ has been following the development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) with interest. Our Disability Discrimination practice experience continues to demonstrate that things don't always go according to plan – or the legislation – regarding disability rights. Of particular interest to BRQ was to examine how the rights of vulnerable people with disability to access the NDIS are being protected and upheld as the NDIS rolls out across Queensland, to identify any gaps and to consider if there is a future role for BRQ here. Our consultation with disability advocacy organisations, service providers and NDIS workers has identified advocacy needs and we will be considering our capacity to partner with other organisations to address these in the coming year.

With the shameful occurrence of domestic violence having finally received much-needed government and public attention, it was timely for BRQ to examine areas where access to social security is impacted by domestic violence and what BRQ could do to better support women and domestic violence services in relation to this. Starting from the knowledge gained from our client stories that security of income is fundamental if women are to leave a violent relationship and re-establish themselves in safety, we consulted with DV services to explore the areas of risk regarding social security entitlement for women. Our review of what information about social security and domestic violence is available concluded that there are gaps, so we have produced factsheets to address these. The factsheets will also serve as a means of promoting to DV services the assistance which BRQ can provide them and their clients.

Another new venture for BRQ was the launching of our social media: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. We are using these platforms, in particular Facebook

and Twitter, as a means of extending the reach of our community legal education and also to raise awareness of issues affecting our clients. As with all social media, this is a work in progress and in the coming year we will look at ways to extend the usefulness and reach. Meanwhile, BRQ social media links can be found on our homepage at [www.brq.org.au](http://www.brq.org.au) – please like us!

### Addressing disadvantage

Security of income is the basic fundamental before other needs such as food and accommodation can be met. The overwhelming majority of BRQ's clients are in receipt of such a low income that they are perilously close to slipping into arrears in their rent and even losing their accommodation. Many clients are unable to afford required medical treatment or medications. Access to Disability Support Pension (DSP) has been the major presenting issue for our social security clients. There have been two likely factors behind this: the decline in grant rate from 38% in 2014-15 to 22% in 2015-16, the change in the claim process with the abolition of the Treating Doctor's Report and the large numbers of DSP cancellations arising out of the implementation of the 2014 budget measure to review 28,000 DSP recipients under the age of 35 who had been granted DSP between 2009-2011.

Discrimination prevents people from participating fully in society; it also has flow-on effects including physical and mental health problems, lowered self-esteem and lowered educational outcomes. This year, education and employment were the major areas of disability discrimination experienced by our discrimination clients and access to goods and services is still a recurring issue.

### Staff changes

There have been a few changes in the BRQ staff team this year, with the departure of our Administration Officer Nicole O'Keane, Telephone Advice Worker and Community Legal Education Coordinator Melissa Langsford and Telephone Advice Coordinator Bryony Walters. We're grateful for their

service and we wish them well in their new roles. It's sad to farewell, however we have also been delighted to welcome Leisa Higgins in the role of Intake and Administration Officer, Steve Irvine as Community Legal Education Coordinator and Social Security Solicitor and long-term BRQ volunteer Ellen Jones in the role of Social Security Advocate Law Clerk.



### Governance changes

The governance of BRQ also underwent changes. Our Treasurer Rachel Watson retired from the Management Committee at the 2015 annual general meeting. We would like to acknowledge the significant contribution Rachel made to BRQ over the previous six years and we wish her well. We were fortunate that Stuart McDowall accepted nomination for this important role. At the 2015 AGM, BRQ welcomed a new Committee member, Mike Dee. Teresa Grahame retired from her position as staff representative and the Committee welcomed Andrew Kennedy in her place. A further development was the decision to trial the inclusion of the Director as a member of the Committee.

### 30th Birthday Celebration

BRQ passed a significant milestone in October 2015: our 30th birthday since incorporation. We celebrated our history and achievements with an event featuring a "Q&A" facilitated by ABC Law Report's Damien Carrick on the topic Community Legal Centres – Adapt or Die? We were delighted and honoured to have an expert panel of Her Honour Judge Fleur Kingham, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Kevin Cocks AM, Associate Professor Rachael Field, QUT and Stephen Keim SC who drew on their experience and insight to affirm the need for and value of Basic Rights Queensland and community legal centres in general. This Q&A was broadcast on 3rd November as Celebrating Basic Rights Queensland and can still be downloaded from <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lawreport/past-programs/> The need to demonstrate and affirm the value of community legal centres remains vital as we are heading into a new funding round with cuts – as yet unspecified – to be applied to CLCs across Queensland.

### In appreciation

BRQ depends upon the support of its funders and we gratefully acknowledge the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

We would also like to acknowledge our sponsor, the Electrical Trades Union and the considerable pro bono support Minter Ellison has donated over recent years.

BRQ is fortunate to have a dedicated, experienced staff team, and we'd like to thank them for all they do to provide the best client services and outcomes possible.

The BRQ staff team is complemented by our team of enthusiastic volunteers. Our client work capacity is greatly enhanced by their cheery assistance with intake, administration and telephone advice and we thank them for this.

With the exception of the Director, the members of the Management Committee are all volunteers. Membership of the Management Committee bears considerable responsibility and we'd like to thank them for their commitment and support.



## Client Story - Catherine

Catherine approached Basic Rights Queensland as she was unable to qualify for income support due to a "preclusion period" imposed as a result of a substantial lump sum compensation payout resulting from a motor vehicle accident. Catherine was precluded from receiving a Centrelink payment until 2025 meaning she would not be able to receive payment for another 10 years. When she contacted BRQ in late 2015 she had no money in the bank, no assets and was relying on charity and limited family support to survive.

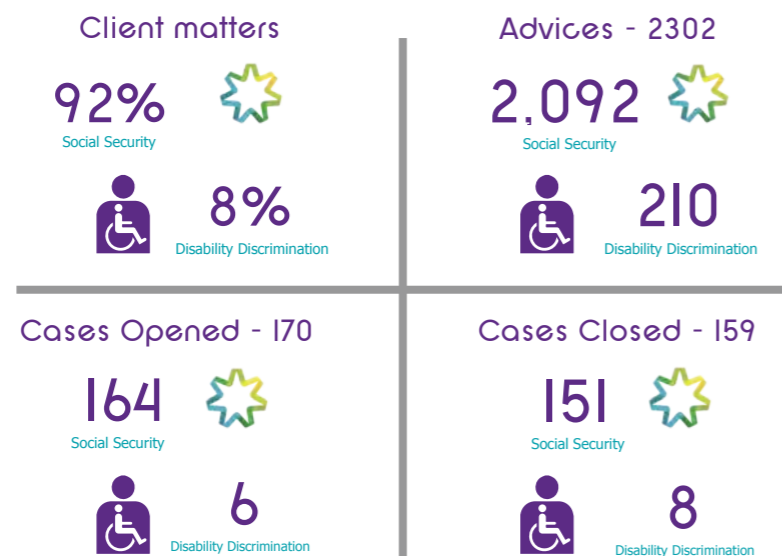
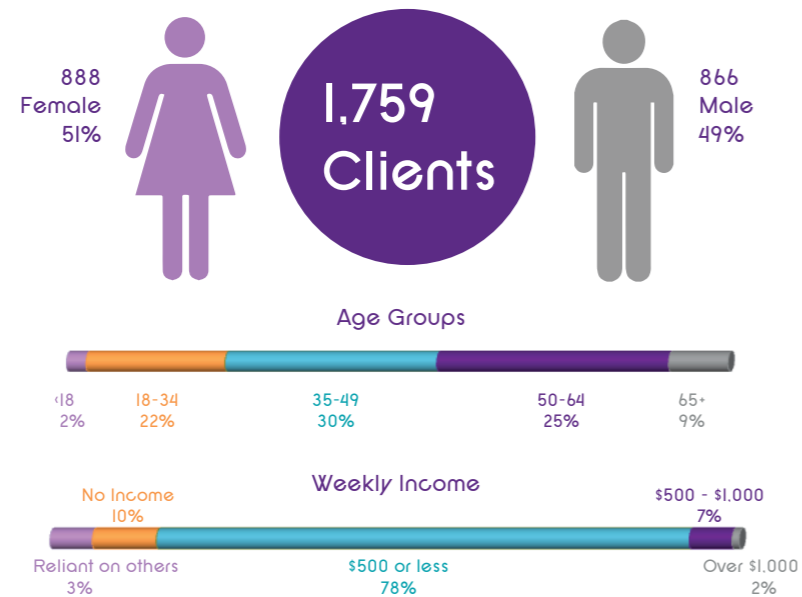
As a result of the motor vehicle accident Catherine sustained multiple physical injuries which left her in chronic pain with limited endurance and permanent facial injuries. Furthermore, she sustained a moderate brain injury which affected her emotions and ability to plan and make considered decisions.

Not long after the accident Catherine's relationship broke down and she was left to raise her children alone. Catherine purchased a house and business with the compensation funds hoping to sustain herself and her family however the impact of the 2011 floods and other factors meant she was eventually forced to sell the house and business at a significant loss. In the meantime Catherine had difficulty managing her money and was taken advantage of financially. As a result of her significant experience of grief and loss across a variety of domains including financial, relationship, employment and health Catherine developed severe depression which worsened over time and was severe when she contacted Basic Rights.

BRQ obtained information from her doctor, mental health professionals and accessed relevant information relating to her compensation payout and argued on appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (Level One) that Catherine's preclusion period should be waived on the basis of "special circumstances". Catherine is now receiving a payment and has regained her self-esteem due to the increased independence that this provides.

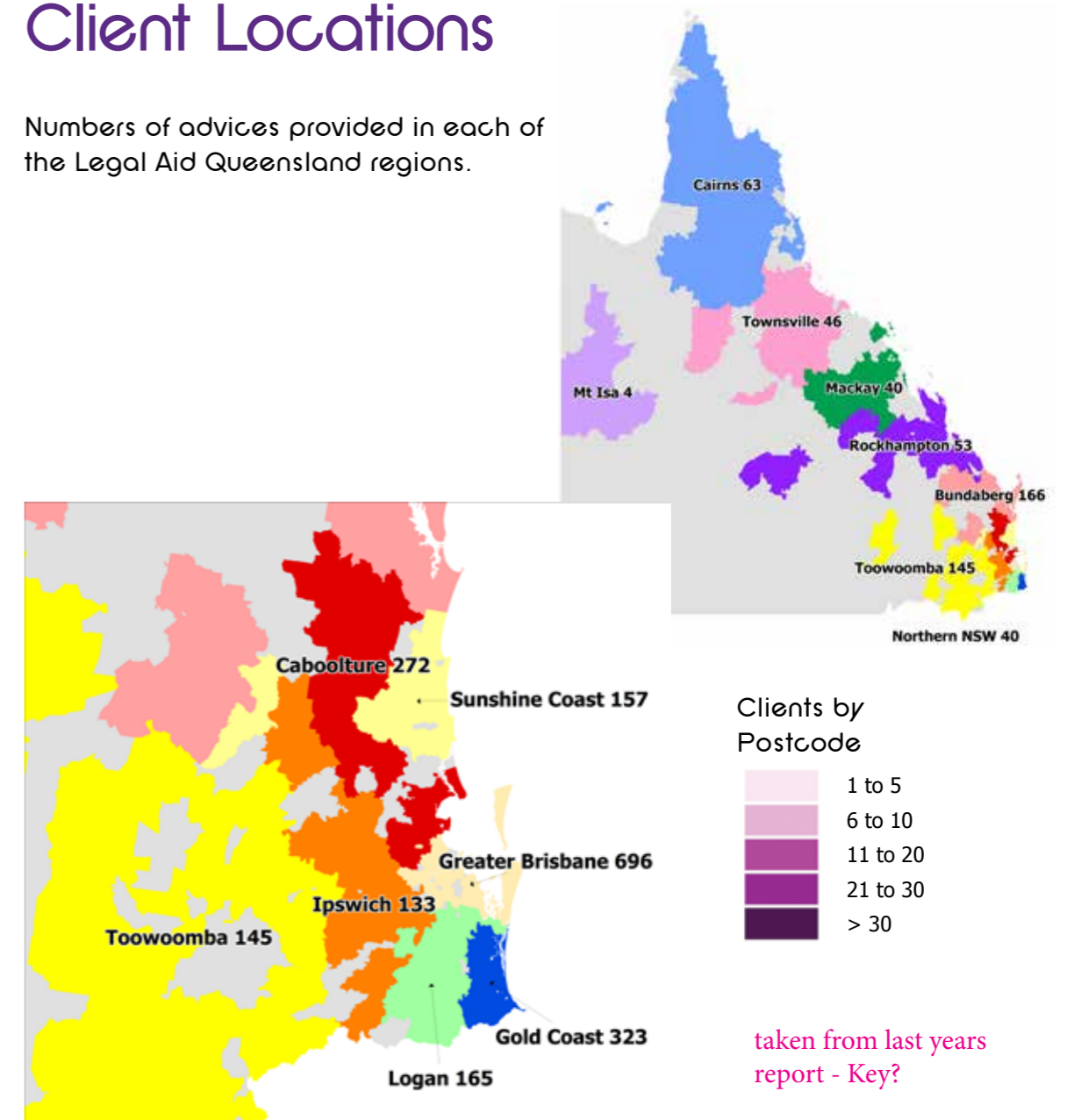
(\*Catherine is not the client's real name)

# Who we help



# Client Locations

Numbers of advices provided in each of the Legal Aid Queensland regions.



## Casework Outcomes

Department of Human Services and Tribunal Representations

Level	Total Representations	Decisions for the Client	Decisions for the Department
Department of Human Services	14	14	0
Administrative Appeals Tribunal (Social Security & Child Support Division)	64	54	10 (1 won at AAT2)
Administrative Appeals Tribunal (General Division)	8	7	1



## Client Story - Jenny

Jenny had been given an 8 week Unemployment Non-Payment Period after leaving her employment voluntarily. Jenny was working when her beloved pet fell ill with a rare illness. She accessed her sick leave, annual leave and unpaid leave from her employment but still needed to care for her pet for an unknown period of time – without any income. Jenny lived alone and considered her animals to be her family – for her, this was akin to caring for a sick child. Feeling she had no other reasonable choice, Jenny left her employment.

Centrelink assessed Jenny as having left her work voluntarily without a good reason. Basic Rights Queensland advised Jenny to appeal the decision to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Social Security & Child Support Division and to argue that it was reasonable in all the circumstances to leave her employment. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal accepted that Jenny's personal circumstances meant that it was reasonable for her to leave her employment to care for a dependent with a serious illness. As she was successful, Jenny was given back pay for the Non-Payment Period.

Jenny was now able to pay off debts that had accumulated during the Non-payment period and, importantly, to maintain her housing. Jenny felt grateful that the Tribunal had recognised her unique situation and strong bond with her animal family which had led to her decision to leave work when she did.

(\*Jenny is not the client's real name)





# Client Services

## Social Security

This has been a year of change and challenge for BRQ's social security legal services. The changes include farewelling staff and welcoming new ones, the establishment of an Administrative Appeals Tribunal Duty Lawyer Clinic, operational change and ongoing legislative change. The challenges include managing increasingly distressed clients who are struggling to survive in an increasingly hostile external environment; while changes to the disability support pension impairment tables, coupled with greatly increased numbers of disability support pension reviews and cancellations have resulted in an increase in the amount of time required for individual cases.

## Advices

BRQ's social security telephone advice numbers have seen a slight pause in the increases experienced in previous years. By 30 June 2016 the number of callers and advices regarding social security and disability discrimination matters was 2300, while during the previous year, callers and advices had reached 2351. Towards the end of the 2015-2016 year, new administrative strategies were implemented to manage an otherwise at times overwhelming demand, on both clients and staff, for our social security advice services. A booking system has been introduced which has reduced the wait list of call-backs to be made, given certainty to clients and significantly reduced the number of "no shows" when clients are phoned back by BRQ. The benefits of this system will hopefully be reflected in a significant increase in the figures for the year ending June 2017.

## Case work

BRQ's casework activity witnessed an increase in the number of cases opened during the year ending 30 June 2016 [183 in 14-15; 216 in 15-16]. Most of

our casework over the past year has continued to involve the rejection or cancellation of the Disability Support Pension. The remaining cases covered a range of other social security matters, particularly compensation preclusion periods and debts.

Our casework services are highly targeted. Representation is only provided to extremely vulnerable people who are unable to self-advocate. Persons with an ability to self-advocate are provided with advice only. The vast majority of our

representation has been conducted before the former Social Security Appeals Tribunal, now referred to as the Administrative Appeals Tribunal's Social Services & Child Support Division [AAT Stage 1].

Our success rate in this jurisdiction is, not surprisingly, remarkably high, and currently stands at more than 80%. In addition to our vulnerability criteria, we insist that vulnerable people must have reasonable prospects of

success. Those persons considered to have poor prospects are invariably advised on how to improve their prospects. There is a clear pattern in many of our disability support pension cases where persons have been insufficiently treated for a variety of complex reasons. We advise them on what they need to attend to for a new claim and many of these claims are successful.

BRQ's involvement in the AAT General Division (Stage 2) is limited due to our limited resources and the labour-intensive nature of many of the necessary procedural steps before an application can proceed to hearing. Some of our unsuccessful AAT (1) cases are appealed to the AAT Stage 2 level, particularly where we believe that further evidence may result in a successful outcome by negotiation. At this level of review, a submission from BRQ can result in the Department of Human Services conceding the appeal or negotiating an outcome which is favourable to the client and most of our AAT (2) matters settle prior to hearing.

"This is why your call made such a positive difference - you actually listened to me."

## New Administrative Appeals Tribunal Duty Lawyer Clinic

In March 2016 BRQ commenced conducting a fortnightly Duty Lawyer advice clinic at AAT (1). Legal Aid Queensland attends every other week. An initial 3 month trial period has been recently reviewed, with the outcomes for clients, the Tribunal and BRQ being overwhelmingly positive; accordingly this service will be continued (at least) until 30 June 2017. The clinic service has identified a number of meritorious cases that fall squarely within BRQ's casework guidelines for representation therefore BRQ has opened case work files for these clients. Where these cases have already been allocated a hearing date, we will arrange for that date to be vacated and prepare the application on an in-house basis. Senior Solicitor. Patrick Cranitch

## Disability Discrimination

BRQ's Disability Discrimination Advocacy Service (DDAS) provided 210 advices to people with a disability who enquire about whether they have faced, due to their impairment, unlawful discrimination. We also worked with associates and community organisations who support these clients and/or their families.

This year we have engaged with stakeholders to increase awareness of the availability of the service and we have seen a marked increase in demand for legal advice. The increase can be attributed to greater awareness of our service, working with our clients in a staged approach to resolve their issue, and referrals directly from the Anti-discrimination Commission of Queensland (ADCQ) and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), where complaints of unlawful discrimination are commenced.

BRQ's DDAS encourages clients to resolve their issues early where possible, with the alleged discriminator, and without the need to engage with a formal legal process. This can lead to a quicker satisfactory result and confidence for the client to enable them to resolve any future issues they face.

We advise our clients on the likelihood of a successful

outcome if a formal complaint is made, what evidence they need to provide to demonstrate unlawful disability discrimination and any possible defences that could be raised by the respondent. We manage our clients' expectations as to what reasonable outcomes could be obtained with a successfully settled Complaint.

DDAS casework for vulnerable clients with meritorious matters included representation for a child who experienced unlawful discrimination in their schooling, and others who would have difficulty advocating for themselves as a result of their impairment/s. Often our role is to support a client to self-advocate at a conciliation conference at the ADCQ or the AHRC. Our client is empowered to engage with the alleged discriminator safely and to express how the events affected them. Often our cases result in changes that have a positive impact for our clients, and also others in the community with a disability.

BRQ represented a client this year at the Federal Circuit Court of Australia. A confidential agreement between the parties was reached before trial. We were able to provide high quality representation, despite our limited resources, with the assistance of a barrister who was provided through the Queensland Public Interest Clearing House (QPILCH) Pro-bono Scheme. This case demonstrated an effective partnership between community legal centres which ultimately brought about an excellent result for our client, with the flow-on effect of a result which enabled others with a disability to have equal access to services.

Disability Discrimination Advocate.  
Andrew Kennedy

## Social Work

In 2015-2016 our social work service provided 233 advices, opened 34 cases and advocated for/represented nine clients at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal-Level One. The social work service continues its focus on assisting BRQ's most vulnerable clients who often present with a combination of issues including severe mental health issues, suicidality, homelessness, relationship breakdown and social

isolation. These most vulnerable clients receive intense assistance, referrals and follow up from the social work service including direct advocacy with Centrelink and crisis/supportive counselling when required.

### Early intervention

The social work service regularly liaises with Centrelink on behalf of our most vulnerable clients to effectively communicate their issues or clarify their circumstances and negotiate the best way forward to resolve their Centrelink problem. This helps to reduce the stress levels on these clients who are already overwhelmed with dealing with their individual life stressors. We are thankful for the assistance of our Centrelink liaison contacts who have been invaluable in assisting us in this task. This year we conducted an evaluation of these direct advocacy contacts and the outcomes show this additional support is of great benefit to our most vulnerable clients. Many of these clients were not on a payment or not receiving their full entitlement when they first contacted us. In the majority of cases, it was found that there was an entitlement and our Centrelink liaison contacts ensured that the right steps were taken to ensure that a payment was promptly made. In addition we have on a number of occasions assisted clients to collect and provide appropriate information for Disability Support Pension claims, enabling the matter to be resolved at an early stage rather than proceed through the external review process.

### Casework

The majority of social work case work is assisting individuals with new claims or cancellations of the Disability Support Pension, particularly where mental health issues are present. This involves not only assisting clients to gather relevant information from relevant health professionals and advocating on their behalf through the appeals process but also assisting them to understand why in some cases it may not be possible to achieve the desired outcome. In addition the social work service continues to assist individuals with a range of other payment issues including "special circumstances" debt waivers, "special circumstances" waivers of compensation preclusion periods and claims for the unreasonable to live at home rate of Youth Allowance. In the past financial year the social work service also delivered training to staff and volunteers in responding to clients at risk of suicide, supervised

a social work student on placement and continued to develop working relationships with other human service professionals in the community sector to highlight the service we provide and to facilitate effective referrals.

Social Worker, Teresa Graham

### Telephone Advice Service

The Social Security Telephone Advice Service (TAS), the 'engine room' of BRQ, delivered 1,859 expert advices to clients from all over Queensland on a wide range of social security law issues.

Eligibility for a payment was the main presenting issue of over half of our advice clients, with access to disability support pension making up most of these. The other main presenting issues, in descending order of numbers, were overpayment, rate reduction and processing complaints. Our clients often are experiencing other socio-legal problems which are exacerbating or are exacerbated by their social security problem and our TAS workers and volunteers need to unpack this while being alert to risks to entitlement of which the client may be unaware.

This year BRQ took the big step of moving to booked telephone advice appointments. In order to ensure those clients who urgently need help are prioritised, BRQ's intake system enables triage in which particularly vulnerable and at-risk clients, or other community service workers, are provided with support and advice immediately or as soon as practicable.

It is clear that the new booking system is better for clients as they have certainty about when their issue will be addressed and for our staff, who have more certainty about their weekly advice workload. All staff involved in intake and advice contributed to the development of our new system and all have worked hard to make this a success.

### TASStaff

Teresa Grahame, Steve Irvine,  
Andrew Kennedy, Bryony Walters  
(to October), Ellen Jones  
(from November)

## Client Story - Tom

After having been in receipt of disability support pension (DSP) for a number of years, Tom was dismayed to find his payment was cancelled. Tom has an acquired brain injury and he suffers from mental illness.

BRQ established that the cancellation was due to Tom being reassessed under the new criteria which were introduced in 2015. Tom's conditions were now not considered to be "fully diagnosed treated and stabilised", so he was awarded 0 "impairment points".

BRQ appealed on Tom's behalf to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Social Services and Child Support Division (AAT1), ensured he was granted "payment pending review", so he had sufficient income to live on during the appeal process, and obtained his Centrelink file.

It was clear from the file that Tom had been treated for his medical conditions over a number of years and all his treatment options had been exhausted. We managed to have Tom's medical matters examined by a relevant medical professional to confirm that his conditions were "fully diagnosed treated and stabilised", which meant he could be awarded points under the Impairment Tables. We wrote submissions on Tom's behalf and appeared before the AAT(1).

The Tribunal found that Tom has a "severe" impairment and awarded him 30 impairment points. Tom's DSP was reinstated.

(\*Tom is not the client's real name)

## Community Legal Education



### Steve Irvine, Community Legal Education Coordinator

BRQ's Community Legal Education program is an important vehicle for providing stakeholders, community sector workers and the general public with clear concise and up to date information about their legal rights and responsibilities in relation to social security and disability discrimination. During the year we have actively engaged in educating community workers about social security issues in order to enable them to assist clients with less complex matters. We have also been raising awareness of BRQ's role in providing assistance to clients with more complex social security issues.

This year we continued our community engagement activities by conducting 18 workshops providing training and information on disability support pension, compensation preclusion periods, carers' issues, youth and Austudy issues and general social security matters. We were also active within the sector and the community, engaging in the Community Legal Assistance Forum (CLAF) and making new connections with external providers such as Centrelink Community Engagement Services and Disability Service Providers. BRQ also provided information and participated in public community events such as NAIDOC, Homeless Connect and the Logan Finance Fair.

The technological age marches on and in response we launched our Facebook and Twitter sites. Both sites have been well received and supported and they are enabling BRQ to provide information to a wider audience, as well as promote our service and support the community sector in general.

During the year we continued to produce legal information materials, including providing an updated chapter on Social Security for the Caxton Law Handbook. We responded to legislative and external organisational changes by updating our fact sheets on Disability Support Pensions and Debts. We also produced a new Program of Support fact sheet.

## Law Reform from Client Experience

Through its client work, BRQ is well-placed to learn about unintended, even harmful consequences of the implementation of legislation and it is BRQ's responsibility to make the government aware of these and to provide proposals for constructive alternatives. BRQ's main channel for achieving this in relation to social security law is through active involvement in the national social security law peak, the National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN). BRQ's Director completed her fourth year as a member of the NWRN Management Committee and BRQ staff participated in the monthly network meetings in which members are updated on the frequent law and policy changes and caseworkers share expertise. A dynamic community legal centre network, the NWRN engages in sector support, information sharing from government to the sector and vice-versa and law reform work. The NWRN's law reform work is grounded in member centres' client work experiences and BRQ has contributed many examples for this.

BRQ's social security client work also provides insight into problems with Centrelink policies and procedures experienced by vulnerable people. For example, the high cost of mobile phone calls to Centrelink when the caller is kept on hold for lengthy periods. We are able to raise these issues and discuss potential solutions with government via the NWRN's regular meetings with Department of Human Services and Department of Social Services staff. The Department of Human Services (DHS) is conducting a seven-year project Welfare Payment Infrastructure Transformation (WPIT), reviewing the highly complex payment system and how payments are delivered. DHS has indicated commitment to ongoing consultations with the NWRN regarding WPIT, and the initial consultation workshop was held in Brisbane in December. BRQ was a

significant contributor to this consultation, being part of the "co-design" DHS-NWRN-DSS (Department of Social Services) team which prepared the workshop as well as participating on the day. We look forward to future opportunities to contribute our client work experience to further such consultations.

BRQ's disability discrimination client work, along with the knowledge gained from the experiences of the two-thirds of our social security clients who are people with disability, informs our disability law reform work.

This year we made submissions to the Department of Human Services consultation regarding the National Disability Advocacy Framework, to the Australian Human Rights Commission's Willing to Work inquiry and to the Department of Social Services regarding the National Disability Advocacy Program Review. BRQ also undertook a research project into the provision of advocacy in relation to accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

**"Our understanding and appreciation of the great work you do has expanded tremendously!"**

Department of Human Services

# Supporters and Donors

We are grateful for the support we receive, both financial and in-kind, from former clients, private individuals, business and organisations.

## Sponsor

The Electrical Trades Union, Qld and NT branch, sponsor since 2006

## Pro bono

Minter Ellison

Dr Cathryn McConaghy, Barrister-at-Law

## In-kind support

Queensland College of Law



## Individual Donors

BRQ receives donations from the general public and from former clients. We would like to express our sincere thanks for their support.

## Funding

Basic Rights Queensland is funded by the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department through the Community Legal Services Program. We are grateful for their support.

# Staff

Role	Name	Years at BRQ	Days/Week
Director	Georgina Warrington	8	4
Senior Solicitor	Patrick Cranitch	14	5
Finance Administrator	Sue McComber	11	1
Intake and Administration Officer	Leisa Higgins	1	5
Social Security Solicitor	Andrew Davison	8	4
Senior Social Worker	Teresa Grahame	11	4
Social Security Solicitor and TAS Coordinator (to October 2015)	Bryony Walters	6	5
Social Security Advocate Law Clerk (from November 2015)	Ellen Jones	2	5
CLE Coordinator and Social Security Solicitor	Steve Irvine	1	4.5
Disability Discrimination Advocate, Social Security TAS worker	Andrew Kennedy	5	4
Administration Support	Ellen Jones	2	0.5
Director Backfill	Avryl Gratton	-	4
Project Worker	Jenny Newton	-	-

# Our People

## Management Committee

### Lurline Comerford, President

Lurline has been BRQ's President for 5 years. Lurline has an interest in social justice and equity for all. A Social Worker since 1974, Lurline is keen to maintain a strong community based organisation that can address social security issues, anomalies and problems and participate in improving the system for those who are disadvantaged.

### Paul Henman, Vice President

Paul had served on the Basic Rights Qld committee for a year before becoming Vice President. He is an Associate Professor of Social Policy at the University of Queensland. Paul has a strong professional interest in social security policy and administration, and of wider issues of inequality. His research focuses on the nexus between social policy, public administration and digital technologies.

### Cale Fryer, Secretary

Cale holds a Bachelor of Business Management (Int. Business) degree as well as graduating with Honours with a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Queensland. Cale is a solicitor of the Supreme Court and the High Court of Australia. He has extensive experience in all aspects of general practice with particular focus on personal injury litigation. Cale is committed to helping ordinary Queenslanders achieve improvement and justice.

### Stuart McDowall, Treasurer

Stuart is a management consultant with over 15 years of professional experience in retail, professional services and public sector organisations. He has professional qualifications in Business and Information Technology, and is also a Chartered Accountant. Stuart is currently working as an Associate Director in Grant Thornton's Public Sector Advisory practice.

### Dr Mike Dee, Committee Member

Mike joined the BRQ Committee this year and is currently a Lecturer at QUT on the Faculty of Health, School - Public Health and Social Work. His interests

include social policy issues around welfare 'reform' in Australia and internationally, covering citizenship, participation, social inclusion/exclusion and the surveillance of welfare subjects. Mike has written a number of papers on these topics and brings a wealth of knowledge to our Management Committee team.

### Paul Frøeburn, Committee Member

Paul was admitted as a solicitor in 1983. After working as a solicitor at Feez Ruthning (now Allens) and as a Senior Associate at Morris Fletcher & Cross (now Minter Ellison) Paul was admitted as a barrister in 1990. He 'took silk' in 2003. Paul has a strong belief in social justice.

### Pat Rogers, Committee Member

Pat has been on the Committee for 12 months and has been active in the Union movement since the mid 1980's. Pat holds a degree in Business and is an Industrial Officer with the Electrical Trades Union. Pat has a strong interest in social justice and community development.

### Christopher Saines, Committee Member

Christopher is the founder of Galleon Law Group which specialises in corporate and commercial law. Since being admitted as a solicitor of the Queensland Supreme Court in 2006, Christopher has assisted a broad variety of clients across all areas of commercial law. He has a particular interest in corporate governance and has assisted companies with the implementation of best practice corporate governance principles and advising board members about their director duties.

### Georgina Warrington, Committee Member

Georgina has been Director of BRQ for five years. Georgina has taught school, university and ESL students. Since qualifying as a social worker Georgina has worked in youth justice and eating disorders. She has a strong interest in social justice and is on the management committees of Windana Support Centre and the National Welfare Rights Network.

# Volunteers and Students

## Volunteers

Sadia Azizi  
Lizzy Katona  
Elena Paik  
Rhia Bhagat  
Brigid Kelly  
Kate Ross  
Terri Bradley  
Dayne Kingsford  
Krish Sharma  
Jean Collings  
Tut Lam  
Alexandra Stevens  
Maddison Dantu  
Tamara Lenz  
Santhya Subramaniam  
Andrea Farrell  
Tinashe Makamure  
Hannah Taylor  
Dorothy Fauls  
Stephen Moran  
Dimitry Thoms  
Vanessa George  
Roisin McDonald  
Ellen Jones  
Tejal Naras

Volunteers make a valuable contribution to the work of Basic Rights Queensland, assisting with intake, administration, advices and casework. Volunteering at BRQ offers opportunities to develop essential professional skills such as client interviewing, record keeping and to gain a practical understanding of legal processes.

While our volunteers are generally law students and lawyers, we welcome volunteers from other backgrounds. What matters most is a willingness and ability to learn and undertake the work and a desire to engage with and support our clients.

*"Volunteering for BRQ has been one of the most profoundly influential experiences of my career and education to date. I take with me many happy memories. Thank you for allowing me to participate in the valuable work you do. My time as a volunteer has inspired me to move into other positions where I can assist vulnerable clients to access justice."*

## Students

Simon Tracey PLT, Ondrea Ward Social Work, Eliza Brierley Clinical Legal.

*"Being a volunteer with Basic Rights Queensland has allowed me to utilise the skills taught at University to assist and engage with the community in a positive way. It has provided an invaluable experience in utilising research, writing and communication skills in a practical and friendly environment and has enriched my passion for working with people in need."*

# Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to present the Basic Rights Queensland (BRQ) Treasurer's Report, for the 2015-16 financial year.

The BRQ Management Committee would like to thank our funders for their financial support. BRQ's primary funding over the period was provided by the State Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG), and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, through the Community Legal Services Program. We are grateful for this support and particularly would like to acknowledge the ongoing assistance from DJAG staff in an often uncertain funding environment.

Other funding received includes donations, which are of great assistance in our work to provide specialist legal advice, information and advocacy to the community. We particularly thank the Electrical Trades Union for their regular sponsorship since 2006!

Salaries and staffing costs are BRQ's major expenditure item, owing to the nature of our services. The cost of BRQ's premises is relatively modest, courtesy of affordable arrangements with Brisbane City Council for our office space in the Maida Lilley Centre in Fortitude Valley. Being co-located with other community services also provides some operational benefits.

The ongoing financial sustainability of BRQ remains a focus for the Management Committee. As can be seen from the financial reports, BRQ has finished the year in a strong financial position and we are confident in our ability to meet our financial commitments in the coming year. BRQ will continue to seek additional funding streams to ensure ongoing sustainability and to continue to provide the most relevant and exemplary service possible to clients.

BRQ's overall performance is a reflection of its talented and invaluable staff and volunteers, who exhibit great passion, energy and innovation in delivering their important work. We express our special thanks to Georgina Warrington, who remains agile, positive and calm in responding to the challenges and opportunities that BRQ is presented with, and to Sue McComber, for her diligence and patience in administering the financial affairs of the organisation.

Treasurer, Stuart McDowall



# Financial Report

## Income and Expenditure Statement for the Year Ended 30 June 2016

Income	2016 \$	2015 \$
Donations	833	1,480
Grants and funding received	826,747	748,470
Interest received	7,279	9,632
Memberships	200	323
Profit on disposal of equipment	-	-
Other income	500	2,544
Sponsorship	8,000	8,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>843,559</b>	<b>770,459</b>
Expenses		
AGM expenses	114	778
Audit fees	5,500	5,000
Bank Charges	62	255
Cleaning	-	132
Computer expenses	844	1,269
Conference expenses	10,836	9,218
Consultancy	2,980	4,574
Depreciation	5,314	5,527
Document destruction and storage	2,129	2,028
Equipment - minor	2,490	705
Insurance	2,308	2,329
Levies to NACLCL and NWRN	4,453	4,487
Library	-	463
Management committee	2,630	1,285
Postage, printing and stationery	6,498	12,644
Practising certificate	2,527	2,962
Program cost	912	185
Professional fee	532	609
Rent	16,008	19,476
Repairs and maintenance	845	513
Staff expenses	693,569	650,775
Subscriptions and registrations	3,892	5,848
Telephone, fax and internet	20,542	18,853
Travelling expenses	3,461	8,722
Planning Day expenses	2,450	1800
Volunteer costs	340	445
Website design and maintenance	268	8,465
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>791,504</b>	<b>769,347</b>
Surplus/(deficit) before income tax	52,055	1,112
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus/(deficit) after income tax	52,055	1,112
Accumulated surplus at beginning of year	207,436	206,324
<b>ACCUMULATED SURPLUS AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>259,491</b>	<b>207,436</b>

## Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2016

Current Assets	2016 \$	2015 \$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	446,997	386,096
Accounts Receivable	10,239	9,917
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>457,236</b>	<b>396,013</b>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Plant and equipment - at Cost	57,882	<b>49,161</b>
Less: accumulated depreciation	(40,643)	(35,329)
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>17,239</b>	<b>13,832</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>474,475</b>	<b>409,845</b>
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	66,851	52,203
Employee benefit provisions	139,830	139,277
Unspent funds	8,303	10,929
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>214,984</b>	<b>202,409</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>214,984</b>	<b>202,409</b>
<b>NET ASSETS (LIABILITIES)</b>	<b>259,491</b>	<b>207,436</b>
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Accumulated surplus	259,491	207,436
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>	<b>259,491</b>	<b>207,436</b>

\* Copies of our full audited Financial Report are available via email: [brq@brq.org.au](mailto:brq@brq.org.au)



Basic Rights  
Queensland Inc.  
SOCIAL SECURITY & DISABILITY  
DISCRIMINATION SERVICES

[www.brq.org.au](http://www.brq.org.au)