

38th Annual Report 2015-16

Legal Services Commission of South Australia

Overview

Highlights 2015-16

127 684
legal services
provided

2.5 million
website
page views

80 000+
calls to
helpline

21 365
legal advice
appointments

19 562
applications
for aid

16 509
grants
of aid

16 234
duty lawyer
services

312
ICL appointments

10 year
anniversary family
duty lawyers

8% ↑
in family duty
lawyer services

780
FDR conferences

77%
FDR conferences
settled

1 430
received migrant
legal education

1 357
received disability
legal education

1.5 million
law handbook page
views (*up 13%*)

3 289
made contact via
legal chat

Director's Report 2015-16

This year has again demonstrated the worth of legal aid to the Federal and State Courts. Our lawyers and private legal practitioners acting on grants of legal aid represented over 30 000 people in their cases before the courts. If representation had not been available, these people would have faced representing themselves in court or could not have pursued their rights.

Our legal advisers provided over 100 000 legal advices and legal education sessions. Our websites were accessed over 1 000 000 times by people seeking legal information and advice to assist them in their daily lives.

Our legal researchers responded to 37 proposals by government for legislative change.

780 family dispute resolution conferences were provided to parents in conflict over care issues for their children, with 77% resolving their differences without a court hearing.

I thank the dedicated staff of the Legal Services Commission for contributing their expertise for the benefit of these South Australians.

I also thank the private legal profession who acted on grants of legal aid, receiving payment for such services at substantially lower fees than if the client had been in a position to pay their legal expenses.

Nearly 700 legal practitioners have now joined the Commission panels. Service delivery contracts clearly set out our expectations of lawyers acting on grants of legal aid, with regular random audits assisting compliance.

This year saw the reduction of our staff numbers through voluntary separation. Some long serving staff members chose to pursue other career paths and I thank them for their years at the Commission.

Programs to curb domestic violence in our community have been the focus of government this year. The Commission was pleased to be funded through the Women's Safety Package to deliver new services in the northern suburbs through a Health/Justice Partnership and to expand grants of aid for clients facing the impacts of domestic violence who might otherwise not qualify for aid.

A recent survey indicated that 79% of family law representation files included issues related to domestic violence. This alarming statistic justifies government's concerns of this pervasive problem.

Director's Report 2015-16

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Our legal advice and education services have expanded through the use of social media and the introduction of a Legal Chat service. I acknowledge the hard work of the staff in Access Services in bringing this project to fruition in a timely and economic manner. In just 10 months we have provided 3 289 client sessions through Legal Chat.

I have been pleased to continue my participation on the Criminal Justice Sector Reform Council. It is here the leaders of criminal justice sector agencies gather to discuss improvements to the criminal justice system. My participation ensures the voice of the client is heard among the views of the police, prosecution, corrections, courts and the government.

I thank the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General of South Australia, the Hon. John Rau MP and the Attorney-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Hon. Senator George Brandis QC for their ongoing commitment to legal aid.

There is always more that we can do as an organisation to help South Australians in need, and I look forward to providing expanded services into the future.

Gabrielle Canny
Director, Legal Services Commission

Financial Overview 2015-16

The Commission ended the 2015-16 financial year with a consolidated comprehensive result of \$650 000 deficit. This compares to a consolidated comprehensive result of \$4.025 million deficit for the 2014-15 financial year.

The Commission has run at a deficit for the last two financial years as a result of a reduction in funding of \$3.5 million in 2014-15 and of \$1.75 million in 2015-16.

The 2015-16 financial statements record the following:

Income—

- Commonwealth Government funding of \$15.7 million
- State Government funding of \$21.4 million
- reimbursement from the State Government under the Expensive Criminal Cases Funding Agreement (see Appendix 2) of \$60 000
- reimbursement from the Commonwealth Government for expensive criminal cases of \$44 000
- funds from the Law Society of South Australia pursuant to the *Legal Practitioners Act 1981* of \$2.9 million
- other income of \$3 million
- total income of \$43.19 million

Expenditure—

- private practitioner payments of \$17.8 million
- total expenses of \$43.84 million

The Finance section of this Report contains the detailed financial year report, the Auditor-General's Report and financial statements.

Summary of Services 2015-16

	2014-15	2015-16
Telephone information sessions	68 028	70 287
Legal Chat online	—	3 289
Advice appointments	25 122	21 365
Duty lawyer services	16 836	16 234
Grants of aid for legal representation	16 062	16 509
TOTAL SERVICES (<i>excl education services</i>)	126 048	127 684
Distribution of publications	83 381	87 779
Law Handbook page views	1 364 068	1 545 363
Commission website visits	795 411	984 352
Applications for aid	19 254	19 562
Assigned in-house	5 164	5 400
Assigned externally	10 898	11 110
FDR conferences held	777	780
FDR conferences settled - percentage	75%	77%
ICL appointments	339	312