



**citizens
advice
bureau**

**Connecting people with
information and services**

WINTER Newsletter 2024



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Having farewelled “Makuru” one of the five seasons that falls between June and July as recognised in the language of the Wadjuk Noongar, the traditional owners of the lands I live and work on, I reflect on what has been an incredibly busy season for all of us here at CAB. We have seen demand significantly increase for all of CAB’s services, driven by factors such as the cost of living crisis and a need for information and referral services to resolve an ever growing number of issues.

As we transitioned into Djilba (August - September) we have seen a steady increase in enquires relating to Strata disputes, typically where neighbours are in conflict and there are no clear pathways forward due to the absence of by-laws or property Strata managers willing to provide their sagely advice. Strata schemes that are typically 2 to 5 unit lots in size will not necessarily have or require a Strata manager, leaving those in dispute to despair at what to do and where to go. While many disputes stem from a lack of understanding of owner obligations and responsibilities, information can be at times difficult to understand or lacking support from anyone willing to provide a free advice service.

The 2023-2024 State Administration Tribunal (SAT) Annual Report, now a year old, notes that there was a 15% increase in strata applications from the previous reporting period (up from 155 to 178). Judging by enquiries to CAB we anticipate when published, the SAT Annual Report will once again report an increase in Strata applications. Such is the growing problem that the Citizens Advice Bureau is reviewing how it can explore dispute resolution solutions and provide greater support to anyone seeking advice. While mediation is one such solution, both parties must agree to the process.

The emerging challenges we see faced by the community is the very reason why we commit to having in place a strategic plan. This year we set about laying down the foundations of the CAB Strategic Plan including identifying our goals and objectives for the next three years. I am pleased to share with you 11 objectives we have identified:

1. Improving client accessibility to our services.
2. Adapting to client service needs.
3. Providing a low-cost affordable legal and mediation service to the W.A community.
4. Demonstrating a social contribution value to W.A.
5. Diversifying our revenue base.
6. Seeking external funding opportunities.
7. Delivering an effective governance framework.
8. Ensuring organisational structure is aligned to the Strategic Plan.
9. Providing learning and professional development opportunities to staff and volunteers.
10. Having in place an effective Information and Communications Technology framework.
11. Aligning internal and external communication processes with the Strategic Plan.

As a lover of the outdoors, a gardening tragic and someone who dislikes the cold, I can’t wait for “Kambarang” the Noongar season that recognises the return of the hot weather. Bring on Kambarang!

Citizens Advice Bureau Chief Executive Officer -
Dion Dosualdo.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

By **Sarah Clifford** - Volunteer & Client Services Coordinator

Since commencing at CAB in mid-June of this year I have enjoyed getting to know the staff and the Branch Volunteers across the State. I hope I can support all Volunteers in their roles whether that is with gaining relevant experience, debriefing, initiating training or making the role more meaningful for them.

On visiting our regional branches I have gained the feedback of many Volunteers with some noting that they are feeling overwhelmed and some that felt they could be more active. I think there was a general feeling there needed to be more support from the Perth Head Office which I hope to rectify with scheduled training in particular in-situ training for Busselton and Bunbury.



From left to right: **Frances** (Perth branch volunteer) and **Sarah**.

We are currently investigating, with a view to expand, the services we offer at our various branches in order to meet growing community need for assistance. Our initial focus is on expanding the volunteer assisted Criminal Injuries Compensation (CIC) applications service. In order to commence this process we have arranged in September for volunteers from our various branches to attend training provided by the Office of Criminal Injuries Compensation (OCIC). We are extremely thankful for the support of the OCIC and know that the training will be invaluable in delivering this much needed community service.

Other initiatives include again offering No Interest Loans training, increasing CAB lawyer visits to branches, sourcing pro bono lawyers as well as developing training to volunteers who may wish to provide help to members of the public with the assisted access and completion of various Government Department forms. We have identified over 20 forms which are only accessible online leaving many in our community who struggle to access or navigate the digital world unsupported.

Our new volunteers have recently completed an updated Induction process, which replaces the previous two-day training format. The revised program now includes one day of initial training, followed by a two-week observation period at their branch, and then a second day of more advanced training. This structure allows volunteers to get a broad overview of CAB's objectives, its vision and its mission. On Day 1 volunteers can expect to meet with our CEO, hear insights from a CAB lawyer, and spend time with me as we get to know each other. Day 2 then delves into specific techniques and processes, helping volunteers apply their new knowledge in practice.

We have recently completed a Volunteer Survey designed to gauge satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. I am pleased to report results suggest satisfaction with Head Office has increased from 33% to 60%. Volunteers have also indicated their preference for additional training topics, including assistance with form preparation, NILS, caller response scripts, computer skills, CIC, handling complex queries, and managing distressed clients.

I'm looking forward to the opportunities ahead and getting to meet more of our incredible volunteers.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Volunteer Profile - Lina Ridley

How long have you been a JP and what inspired you to become one?

I was commissioned in September 2021 and mentored by some wonderful JPs connected to CABWA, RAJWA, JPAWA, Police Central and Family Court of WA.

I've always had an interest in the law and procedural fairness, so becoming a JP furthered that interest by allowing me to explore a wider range of legal matters.

You must meet a colourful array of people, what do you find most rewarding in helping people?

JP service allows me to help others by giving them time and attention when they need documents witnessed or certified as true copies. People are often stressed when fulfilling a legal or governmental obligation, so I try to make it less intimidating and hopefully ease their anxiety. In the process, I meet an interesting cross-section of people that helps me appreciate how lucky I am to have a simpler life.



Our statistics show the JP services are in high demand, what are some of the most common reasons people call on your services?

A JP signs documents that need to be witnessed in accordance with the Oaths, Affidavits and Statutory Declarations Act (WA) 2005 or similar Commonwealth Acts.

The most common are Family Court documents (Divorce, Property Settlement, Child Maintenance, Consent Orders) or those relating to estate planning (probate, EPA, EPG). However, there is always a mixed bag of interesting items – Magistrate Court Prosecution Notices; Request for DNA samples to confirm paternity; Proof of Identity; Request for reinstatement of licence; Recognition of international qualifications; Freezing Orders; Land Transfer; and more infrequently Warrants; Bail applications; etc. Whilst the content is none of my business, people often tell me their story.

What makes a good JP, and would you recommend to someone to do the training and become a JP?

A good JP should be non-judgemental and have empathy for the people they meet – there are always two sides to a story!

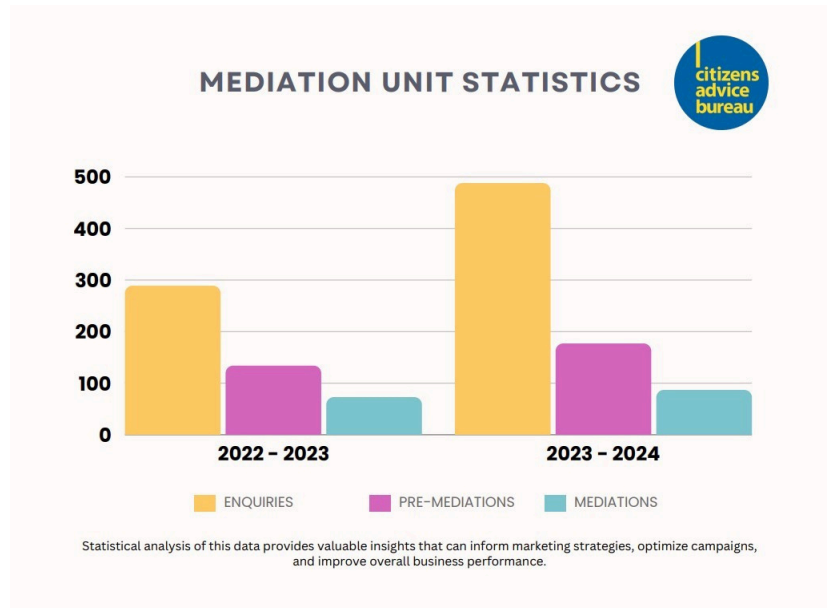
Yes – I would highly recommend becoming a JP, but it will take time – normally 8 months but during COVID, my application took 20 months! You need to...

- Be recommended by a State MP – don't worry, just make an appointment to introduce yourself to your local Member
- Complete JP training – 1 week full-time or staggered online options
- Be subject to checks on good character/reputation undertaken by Department of Justice.

MEDIATION

The demand for dispute resolution mediation services has steadily increased in the past financial year. There has been a noticeable spike in enquiries encompassing a wide range of disputes such as Community issues, disputes within the Associations Incorporation Act, and disputes in regional and remote areas, as well as family and grandparenting issues.

As issues arise from housing infill and apartment living, neighbours are increasingly turning to dispute resolution as a faster and more collaborative alternative to navigating complex community issues involving dividing fences, noise complaints, damage caused by overhanging trees and roots, and other community matters.



Recent upgrades to CAB's technical equipment have increased the outreach of dispute resolution services to regional and remote areas such as Mt Magnet, Leonora, Busselton, Margaret River, Northam, and Newman. CAB is providing facilitated dispute resolution through phone teleconferencing and virtual mediation via Teams.

In response to a notable increase in demand from grandparents seeking additional access to their grandchildren, CAB has undertaken specialized training for mediators in this area. We arranged for a representative from Wanslea Grandcare to conduct training sessions, equipping our mediators with the necessary skills to support grandparents in navigating court and social service processes. Our Mediation Coordinator also visited Wanslea to explore potential collaborations and to educate Wanslea about the rights of grandparents as significant caregivers in their grandchildren's lives.

Since inception in 1988, CAB has built a reputation for successful dispute resolution as well as an alternative to costly legal representation. Various Community Legal Centres, Magistrates Court, State and local Government agencies recognise and have come to rely on CAB's mediation services when referring community legal matters, complaints or enquiries.

CAB has increasingly become relied upon to provide dispute resolution in matters relating to, intra family disputes, elder abuse, group facilitations in aged care villages, neighbourhood disputes and various civil matters. The demand for dispute resolution services have steadily increased in the past financial year focusing on Community issues, disputes within the Association Incorporation Act and disputes in regional and remote areas, as well as family and grandparenting issues.

CAB is currently expanding and reaching out to LGAs to enhance coverage within metropolitan and regional areas. To accommodate the growing demand for dispute resolution, CAB is also increasing its mediation panel and welcomes experienced and accredited mediators to consider volunteering.

SERVICES OFFERED AT THE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

Spoiler Alert! A sneak preview of our end of financial year statistics reveals there has been a significant increase in the number of free appointments undertaken by the visiting volunteer Justices of Peace. Incredibly, the number of appointments is up 31% from 6335 to 8305.

Such is the demand for the Justice of the Peace service that we are actively looking to increase the number of days we can host the service at various branches. We are also fortunate enough to have recently secured JP services to Kwinana and Midland once a week for a few hours.



From left to right: Fremantle Branch Volunteers **Karen** and **Lina** (JP).

Anyone wanting to access JP services at our Midland, Armadale, Kwinana, Fremantle, Mandurah or Rockingham branches are advised to call in advance and confirm availability otherwise CAB's Perth branch offers JP services Monday-Friday from 9:30am-3:30pm.

Visiting Pro-bono Lawyer Profile

Jarred Johnstone – Johnstone Crouse Lawyers

Jarred has been volunteering his services fortnightly on Tuesdays at CAB's Perth Branch office since February 2022 and like Kevin Barry before him, carrying on a proud tradition of support from Johnstone Crouse Lawyers.

Having been admitted to practice as a lawyer in Western Australia in 2012, Jarred's work primarily involves dispute resolution and litigation in the areas of property law, commercial law, estate planning and family law. Prior to Jarred's law career, Jarred was a property valuer and has in excess of seven years' combined experience in property valuations in Australia and South Africa.

VISITING LAWYER



**JOHNSTONE
CROUSE**
LAWYERS

SERVICES OFFERED AT THE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION

Thanks to the training support provided by the Office of Criminal Injuries Compensation, CAB will look to expand our volunteer assisted Criminal Injuries Compensation (CIC) application service across our various branches.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme and the application process are designed to provide compensation to victims who have suffered physical harm, mental or nervous shock, or pregnancy from an offence committed in Western Australia.

When attending an appointment, the claimant will speak to the volunteer about their circumstances. The volunteer may then assist them in completing the online claim application, including the victim impact statement.

A specific community need for such a service is due in no small part to a variety of disadvantages and circumstances that otherwise preclude them from accessing the online eCourts such as:

Digital Literacy: Not everyone is familiar with how to use technology or navigate online platforms. Those with limited experience or training in using computers, smartphones, or the internet might find it challenging to access and use online services effectively.

Physical or Cognitive Disabilities: Individuals with disabilities may face barriers when using online services. For example, someone with visual impairments might need screen readers, while those with motor difficulties might require adaptive input devices.

Age-Related Challenges: Older adults might struggle with new technology due to unfamiliarity or physical limitations, such as decreased dexterity or declining vision.

Language Barriers: People who are not fluent in the language in which the online service is provided may need assistance in understanding and navigating the content.

Technical Issues: Sometimes, technical problems such as slow internet connections, outdated devices, or software incompatibilities can make accessing online services difficult.

Financial Constraints: Not everyone has access to the latest technology or high-speed internet, which can hinder their ability to use online services effectively.

Privacy Concerns: Some individuals may be hesitant to use online services due to concerns about privacy and security, requiring guidance on how to protect their personal information.

Health Conditions: Conditions like anxiety or certain mental health issues might make navigating online services stressful or overwhelming for some individuals.

Lack of Support: People without a support network or resources to help them troubleshoot issues or learn how to use online services may struggle more than those who have access to such support.

The volunteer assisted application service provided by CAB is a social imperative in the knowledge that accessing a redress scheme can have life changing positive outcomes for victims of crime.

SERVICES OFFERED AT THE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

NO INTEREST FREE LOANS

One step forward, two steps back. Unfortunately, this is the reality for many low-income earners when it comes to applying for and managing credit. CAB is proud to have partnered with Anglicare WA a provider of the WA No Interest Loans Scheme (WA NILS).

WA NILS is a not for profit organisation here to keep you moving forward. WA NILS grant small loans (between \$200-\$1500) at 0% interest to help those who need it most.

Thanks to our partnership our trained volunteers at CAB can assist you with completing your WA NILS Application.

To make an appointment with trained volunteers, contact your nearest branch to see if the service is available.

No
Interest
Loans

The ATO Tax Help program is a free service facilitated by accredited CAB Volunteers to help eligible people earning \$60,000 or less lodge their tax return.

From July to October each year, our accredited volunteers help people lodge their tax returns and can also assist with:

- creating a myGov account
- lodging an amendment to your tax return
- claiming a refund of franking credits

You can make an appointment to speak to a CAB Tax Help volunteer at the Perth, Joondalup, Kwinana and Fremantle Branches.

TAX HELP

You are eligible for Tax Help if your income is around \$60,000 or less, have simple tax affairs for the income year and you didn't:

- work as a contractor – for example, a contract cleaner, taxi or uber driver
- run a business, including as a sole trader
- have partnership or trust matters
- sell shares or an investment property
- own a rental property
- have capital gains tax (CGT)
- receive royalties
- receive distributions from a trust, other than a managed fund
- receive foreign income, that is not a foreign pension or annuity.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Volunteer Profile - **Cameron Atkinson**

How did you come to be at CAB and why study Law?

I had a keen interest in law from various experiences through life, while working as an Assistant Bailiff I decided to go to Uni and get the bit of paper to help people who needed as the legal system can be very complex and not easily accessible, with legal assistance often out of reach for those who are in hardship.

I was aware of CAB and its services as I was frequently getting affidavits witnessed while working with the bailiffs, so when I decided to cut my working hours down to better manage my Uni work load, I still wanted to be doing something, and considered CAB a great stepping stone into legal work while also helping the community.



You recently completed your studies, as a now former student would you recommend to other Law Students to volunteer and why?

I 100% recommend particularly first year Law students to volunteer for community legal centres, quite often the caller won't know the exact legal issue they want to get advice for so you need to be able to extract the relevant information and make a call on where to refer them or how best to help them within your means. This is definitely a skill that will serve them well throughout their degree with all the assignments with red herring facts to distract you from the issue you need to answer.

Depending on the CLC you can also get a feel for the practice areas and help clarify interests in particular areas you may want to practice.

What do you see as emerging trends or issues from people you speak to?

The calls I receive are vastly different every call. Building disputes, and Neighbourhood disputes are rather common!! Those pesky trees encroaching on fences...

What's your top tips to anyone starting out on the phones at CAB?

My top tips:

- Don't assume anything, quite often there is more details that you haven't been told that can very quickly change the situation and who they should contact, particularly in family matters and people's safety can be improved quickly.
- Don't be afraid to ask the team questions, with how often people get given various numbers to call, it is definitely better to make sure complete and accurate information is provided rather than taking a guess. People working at CLCs are very generous with their time and are willing to help make sure you are supported.
- Remember to take care of yourself. By the very nature of CLCs most of the calls will be people in difficult situations, as rewarding as it is being able to help them even just by pointing them in the right directions to get help, some of the calls can be quite heavy. We are very fortunate to have incredibly supportive management that will debrief with you and have no issues to take a moment, have a biscuit and coffee and compose yourself if you need to talk it out.

LEGAL

At the commencement of the new financial year CAB approved modest fee increases for various legal services including the introduction of a cost recovery fee for registered postage. Fees have and will continue to remain well below the legal sector average as part of CAB's commitment to providing low-cost affordable legal advice and drafting services.

Demand for CAB's services in Midland, Joondalup, Armadale, and Bunbury branches remain consistently high. Where demand is lower in other branch locations or where we are currently unable to provide a visiting lawyer, CAB offers assistance via virtual appointments, however, face-to-face legal appointments remain our preferred operating modality.

It is pleasing to note that as of August legal appointments are now offered at 5 out of our 10 branches with the hope we can expand on the number of branches hosting CAB lawyers by years end.

CAB legal community outreach has continued to be supported by our long-standing relationship with Legal Aid WA Virtual Office, where we host their services and provide volunteer support in eight (8) CAB branch locations. With CAB VO and Legal Aid VO operating appointments in most of our branches, the operation of legal services in surrounding communities significantly enhances the accessibility of low-cost legal services on a much wider and diverse scale, particularly to our most vulnerable community members.

<p>Legal Advice</p> <p>\$60 (\$50 concession) fee per appointment.</p> <p>20 minute appointment with visiting Lawyers.</p> <p>30 minute appointment with CAB Lawyers.</p> <p>Legal advice is given on many areas of law including family, estate matters and general law.</p>	<p>Letters of Administration</p> <p>\$70 (\$60 concession) fee per appointment.</p> <p>Simple Letters of Administration</p> <p>\$1,950 for document.</p>	<p>Post</p> <p>Registered Post: \$15</p> <p>FREE when collected in person from a Branch Office.</p>
<p>Wills</p> <p>\$60 (\$50 concession) fee per appointment.</p> <p>Simple Wills: \$250 for document.</p>	<p>Probate</p> <p>Probate Appointment</p> <p>\$70 (\$60 concession).</p> <p>Probate Application</p> <p>Review of a Completed Online Application \$150.</p> <p>Prepare a Probate Application \$500.</p>	<p>Requisitions</p> <p>Responding to Requisitions</p> <p>\$600 to \$1,800 for documents.</p>
<p>Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA) & Enduring Power of Guardianship (EPG)</p> <p>\$60 (\$50 concession) fee per appointment.</p> <p>\$65 for each document.</p>	<p>Reprints & Amendments</p> <p>\$25 per document.</p> <p>Cannot involve redrafting or new instructions.</p> <p>Amendments must be requested within 3 months from the date the document was finalised.</p>	<p>Bundles</p> <p>\$60 (\$50 concession) fee per appointment.</p> <p>Bundle 1: Will, Enduring Power of Attorney & Enduring Power of Guardianship \$350.</p> <p>Bundle 2: Enduring Power of Attorney & Enduring Power of Guardianship \$120.</p>
		<p>Family Law</p> <p>\$200 (\$180 concession) for a 1 hour appointment with a CAB Lawyer.</p>

Note: CAB is unable to prepare URGENT documents

CAB IN THE COMMUNITY

40,448

PEOPLE HELPED



COMMUNITY EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT

- AGED CARE
- LIBRARIES
- SUPPORT GROUPS
- TALKBACK RADIO
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT

OUR **TOP 3** AREAS OF LAW BY APPOINTMENT

1. WILL/EPA/EPG
2. LETTERS OF
ADMINISTRATION
3. PROBATE



CLIENTS FOUND CAB HELPFUL



97%

CLIENTS WERE HAPPY
WITH OUR SERVICE

CUSTOMER PERCEPTION SURVEY

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU
MAY 2023



94%

CLIENTS WOULD
RECOMMEND OUR
SERVICES TO OTHERS



CLIENTS RECEIVED
USEFUL INFORMATION



A PANEL OF

13

ACCREDITED
MEDIATORS

9



QUALIFIED FAMILY
DISPUTE RESOLUTION
PRACTITIONERS

5



LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
PARTNERSHIPS
WITH MEDIATION
SERVICE

CAB SNAPSHOT

**SERVING &
INFORMING
WA FOR**

**60
YEARS**



**OVER 200
VOLUNTEERS**



INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICE

- PHONE LINE
- FACE-TO-FACE
- ONLINE



LEGAL SERVICE

- WILL/EPA/EPG
- FAMILY LAW
- LOA
- PROBATE



MEDIATION SERVICE

- DISPUTE
 - FAMILY
 - COMMUNITY
 - COMMERCIAL
- CONFIDENTIAL
PROCESS

WA FUNDING BODIES



ADDITIONAL FREE SERVICES

- WA NILS
- CRIMINAL INJURIES
COMPENSATION
- TAX HELP
- JUSTICE OF PEACE
AND LEGAL AID WA
(WITH OUR THANKS)

COMMUNITY EDUCATION



GOVERNANCE

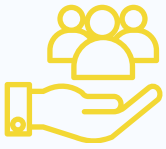
COMPLIANT:
REGULATORY
REQUIREMENTS



NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SCHEME FOR CLC'S

- ✓ ACCREDITED
- ✓ CERTIFIED





CAB's 3 Pillars



INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Our role is to give accurate and current information and referral assistance to help the WA community navigate their challenges.

We answer queries via:



With regular Community Legal Education activities we go out to meet people in the community and represent CAB offsite.

Additional Services:

- Tax Help
- WA NILS
- Criminal Injuries Compensation
- CAB Virtual Legal Appointments
- Justice of the Peace



LEGAL

We provide a low-cost legal advice service on a range of issues and prepare various legal documents:

- **Family Law** - divorce, child and property matters
- **Civil Law** - Wills, Enduring Power of Attorney and Enduring Power of Guardianship, Probate applications and Letters of Administration, Estate
- **Criminal Law**

Probate kits can be purchased on our online shop and at our Perth office.



MEDIATION

We offer dispute resolution services for the following matters, including:

- **Family Matters**
 - Parenting
 - Property
 - Grandparenting
- **Community Matters**
 - Dividing fences
 - Overhanging branches
- **Commercial Matters**
 - Workplace disputes
 - Small business and association disputes
- **Facilitation and Education.**

Mediations are held in our Perth office or virtually.



With thanks to our Funding Partners

We wish to express our gratitude and appreciation towards our funding partners and supporters.

Your contributions and unwavering support enable us to continue to provide a quality service in diverse areas.



With thanks to our Visiting Lawyers

Our visiting pro bono lawyers assist our clients in family, estate and criminal law matters.



CABWA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands in which we live and work, the Whadjuk Nyoongar people. We pay our respects to elders, past, present and emerging, acknowledging their special connection to land, waters and community.

CABWA recognises, respects and welcomes diversity in all its forms, in the belief that diversity is a source of strength and opportunity.



CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

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