

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Aged
Care
Justice



-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS-

70 COMPLAINTS REFERRED FOR ACTION

407,000 AGED CARE RESIDENTS SERVED	50+ VOLUNTEERS
\$102,000 GRANT FUNDING RECEIVED	RECOGNISED AS KEY INDUSTRY PARTICIPANT
1,000+ VOLUNTEER HOURS	\$70,000 PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING RECEIVED IN CASH AND KIND
4 LEGAL ARTICLES PRODUCED AND PUBLISHED	22 PANEL LEGAL FIRMS
130 NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS	ALLIANCES WITH VARIOUS COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AND ADVOCACY GROUPS

2023

OVERVIEW



Aged Care Justice (“ACJ”) is dedicated to ensuring that the elderly who live in aged care accommodation or access home care (together with their family and friends “Our Community”) are treated with respect and care. We do that by ensuring that Our Community has access to information about their rights and access to legal advice so that they can enforce those rights and protect themselves where necessary.

Originally established as ALARM during the pandemic in October 2020, ACJ commenced its operations in March 2021. Within a remarkably brief span of time, we have instituted robust systems, streamlined processes, and secured essential funding, providing a strong foundation that facilitates the continual growth and operation of our organisation in pursuit of our mission.

2023 marked a significant transitional phase for ACJ. It has evolved from an embryonic start-up that needed to prove its worth or risk fading into obscurity, into a recognised entity that plays an indispensable role in the aged care community.

This year, we have assisted over 70 individuals in accessing legal advice and delivered crucial legal education on aged care matters to Our Community and the general public. These milestones were achieved primarily due to the unwavering commitment of our dedicated volunteers, who wholeheartedly champion our cause.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every person contributing to ACJ, enabling us to deliver essential community services aimed at safeguarding our aged care community. Our appreciation goes out to our volunteer network, encompassing those tirelessly drafting funding proposals, reaching out to legal firms to join the legal panel, conducting extensive research and/or writing articles to educate our community and those who speak to those who have been harmed or are family members of friends of those who have been harmed. Your contributions are both invaluable and indispensable. Thank you for your relentless dedication and all that you do.

A significant aspect of ACJ's transition was the decision of our founder, Bryan Keon-Cohen AM KC, to step down as chair and assume the role of co-patron. Bryan's visionary leadership was instrumental in establishing ACJ. He recognized the suffering that would be highlighted in the forthcoming Royal Commission report into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and the urgent need for accessible justice and systemic changes to prevent similar hardships for future generations. Leveraging his profound insights and fervour for reform, Bryan inspired and galvanized everyone involved to make a tangible difference. While we will miss his guidance as chair, we are fortunate to retain access to his invaluable knowledge, energy, and unwavering commitment to rectifying injustices. Bryan, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your pivotal role in shaping ACJ's journey thus far.

I also need to express special appreciation to Henry Walachowski for his exemplary service as Treasurer. Non-profit organisations are rightfully subject to significant regulatory obligations, and it is Henry's dedication that enables us to fulfill these requirements and sustain our operations.

Additionally, our CEO, Anastasia Willis, serves on a voluntary basis, dedicating an exceptional amount of time and energy to steer the organisation forward. Lastly, Senior Legal Education Officer Katrina Ryan has been instrumental in driving every initiative, demonstrating unparalleled commitment and empathy in her role. Her exceptional dedication makes her an invaluable asset to our organisation.



2023

HIGHLIGHTS

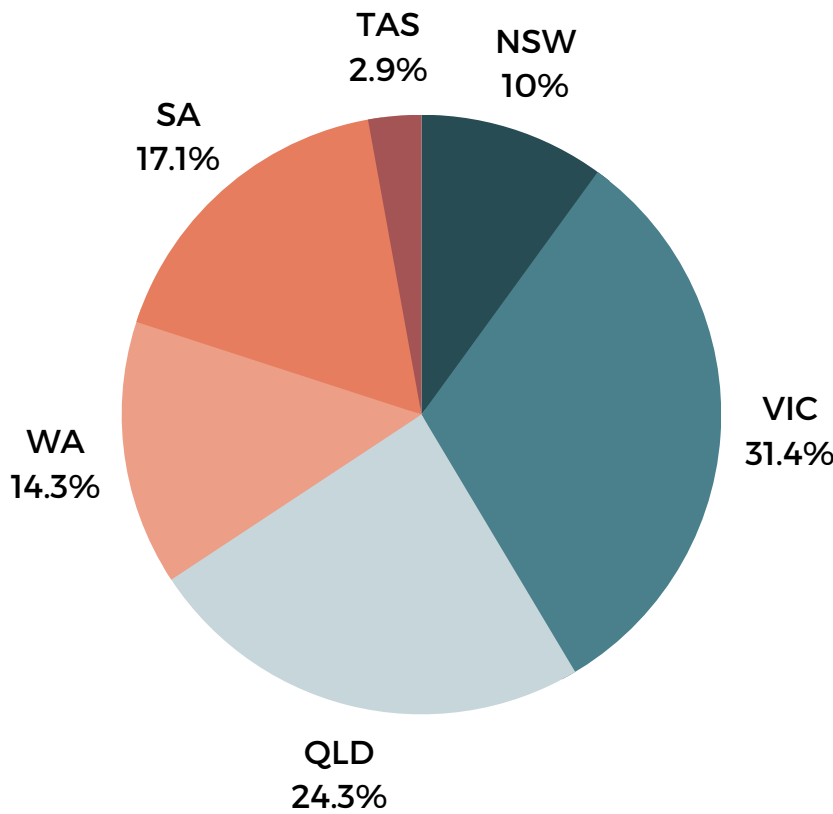
Our progress this year has been significant, with a multitude of accomplishments. While it's not possible to enumerate all our achievements in this document, the following are some of the highlights:

70

Complaints

\$170,000

Total funding secured



Complainants by State

Complainants Register and Legal Recourse

On average ACJ receives 3 complaints per week with a total this year in excess of 70. ACJ has dealt with a diverse range of complaints this year, encompassing issues such as restricted access for families, physical injuries sustained within aged care facilities, instances of medical negligence,

chemical restraint, and contractual disputes. Most matters found resolution without legal action. However, for some there was no legal recourse. We are advocating for legal reform to ensure that all complainants have equitable access to legal remedies when required.

Grant Funding

ACJ successfully secured \$102,000.00 in funding from the Victorian Legal Services Board Annual Grant through four rounds of grant applications. The grant project, scheduled to run from 1 November, 2023 to 31 October, 2025, focuses on in-depth research into restrictive practices within aged care. The project aims to educate the public and the aged care community on current laws and therefore should

facilitate more complaints being registered and allocated to our legal firms, fostering improved access to justice for Our Community. Activities will include comprehensive research, community and sector consultations, creation of 19 informative fact sheets and webinars for public dissemination, specifically tailored to the aged care community.

Philanthropic Funding

ACJ received \$41,894 in philanthropic funding this year and various in-kind donations, notably from Yarra Web Pty Ltd providing crucial support for our website. We

extend heartfelt gratitude to all our donors, both in cash and kind, for their invaluable support, enabling us to sustain our operations and outreach efforts.

Law Reform, Education & Advocacy

As a key objective for 2023, ACJ aimed to establish itself as a leading authority on aged care legal matters within the community, fostering reforms and serving as a pivotal resource for legal education and support. We actively engaged in the reform sphere, participating in meetings with various advocacy organizations and submitting responses to governmental inquiries, including the Inspector-General Draft Bill, Capability Review to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, and Disallowable Instruments in aged care regulation.

ACJ's active involvement in various roundtable discussions and summits, such as Greens Senator Janet Rice's Roundtable, COTA/OPAN Roundtable, and the Financial Sustainability Summit hosted by the Aged and Community Care Providers Association (ACCPA), has strengthened our voice in advocating for necessary reforms. Notable contributions were made by CEO Anna Willis, consultant Rodney Lewis, and ACJ consultant Alwyn Blayse, who represented ACJ in these crucial forums.

Educational Outreach and Legal Expertise

Our dedicated team of student volunteers (reinforced by a significant group of South Australian volunteers under the leadership of Dr. Eileen Webb) has produced insightful articles on aged care issues, disseminated among our newsletter readership, policymakers, and media platforms. Notable topics covered included 'Human Rights and Aged Care',

'Ensuring Additional Services in Aged Care', and 'Understanding Refundable Accommodation Deposits'. In collaboration with a seasoned Barrister from Murray Chambers in SA, ACJ is developing informative resources on the legal options available to individuals banned from visiting aged care residents, addressing a common source of distress for many affected parties.

Expansion of Legal Panel

ACJ's legal panel has expanded, now incorporating a total of 22 legal firms with a number of barristers available to assist as needed. Our consultant, Manny Spiteri, has been assisting us in identifying Tasmanian based legal firms, notably speaking at an event in

Hobart, where ACJ brochures and fact sheets were made available. We thank the firms on the legal panel for not only providing legal services but also generously giving their time to support the stressed families dealing with loved ones in care.

Alliance with Community Legal Centres and Advocacy Groups

ACJ continues to foster collaborative relationships with various allied organizations, including Northern Community Legal Centre, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Community Legal Centre, Elder Rights Service Victoria, Justice Connect, and Carers Circle. Notably, Elder Rights Service

Victoria now refers complainants to ACJ when legal assistance is required. ACJ is actively seeking to establish referral relationships with other OPAN-related advocacy organizations in different states, fostering increased collaboration and support within the aged care sector.

Enhanced Communication and Outreach

In 2023, ACJ launched a monthly Newsletter, providing subscribers with updates on ACJ's initiatives, insights, and access to legal articles and informative fact sheets. With a current subscriber base of 130 and growing, the Newsletter has played a vital role in expanding our referral network and outreach efforts. Our robust online presence, including high organic search engine performance, and engagement on social media platforms such as

Facebook, has significantly boosted our visibility, leading to increased referrals and public awareness of our services and resources.

In 2023 ACJ was interviewed by The Guardian, HelloCare, Inside Ageing and Mirage News on various topics related to the rights of aged care recipients and regulation of the sector.

Future Outlook and Acknowledgments

We are delighted to witness ACJ's heightened influence and proactive involvement in industry initiatives, allowing us to address the pressing needs of Our Community. As our services continue to be sought out by an increasing number of individuals affected by aged care concerns, we remain resolute in our commitment

to advocating for the well-being of Our Community. We acknowledge the ongoing dedication and contributions of all committee members and consultants, expressing our sincere gratitude for their invaluable support and commitment to our shared mission.

Chair: Sue Williamson
Aged Care Justice
ABN 74197462843
info@agedcarejustice.org.au
03 9016 3248
<https://www.agedcarejustice.org.au/>