

The number 2423 is rendered in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The '2' is green, the '4' is blue, the first '2' is brown, and the '3' is red. The numbers are superimposed over a background image of a long, straight road stretching into the distance under a blue sky with white clouds. The road is flanked by dry, yellowish-brown grass and a few scattered trees. A small white car is visible on the road in the distance.

ANNUAL REPORT



Mural by Coonamble-based Aboriginal artist Jamie Hamilton.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are located, the Tubba-Gah people of the Wiradjuri nation, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge all countries and people across whose lands we work. We acknowledge their continued care of the lands and waterways, their lore, and that sovereignty was never ceded.

This is, was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

Cover photo courtesy of The Guardian



Who We Are & What We Do	4
Chairperson Report	7
Executive Officer Report	8
General Legal Support	10
Client Focus: Zi's Story	11
Domestic Violence Support	12
Shark Cage - Stronger and Safer	14
No More, No Way	15
2024-25 Impact Report	16
Law Reform	18
Client Focus: James' Story	19
Community Legal Education	20
Open and Accessible	22
Client Focus: Sarah's Story	23
Cultural Safety	24
Client Focus: Emma's Story	25
Our Team	26
Treasurer Report	31
Financial Statement	32
Partners Spotlight	34

Our Footprint



Our Purpose

The Centre is an independent, not-for-profit organisation which provides free legal help to people experiencing disadvantage in the state's west.

Our Vision

Western NSW Community Legal Centre has a vision for a fair society which:

- Values people's full participation in the community.
- Promotes the individual's right to make informed decisions about their own lives and their community.
- Involves all people as equals regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual preference, age or religious beliefs.
- Ensures that every person has access to, and a fair share of the economic, social and cultural resources of the community.
- Supports quality of life.

Our Goals

Our 2024-25 goals focussed on reaching people who experience the most disadvantage in our communities, collaborating to maximise our impact, working to address systemic issues and providing a supportive environment for our staff.

- Provide a high-quality legal service that facilitates access to the legal system for those experiencing the most need.
- Work collaboratively with stakeholders to promote awareness of legal rights and remedies in local communities.
- Participate in law reform to improve the wellbeing of people experiencing disadvantage.
- Maintain a capable workforce to support excellent service.

MAP KEY

Offices	Domestic Violence Legal Advice	Correctional Centre Outreach
General Legal Advice	Domestic Violence Legal Advice via Phone	Community Legal Education
General Legal Advice via Phone	Intensive Domestic Violence Support	Duty Court Solicitor - Domestic Violence

Our Services

Our Centre provides free legal advice and practical casework support across a vast catchment touching on 16 local government areas.

General legal services



- Family Law
- Guardianship and Power of Attorney
- Wills Advice
- Employment Problems
- Neighbour Disputes
- Credit & Debt
- Discrimination
- Consumer Complaints

Specialist domestic violence unit



- Victims Compensation
- Domestic & Family Abuse AVOs
- Divorce/Separation
- Parenting Plans
- Child Care and Protection
- Safety Planning
- Relocation Support



Chairperson Report

On behalf of the Management Committee, I am delighted to present the 2024/25 Annual Report of the Western NSW Community Legal Centre Inc. This report highlights the vital services delivered across region by our generalist legal centre and specialist domestic violence unit, Western Women's Legal Support.

Acknowledging our Staff and Partners

Our staff are at the heart of our operations. Their commitment to providing high-quality legal help, outreach services, community legal education and advocacy ensure real outcomes for people across our vast region. Often this work is done in collaboration with other service providers, and we are grateful to these community partners and legal firms who strengthen our services. Special thanks go to Ashurst Solicitors and Gilbert + Tobin for supporting our client work and law reform activities.

Leadership and Transition

The leadership of principal solicitors, Patrick O'Callaghan and Rachael Robertson, has been pivotal to our success this year, especially as they undertook extra responsibilities following the resignation of our Executive Officer, Sally

Foran, in November 2025. We also thank Lianne Davids, our former EO, for stepping in to assist with administration and recruitment. In April, we were pleased to welcome Trevor Mvundura as our new EO. Trevor brings extensive experience and a strong vision for the future of our services.

I acknowledge the ongoing dedication of my fellow Committee members for their wise governance and support. During the year we reluctantly farewelled Louise Norton and Jane North, with thanks for their contributions, and warmly welcomed Jennifer Spear, a local solicitor who brings valuable legal insight into the issues confronting our communities.

Looking Ahead

As we approach our 30th anniversary in 2026, we look forward with a sense of excitement and confidence at what can be achieved together for the people of western NSW.

Loris Hutchins
Chairperson



Executive Officer Report

Dear clients, partners, supporters, staff and friends,

This year has been one of change, renewal, and growth for our organisation. We have farewelled valued colleagues and welcomed new team members who bring fresh energy and ideas. Through these transitions, our commitment to delivering services across our communities has remained strong and unwavering.

Change, Renewal, and Growth

We also embraced new ways of working. By introducing smarter HR systems, strengthening our IT security, and moving further into digital operations, we have reduced our reliance on paper and created more space to focus on what matters most – supporting people. These changes have been about working smarter, not harder, and positioning ourselves for the future.

Our refreshed logo and visual identity now better reflect who we are in Western NSW: rooted, resilient, hopeful. We made communication a priority, reaching out in small communities, refining our social media messaging, using radio, and hosting face-to-face events, so that people know we are here and know how to reach us.

Delivering Real Outcomes

Thanks to these efforts, we made a measurable impact. We supported 1278 clients this year, with a 34% increase over the previous year. In our specialist domestic violence unit, Western Women's Legal Support, we walked alongside 751 women and families facing extraordinary hardship.

These are people whose stories remind us why we do this work.

Our funding from the Commonwealth and State Governments has been renewed through to 2030. That kind of commitment gives us certainty, so we can plan, partner, and deepen impact far into the future.

Moving Forward, Together

On a personal note, stepping into the role of Executive Officer has been both humbling and inspiring. To lead an organisation with such a rich history, culture and purpose is a privilege. I am proud to bring my experience into this role, but even more proud to work alongside such a dedicated and talented team.

None of this would have been possible without our people. To our staff, thank you for your resilience, adaptability, and compassion during a year of change. To our partners, funders, and supporters, thank you for your trust and belief in our work. And to our communities, you remain the reason we exist, and it is our privilege to serve you.

Together, we look ahead with hope and determination, committed to creating a fairer, more just future for all.

With gratitude,

Trevor Mvundura
Executive Officer

WESTERN WOMEN'S HAS A
FANTASTIC REPUTATION IN
THE COMMUNITY.

– Client

THANK YOU SO MUCH. YOUR
LINE OF WORK MUST OFTEN
BE FRUSTRATING AND
DISHEARTENING. I VERY MUCH
APPRECIATE WHAT YOU DO,
AND THE SUPPORT THAT'S ON
OFFER.

– Client

I WANTED TO SHARE MY GOOD NEWS WITH
YOU. I RECENTLY GOT A PART TIME JOB AND
PASSED MY DRIVING TEST. I HAVE STARTED
BEING INDEPENDENT NOW. I AM REALLY
GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR THE HELP AND
HARD WORK. THANK YOU FOR GUIDING ME
THROUGH THE LEGAL SYSTEM.

– Client

THANKS SO MUCH FOR YOUR
HELP. I REALLY APPRECIATE
YOUR TIME AND EXPERTISE.

– Client

WE WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND WNSWCLC ON AN OUTSTANDING YEAR,
DESPITE THE NOTED CHALLENGES WITH STAFFING AND INCREASED
DEMAND FOR SERVICES... WNSWCLC EXCEEDED ITS SERVICE DELIVERY
TARGETS... IT WAS IMPRESSIVE TO READ ABOUT THE BREADTH OF
WORK CONDUCTED BY THE CLCP AND DVU TEAMS INCLUDING
OUTREACH SERVICES, CLE, LAW REFORM SUBMISSIONS AND THE
SUCCESSFUL OPEN DAY FOR CLIENTS WITH A DISABILITY.

– Legal Aid



General Legal Support

Strategic, Targeted, Responsive

In 2024-25, Western NSW Community Legal Centre continued to align its services with its strategic plan. In doing so, its work was targeted and responsive across our vast region. We ensured services were delivered to identified vulnerable people and regions experiencing disadvantage.

We invested in delivering face-to-face outreach services to regional and remote communities. This year over 60% of our clients were located outside Dubbo. Over 30% of our clients identify as Aboriginal and over 50% were women. We cannot do this work without the support and generosity of our stakeholder partners, and I thank you all for the positive impact you help us have for people in remote areas.

Transforming Lives

We are focused on increasing accessibility to our services for people who live with a disability. Over 30% of our clients live with a disability and we provide a calm and safe space, giving plenty of time for clients to share their information and work on their matters.

We attended correctional centres and provided inmates with Powers of Attorney, ensuring they are able to have someone they trust manage their financial obligations and provide them with money. This helps inmates keep their home and pay loans. The impact means somewhere to live when released from jail and minimal debt, which reduces the chances of reoffending.

United for change

I want to thank our staff for their unwavering support and dedication during a period where we were short on resources, including staffing levels. We continued delivering services and achieving positive outcomes. Where personal and professional values align, impactful results are achieved for our clients and communities. Everyone worked together make this happen.

Patrick

Patrick O'Callaghan

Principal Solicitor



Client Focus Zi's Story

Supporting Inmates

Zi,* an inmate at one of our outreach prisons, came to us with a range of complex issues. Although he had a Power of Attorney in place, his attorney spoke limited English, making it difficult to manage his affairs on the outside.

Before his incarceration, Zi ran a business in Sydney and owned a vehicle registered in Victoria. While he was in custody, an employee using the business vehicle ran up five speeding and parking fines in Zi's name. With assistance from prison staff and Revenue NSW, we successfully had all five fines withdrawn. Zi faced 24 additional speeding fines in Victoria totalling almost \$8000. Dealing with Fines Victoria proved far more challenging. Despite providing clear evidence of his incarceration

at the time, the department was slow and unhelpful, highlighting the difficulties inmates face when navigating interstate systems.

On top of this, Zi also needed help with two tenancy matters – one commercial, one residential – both located in Sydney. We referred these to a private lawyer and the Southern Sydney Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service to ensure appropriate support.

Zi used his time in jail wisely. He was active in prison programs and earned several qualifications. Unfortunately, he encountered problems with his name. Instead of the anglicised version Zi adopted when he became an Australian citizen in 2013, Corrective Services NSW used his birth name. As a result, his qualifications included four variations of his name. With the assistance of the Unique Student Identifier team and TAFE NSW, we helped consolidate his records so his achievements were properly recognised.

Zi's experience demonstrates the importance of our prison outreach program. Many inmate issues extend beyond strictly legal matters, but having a lawyer involved ensures problems are addressed quickly, fairly and with minimal stress. Our work helps inmates focus on rehabilitation and rebuilding their lives, making this service invaluable.

*Name changed.



Macquarie Correctional Centre, Wellington.
Photo courtesy of CSNSW.

Team members (from left): Trevor, Joshua, Kathy, Zoe, Julie and Patrick.





Domestic Violence Support

A Holistic Approach

This past year has been one of significant demand and continued resilience for Western Women's Legal Support (WWLS). The challenges faced by women in Western NSW remain stark, with the region continuing to report some of the highest rates of family and domestic violence and sexual abuse nationally.

Our integrated service model remained central to our approach. Solicitors, caseworkers, and our Aboriginal Support Worker continued to work collaboratively to identify and respond to the multifaceted needs of our clients. This holistic framework ensures timely legal advice, safety planning, and connection to broader support networks, delivered with compassion and cultural sensitivity.



This is an AI generated image and does not depict real people.

Reaching Out

Our monthly face-to-face services continued in regional and remote towns including Nyngan, Cobar, Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Parkes, Forbes, West Wyalong, Lake Cargelligo, Wellington, and Mudgee. These visits are resource-intensive, but we have always viewed physical presence as essential. The nature of our work – supporting women through deeply personal and often dangerous circumstances, demands trust, safety, and connection that cannot always be built over the phone. WWLS remains the only legal service offering regular in-person support for domestic, family, and sexual abuse in these communities.

The Power of Partnerships

Beyond direct client work, we continued to invest in strong partnerships with local services. We know that our impact is amplified through collaboration, and we are grateful for the ongoing relationships with Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (DVCAS), Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV), domestic violence counsellors, housing providers, financial counsellors, and other community organisations. These partnerships are the backbone of our holistic service delivery.



Rachael (left) with Senior Solicitor, Tori.

Teamwork and Courage

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Management Committee and senior management for their guidance and support throughout the year. To the incredible women who make up the WWLS team, thank you for your dedication, empathy, and tireless work.

And finally, to the 591 women and children who have trusted us to walk alongside you this year, your courage and strength continue to inspire us.

Looking ahead, WWLS remains committed to advocating for sustainable funding, expanding our reach, and strengthening our service delivery. We will continue to work toward a future where every woman in Western NSW has access to the support needed to live free from violence.

Rachael Robertson

Principal Solicitor

Shark Cage – Stronger and safer

The Shark Cage program, developed by Melbourne psychologist Ursula Benstead, helps women who have experienced domestic violence to recognise and build healthy relationships. During 2024-25, WWLS caseworker Sue Turner co-facilitated a group with a support worker from Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) and a domestic violence counsellor from NSW Health.

The program is tailored for small groups. Seven women enrolled and four completed, with others withdrawing for practical reasons. Over seven weekly two-hour sessions, discussions covered: types of abuse; women's rights; setting boundaries; recognising abusive behaviours; understanding trauma; reducing

self-blame; effective communication; self-esteem and self-care.

Using metaphors – sharks represented abusers, dolphins were supportive people, and fish those who are vulnerable – participants learned to build or repair the protective bars of their shark cage, which symbolised their rights and boundaries. Along the way they created “treasure chests” containing self-care and healthy coping strategies. The program concluded with a collaborative mural as a visual reminder of their journey.

The women gave strong positive feedback and all participants showed improvement in pre- and post-program evaluations, with several demonstrating significant positive change.



Learning to sort the sharks from the dolphins.

No More, No Way

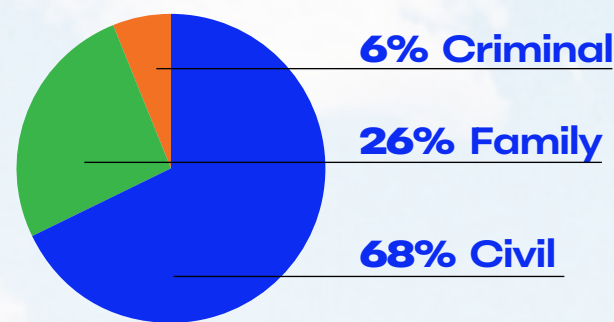
The WWLS team were honoured to attend the #NOMORE Dubbo National Rally Against Violence, joining survivors, advocates, and allies in raising our voices against domestic violence. This powerful gathering was a reminder that every voice matters and that no one should ever face abuse alone. We are committed to supporting those affected by domestic violence and continuing the fight for safety, justice, and healing in our community. If you or someone you know needs help, please don't hesitate to reach out. You are not alone.



From left: Hannah, Nicole, Kate and Rachael at the National Rally Against Violence.

2024-25 Impact Report

Types of Law



Except for traffic-related matters, the Centre does not generally provide criminal law services.

Top 10 Problem types

- 1 Victims Compensation
- 2 Family Domestic Abuse
- 3 ADVOs
- 4 Power of Attorney
- 5 Guardianship
- 6 Employment
- 7 Credit and Debt
- 8 Sexual Assault
- 9 Parenting Arrangements
- 10 Separation

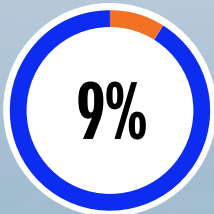
Outreach Activities



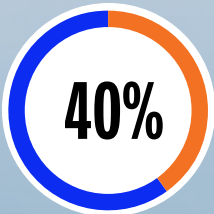
Statistics:

Law reform activities	07
Community legal education activities	37
Staff skilling opportunities	140
Stakeholder engagements	267
Women supported by DVU*	751
Total number of clients	1,278
Referrals	1,302
Legal tasks	1,658
Legal advices	2,584

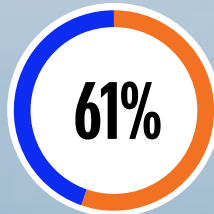
*Domestic Violence Unit



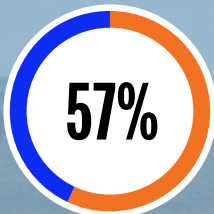
of clients are aged 65 or over



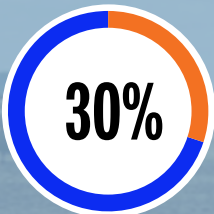
of clients are First Nations people



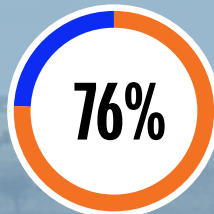
of clients live outside Dubbo



of all clients experienced domestic and/or family abuse



of clients identify as having a disability



of clients are women

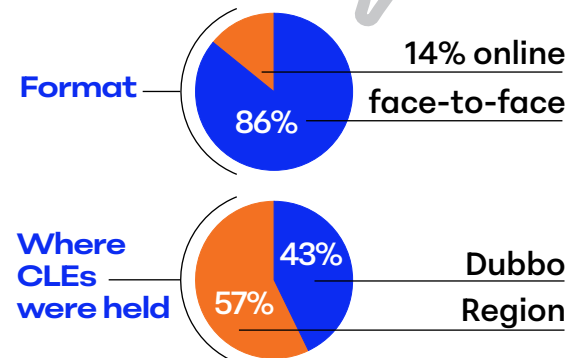
Community Legal Education

Our free Community Legal Education (CLE) program continued to equip people with the knowledge to understand their rights and access remedies. In 2024-25 we partnered with community groups, service providers, local government and correctional centres to deliver a range of workshops on topics such as: end of life planning, family abuse, victims services, parenting when separated, scams, consumer rights, NDIS, contracts and elder abuse. The talks were tailored to the needs, ages and circumstances of attendees, and presented in 13 communities through in-person workshops and online via Teams and Zoom. Among the big takeaways for participants – learning about laws affecting everyday life, where and how to get help, avoiding stressful legal battles and acting before problems arise.

“It was really good. Wish I had known this 30 years ago.”

“Found the talk very interesting. A lot to think about.”

“Very informative”



Patrick (back right) partnered with Sharone Milnes from Narromine Community Skills Project to talk legal matters with mums in Narromine and Trangie.

Ashleigh joins the White Ribbon event at the Dubbo rotunda in November, raising awareness of domestic abuse and campaigning for an end to violence against women and children.



Free legal advice & support



No freeloaders in this office! Ruffles spent time with us while his usual sidekick, Joanna, was out in the region providing free legal advice. The lovely lab was plum tuckered out after a hard day of lawyering.



Visiting Goodooga.



TAFE work experience student, Olivia, was with WWLS for six weeks while completing a Diploma in Community Services. During her placement, Olivia brought enthusiasm, compassion and commitment to learning about the vital work we do supporting women and families across the region.

Open and Accessible

What an occasion. This year our Centre hosted its first ever Open Day. The event welcomed 17 clients and staff from the local NDIS provider, Empowered Choices Support Services, offering them the opportunity to explore our work, meet our team, and learn about the services we provide. It was a great way to demystify the law and share information in a casual setting.

The day began with a tour of the CLC and WWLS offices, followed by short but informative slideshows on topics such as fostering healthy relationships and the dos and don'ts of signing contracts. Afterwards, there was a creative art session, a relaxed picnic lunch (with icecreams) and an opportunity to chat and ask questions.

While our Disability Inclusion Action Committee (DIAP) spearheaded the event, in partnership with Empowered Choices, it was an all-hands-on-deck affair. The clear message – legal services are for everyone. Complex language and formal settings often act as a barrier to accessing justice. The Open Day was an opportunity to put an approachable and friendly face to the service, reduce anxiety around seeking legal advice and encourage early help-seeking.

Sue, Hannah, Ashleigh, Kathy
Sue, Hannah, Ashleigh and Kathy
 DIAP Committee



Above: Clients and staff from Empowered Choices Support Services joined us for our first ever Open Day.

Right: Letting the creative juices flow.



Client Focus **Sarah's Story**

Breaking the Silence

Sarah* was born with limited hearing and became completely deaf after surgery in late 2024. Her struggles with hearing loss and isolation were compounded by a long-term abusive relationship. Fleeing the violence, Sarah moved to Dubbo with her mother, but the trauma caused by her ex-partner, combined with her disability, led to suicidal ideation. Although Sarah was frequently hospitalised for mental health support, she didn't receive an Auslan interpreter until March 2025. The interpreter, who had worked with WWLS clients before, referred her to the service.

At her first appointment, Sarah disclosed severe physical and financial abuse. Her partner had manipulated her into paying for everything during their relationship, leaving Sarah with significant debt and multiple loans. With her consent, our caseworker arranged for Sarah to meet with a financial counsellor.

Sarah had also been denied a Disability Support Pension (DSP) by Centrelink but was unsure why. Our caseworker assisted in reviewing this decision, providing support letters, and helping her access legal advice.

Although Sarah was a month past the deadline for applying for the Escaping Violence Payment (EVP), the caseworker advocated with the EVP provider, explaining that the delay was due to Sarah's circumstances. After persistent advocacy, Wesley Mission's senior team agreed to provide Sarah with the \$5000 payment.

Our legal team helped Sarah apply for victims support and linked her with a medical negligence lawyer for advice about the surgery that left her completely deaf. Through these efforts, WWLS has helped Sarah navigate the complex challenges of her situation and rebuild her life.

*Name changed

This is an AI generated image and does not depict real people.



Our Team

Management Committee

- **Loris Hutchins**
Chairperson
- **Brian Goodlet**
Treasurer
- **Lyn Penson**
Secretary
- **Elsie Gordon**
Vice Chairperson
- **Eric Wilson**
Member
- **Jennifer Spear**
Member

Senior Management

- **Trevor Mvundura**
Executive Officer
- **Patrick O'Callaghan**
Principal Solicitor
- **Rachael Robertson**
Principal Solicitor

General Legal

- **Cassandra Boyce**
Solicitor
- **Zoe Walker**
Solicitor
- **Kelly Andrews**
Paralegal/Receptionist
- **Jacqui Yeo**
Accounts
- **Kathy Stone**
CLE Coordinator

Domestic Violence Unit

- **Tori Mines**
Senior Solicitor
- **Alicia Rowles**
Solicitor
- **Hannah Spalding**
Solicitor
- **Kate Ronne**
Caseworker
- **Nicole Furnell**
Caseworker
- **Ashleigh Hoyle**
Caseworker
- **Amanda Howard**
Receptionist

The friendly and always helpful team at WWLS



Thanks For Your Contribution

The following team members left in 2024/25 to embark on new challenges.



Sue Turner

Caseworker extraordinaire, Sue Turner, retired in January after almost seven years with the WWLS team.



Jane North
Management Committee member



Louise Norton
Management Committee member



Sally Foran
Executive Officer



Jade Shields
Aboriginal Support worker



Larissa Connolly
Solicitor



Joanna Smith
Solicitor



David Pheaney
Solicitor



Camilla Guest
Solicitor

Around the Region



Partner Spotlight

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone whose contribution – whether financial, practical or professional – has made it possible to deliver free legal services and support to those most in need.

Outreach Partners

Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS)
Walgett

Barnardos
Mudgee, Nyngan and Wellington

Bluey Motel
Lightning Ridge

Brewarrina Aboriginal Child and Family Centre

Bourke Local Court

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes
Bourke, Cobar and Forbes

Central West Family Services
Condobolin

Central West Family Support
Lake Cargelligo

Child and Family Centre
Lightning Ridge

Cobar Shire & TAFE Library

Community Skills Project Inc
Narromine

Connecting Community Services
Dubbo

Coonamble Neighbourhood Centre

Gilgandra Shire Council

Housing Plus
Dubbo and Mudgee

Kidman's Camp
Bourke

Mission Australia
Coonabarabran, Lightning Ridge, Mudgee and Walgett

Macquarie Correctional Centre
Wellington

Nyngan Community Hub

Parkes Shire Library

Staying Home Leaving Violence
Dubbo

Sureway
West Wyalong

Warren Hospital
(Multi-Purpose Service)

Wellington Correctional Centre

WINS Community Centre
Wellington

Funders

- Australian Federal Government
- NSW Government
- Public Purpose Fund through the Community Legal Centres Program administered by Legal Aid NSW.

Pro Bono

- Ashurst
- Gilbert + Tobin
- HWL Ebsworth Lawyers



Our deep appreciation to Macquarie Electric for helping transport donated items to a client in need.



Caseworker Nicole shows off the safety doorbells.

Ring Security

We are sincerely thankful to Ring for their generous donation of 50 doorbell cameras to women experiencing domestic violence in our region. These devices provide more than just cutting-edge technology — they offer safety, peace of mind, and a vital layer of protection for women rebuilding their lives.

Thanks to Ring's support, 10 survivors are already feeling more secure in their homes as they take vital steps toward independence and healing. Partnerships like this are essential to the work we do, and we are grateful to Ring for standing with survivors and supporting safer futures.

