

# Welfare Rights Centre

## Annual Report

July 2005 to June 2006

Prepared for 2006 Annual General Meeting

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# Introduction

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The Welfare Rights Centre is a community legal centre which specialises in Social Security law, administration and policy. Established in 1983, the Centre provides expert advice and representation on Social Security and Family Assistance matters. Now in its twenty third year, the Centre currently employs 11 workers and benefits from the service of unpaid volunteer workers and its Board members to provide a wide range of services covering casework, policy analysis and advocacy, publications and community education.

## 1.0 Casework

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### 1.1 Casework service

The Welfare Rights Centre provides a casework service to people with Social Security and Family Assistance problems and to agencies assisting people with Social Security problems. The aim of the Centre's casework service is both to achieve outcomes for individual clients and for classes of clients, and to utilise our casework to improve equitable access to income security.

The casework service comprises a telephone advice service, research, assistance with self-advocacy, written advocacy on behalf of clients and written or personal representation before the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT), the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), or the Federal Court in some cases. Advice is given on all aspects of Social Security and Family Assistance law and appeals. Further

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assistance may be provided in complex cases, matters of wide application and matters in which the client has no money at all or where they may not adequately represent their own interests.

Telephone advice and assistance is available between 9 am and 5 pm Monday to Friday. The Centre has a toll free number to facilitate access for clients in country and outer-metropolitan areas and a TTY for people with hearing impairments. Initial advice is generally provided by telephone, however, the Centre has an access and equity policy to ensure that people unable to obtain assistance by telephone are not disadvantaged.

The Centre's casework service could not function without the valuable contribution of unpaid volunteer workers. Their contribution is gratefully acknowledged in sections 3.3 and 6.5 of this Annual Report.

## 1.2 Casework statistics

The following statistics are compiled from information provided to us by our clients. Some clients choose not to provide some of their personal information. The percentages are calculated on the total number of people volunteering particular information and may not represent the complete picture. Nevertheless, they provide a good overview of the casework of the Centre.

### Number of clients

From July 2005 to June 2006 the Centre provided assistance to 3,169 clients and hundreds of referrals to other services. We provided clients with advice on 3,261 different matters and provided advocacy (representation in a review and/or

appeal) for 713 clients. This advocacy included representation of clients in internal Centrelink reviews, and with appeals to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Federal Court. 59 cases closed over the period involved formal Tribunal or Federal Court representation.

### Age:

	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>
0-18	2%	1%
18-34	18%	19%
35-49	25%	24%
50-64	17%	18%
65+	7%	8%
not supplied	31%	30%

### Gender

	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>
Female	59%	56%
Male	37%	39%
not supplied	4%	5%

### Country of birth

The top ten countries of birth of clients who disclosed country of birth was:

	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>
Australia	69%	70.3%
United Kingdom	2.3%	2.6%

New Zealand & Cook Is.	2.4%	3.6%
Vietnam	1.4%	.9%
Lebanon	1.3%	2.5%
Iraq	1.3%	.9%
Greece	1.2%	1%
Italy	1.2%	.8%
China	1%	1.3%
Egypt	-	.9%

Clients of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background  
2% of all clients identified themselves as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, or both.

### The most common payment types for matters over the period were:

Disability Support Pension	20.7%
Newstart Allowance	19.8%
Parenting Payment (single)	13.3%
Age Pension	11.5%
Youth Allowance	7.2%

### 1.3 Casework issues during 2005-2006

The most resource-intensive issue for our advice and casework service continues to be related to the raising and recovery of Social Security and Family Tax Benefit debts - particularly where the client is at risk of criminal prosecution in respect of their debt.

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## Debt waiver rules

Unfortunately, the debt waiver provisions of the Social Security Act are still in need of reform so as to allow for waiver of recovery of a debt where a person would have been eligible for an alternative income support payment during the debt period, had they claimed the other payment. This issue particularly affects many young Austudy Payment, ABSTUDY and Youth Allowance recipients who attempt to maintain full-time study despite difficult personal situations, and accrue debts due to misunderstandings regarding changed enrolment status.

We also continue to advise clients with compelling grounds for debt waiver, but for the fact that the legislation still prevents waiver of a debt if another person (eg, their partner or parent), “knowingly” made a false statement or representation contributing to the debt.

The Centre has an ongoing commitment to advocating for people with such debts, and seeking policy reform.

## Prosecution and debt waiver

The Centre is regularly contacted by people who have been convicted in relation to a Social Security debt, and who may have had grounds to have recovery of the debt waived if they had approached the Centre before the matter went to the criminal court. Often such clients plead guilty without having sought legal advice.

Generally, waiver of such debts is not possible after conviction, but the Welfare Rights Centre was recently able to successfully argue that a young man’s \$7,000 Youth Allowance debt be cancelled - by retrospectively granting

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exemptions from his activity test requirement (full-time study). Although our client had already been prosecuted and convicted in relation to the debt, luckily he had no conviction recorded.

### Marriage-like relationship debts.

The rules for determining whether a person is a “member of a couple” or in a “marriage-like relationship” are complex and involve subtle considerations. We currently have a number of clients with substantial debts due to their alleged failure to advise Centrelink of the “fact” that they reconciled with their partner.

For clients who were considered by Centrelink to be single, and granted Parenting Payment Single, on the basis of their accurate depiction of their home situation, the raising of these large debts (and potential referral to the DPP), is unjust. This is particularly so where the client has been subject to regular reviews of their living arrangements over a number of years. In many cases the client has had regular contact with the ex-partner for the sake of their children (as encouraged by the Government). Our clients are at a loss to understand how their attempts to maintain an amicable relationship with their ex-partner can be used as “evidence” to raise a debt against them.

In these cases we have argued that the legislation prevents Centrelink from backdating the decision and raising a debt unless the client made a false statement when they claimed payment or made false statements during reviews. We are currently running a number of these appeals, with a view to obtaining some beneficial, precedent-setting decisions.

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## Backdating claims

The Centre has run several appeals in which we sought that a recent Federal Court decision be applied so as to retrospectively transfer the client from the payment they received, to a payment that they would have been entitled to - had they claimed it. One of the Centre's clients won almost four year's worth of arrears of the difference between Disability Support Pension and Newstart Allowance.

We have also had some success in arguing that this provision be applied so as to reduce or cancel debts.

## Residence issues

The rules restricting access to Social Security for New Zealand citizens living in Australia continue to cause a great deal of hardship and confusion. In particularly desperate cases we persist in submitting to the Department of Finance and Administration that periodical payments be made (in lieu of Social Security payments), as an "Act of Grace". These requests are of varying success but at least serve to ensure that the issue is highlighted. The Centre will continue to seek reform such that New Zealanders living in Australia are, at the very least, given access to Special Benefit.

## Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) appeals

The Centre has noticed a significant increase in the number of DEWR appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Federal Court. DEWR is frequently appealing discretionary decisions, such as where the SSAT found "special circumstances" to waive a debt, or concluded that a person was not in a marriage-like relationship.

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## 2.0 Policy Report – 2005/2006

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### 2.1. The aim of policy advocacy

#### Goals

The Australian Social Security system is a very complex, tightly targeted and intrusive system of residual income support. Whilst the bulk of rights and entitlements, obligations and responsibilities are set out in legislation, increasingly many of these provisions are being shifted to policy guidelines. In this context, and in a situation where the Government of the day has almost total control of the legislative process, through having the numbers in the Senate, policy advocacy for Social Security protection and reform becomes even more critical.

In these circumstances it is important for the Welfare Rights Centre to have a clear set of goals to guide its increasingly important law reform and policy advocacy activities. These are:

1. to develop and advocate proposals for reform of Social Security legislation, administration and Government policy in order to minimise hardship and poverty in Australian society in general, and for Social Security recipients in particular;
2. to ensure that the Social Security system is:
  - based on rights and entitlements, responsibilities and obligations which are clearly stated in legislation and enforceable,

- administered under clear, publicly accessible policy guidelines, and
  - characterised by a robust review and appeals systems that allows individual decisions to be challenged; and
3. to promote fair and accessible administrative law particularly in the field of income support.

## Implementation in 2005 – 2006

Over the last year the Centre, in partnership with the National Welfare Rights Network, has been engaged in a very active program of law reform and policy advocacy aimed at achieving these goals.

### 2.2 “Welfare to Work” – the dominant policy issue of the year

The Welfare to Work agenda of the Federal Government became a main focus of our policy and advocacy activities over the year and we participated in many discussions, consultations and meetings with most stakeholders, ranging from community welfare organisations, church charities, politicians and policy agencies, such as the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), with a view to preventing a number of harsh measures and to improving many others.

### Pre-legislation phase

To achieve this, Welfare Rights undertook a significant amount of “backroom analysis” of the changes that the Government was planning in order to inform and drive both our own and wider sector lobbying. Our paper

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*“Recommendations to address problems in the proposed ‘suspension’ compliance scheme”* was circulated widely.

Many Welfare Rights Centres were involved in analyzing the changes, commenting on potential legislation and providing feedback to DEWR, as well as contributing ideas for media work on these issues.

Welfare Rights also took part in the ACOSS “Day of Action” on welfare reform on 15 September 2005, where meetings were held with over 30 politicians including many Government backbenchers, to discuss welfare “reform”.

### Continued lobbying brings some successes

Continued lobbying throughout the later part of 2005, particularly of Coalition backbenchers, up to the tabling of the legislation, led to the Government having second and then third thoughts which resulted in two rounds of minor, but significant, amendments. Further last minute minor changes to placate a number of concerned Government backbenchers were also introduced. The changes covered such things as:

- ◆ activity requirement exemptions for some sole parents who are home schoolers, foster parents or distance educators; and
- ◆ changes to the new compliance regime.

The most significant concession was the extension of Parenting Payment Single at the pension rate from when a person’s youngest child turns six, as originally proposed by the Government, to when the youngest child turns eight.

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## Post-legislation phase

The Government finally tabled the legislation in Parliament on 10 November 2005.

The “Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Amendment (Welfare to Work and Other Measures) Bill 2005” comprised 23 Schedules over 250 pages with an Explanatory Memorandum of 190 pages.

The Government announced a Senate Inquiry into the Bill by the Community Affairs Legislation Committee with submissions due by 16 November. Welfare Rights produced an extensive submission to the Senate Inquiry.

Meetings were held with DEWR to discuss the legislation and evidence was given at public hearings.

The Senate Committee report contained six minor recommendations, the most important of which was to reassess which of the guidelines under the package were to be in the form of “Disallowable Instruments” and therefore subject to at least some scrutiny by Parliament. The report recommended that more of the detail in relation to unsuitable paid employment, special family circumstances, suitable and unsuitable activities for participation and compliance issues should go into Disallowable Instruments.

## Disallowable Instruments

Welfare Rights took part in DEWR consultations over these Disallowable Instruments in January, with a range of other community sector agencies. Arising from the amended Welfare to Work legislation in December 2005, there are now five Disallowable Instruments. We provided written comments to support our views after the meeting and many of these comments were taken on board.

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## W2W letters

Welfare Rights also took part in two days of consultations with Centrelink over letters to current clients about Welfare to Work changes and the Centrelink training package. We believe that our efforts improved the letters and the overall Welfare to Work staff training package.

## Monitoring W2W impacts

Welfare Rights also took part in an ACOSS convened sector meeting to determine data requirements for, and the role of community organisations in, monitoring the impacts of the Welfare to Work measures. We were then commissioned to further develop the “data that will be needed”.

## Debt and fraud implications

Welfare Rights met with Centrelink officers on fraud and debt prevention activities and to press our view that there are debt prevention opportunities and obligations on Centrelink arising out of the W2W package. We hope to see improvements to the notices sent to clients. Welfare Rights also sent a detailed letter to Minister Hockey and other Ministers and Departments to urge a debt prevention focus for those recipients with participation requirements.

## Further consultations – W2W Guide

Welfare Rights participated in DEWR consultations over the Guide to Social Security and Family Assistance Law in both Melbourne and Sydney in February, and again in Canberra in May, in an attempt to further refine implementation policy before the W2W package commenced. Again, many of our criticisms and suggestions were adopted by DEWR.

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## Job Capacity Assessments

Welfare Rights met with staff from the Department of Human Services to discuss the new Job Capacity Assessments complaints scheme. Issues discussed included plans for monitoring quality assurance under the new assessment procedures and privacy and information sharing arrangements. We also sought guarantees about the number and outcomes of assessments and complaints and the public availability of these reports.

### 2.3 Major policy campaign issues for the year

#### Debt prevention

Throughout the year, Welfare Rights maintained the emphasis of the past few years on raising the profile of both debt recovery and debt prevention issues within the system.

Our highlighting of unfair debt recovery practices and procedures has gradually led to significant changes in some areas of Centrelink's procedures. Complaints about Centrelink debt recovery practices, and those of private debt collection agencies, have fallen markedly in the period compared with previous years.

The 2006-2007 Federal Budget also included a number of measures that are likely to reduce the incidence of Social Security debt in future years primarily by detecting debts earlier in the process.

#### Centrelink investigations into "marriage-like relationships"

The Welfare Rights Centre has been seeking reform on

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various aspects of marriage-like relationship issues for 18 months, particularly the unacceptable measures employed by Centrelink investigations and prosecution staff when gathering information about a person's relationship status.

Early in the year, the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office announced an own motion investigation into the policies formulated by FaCSIA in relation to marriage-like relationship cases and the NWRN made a written submission to this inquiry.

The submission focused on FaCSIA policy in relation to marriage-like relationships and the restrictive procedures set out in Centrelink's E-References.

Welfare Rights also attended a meeting with the Centrelink Marriage-like Relationships Internal Working Group in Canberra. This enabled us to discuss our concerns first hand with the Centrelink staff responsible for implementation of the policy. Centrelink also revealed that it was seeking funds for an "MLR Project", which would look at training, "E-References", ways to reduce appeal rates, specialist training for MLR assessors. We endorsed this project and raised our support for it when we met with the CEO of Centrelink, Jeff Whalen.

Great progress has been made on this issue since the NWRN commenced campaigning some 18 months ago. Both Centrelink and FaCSIA have given it high priority and significant changes have been made to the Guide. However, Welfare Rights caseworkers have not yet experienced any significant change in attitudes or practices among Centrelink officers in the way they implement these policies or deal with marriage-like relationship matters.

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## 2.4 Other policy issues

### Carer Allowance cuts – Senate legislation inquiry

Legislation was tabled in February 2006 to reduce entitlements to the back-payment of Carer Allowance (child) and Carer Allowance (adult) from 52 and 26 weeks respectively, to 12 weeks. Welfare Rights alerted community groups about the impending change and we were successful in our push to instigate a Senate Inquiry into the changes.

Many groups and individuals provided submissions to the Inquiry. The Senate report on the legislation recommended that where a person had a reason for not claiming within 12 weeks and loss of backdating entitlements would place a person in hardship, special provisions should be made to allow for backdating longer than the 12 weeks proposed. This Senate report had a Government Chairperson and a Government majority, but even this compromise position recommended by the Inquiry was not supported by the Government and the legislation was passed without amendment.

### 2006-07 Federal Budget response

There was not much in the way of Social Security changes in the 2006-2007 Federal Budget – “less pain but little gain” being our media release headline. Considering all of the negatives that were announced in the previous year’s Budget, we were somewhat grateful.

### Other issues

Welfare Rights also provided feedback to Centrelink on a wide range of other issues, including: the trial of weekly

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Centrelink payments (which ultimately was retained due to our intervention); Centrelink's customer charter; the information Centrelink provides on appeal rights; the conduct of prosecution interviews; Centrelink policy around the "banning" of clients and Centrelink protocols for dealing with vulnerable clients.

## Mental health Issues

Welfare Rights appeared before the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health. Our submissions were heard together with those of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) and Redfern Legal Centre, because of our common perspective in terms of providing legal advice, representation and appropriate referrals to people affected by mental illness.

Welfare Rights also took every opportunity possible in the course of the W2W debate to raise practical issues related to the impact of the W2W proposals on people with mental health problems.

## Community sector collaboration

Ongoing collaboration with a wide range of community organisations continued throughout the year, with close and continuing contacts with the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations and the National Council for Single Mothers and their Children in particular in relation to the Welfare to Work proposals. Welfare Rights continues to play a formal adviser role to ACOSS on Social Security policy.

## Government departments and agencies

Welfare Rights participated in 28 meetings with Centrelink

during 2005-2006. In addition, there were two biennial meetings with Centrelink and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA). Sixteen meetings were also held with Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) officials, and four meetings held with the Department of Human Services.

We also exchanged views on policy and Centrelink service delivery matters with the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Australian National Audit Office.

Welfare Rights was represented on Centrelink's Participation Reference Group, was a member of the Internal Review of Appeals Working Group established by Centrelink, represented ACOSS on the Centrelink Older Person's Reference Group and during the year was formally invited to be a member of Centrelink's Multi-cultural Reference Group.

## 2.5 Submissions and policy papers

Welfare Rights appeared before three Parliamentary Inquiries that were examining policy and legislation in relation to mental health, Welfare to Work and proposals to reduce backdating provisions for Carer Allowance.

A number of policy and research papers and submissions were also prepared during the year including:

- ◆ Getting Welfare to Work right: 14 remaining problems with the Welfare to Work Package
- ◆ Cameos demonstrating the financial impact of the abolition of Parenting Payment Single for parents once their youngest child turns six
- ◆ How Newstart Allowance waiting periods strip savings and clawback benefits after 1 July 2006

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- ◆ Senate Legislation Community Affairs Committee, *Welfare to Work and other measures Bill*, November 2005
  - ◆ Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee on the Family Assistance, Social Security and Veteran's Affairs Legislation Amendment (2005 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2006.

## 3.0 Community Education and Training and Volunteer Workers

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### 3.1 Long term goals

The community education and training goals are:

- To provide high quality, accessible and targeted community legal education.
- To ensure that the work of the Welfare Rights Centre is widely known and supported throughout NSW in order to maximize its accessibility and strengthen community support for the Centre.
- To ensure that the Welfare Rights Centre plays an appropriate role within, and for the advancement of, the Community Legal Centre movement in Australia.

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### 3.2 Education and community liaison

In 2005-2006, the Centre continued with the aim of targeting the most disadvantaged groups for community education. The Centre held over 50 training seminars for community organisations, including youth centres, Migrant Resource Centres, women's refuges, accommodation services, hospitals, youth and migrant interagency meetings, financial counsellors and TAFE colleges. Information was provided about the rights and entitlements of Social Security recipients and the role of the Welfare Rights Centre. More in-depth training about specific Social Security payments was also provided to youth organisations, migrant services and financial counsellors in particular.

### 3.3 Volunteer workers

The Centre's volunteer workers program continued with a number of individual induction sessions for prospective volunteer workers being held throughout the year. The number of volunteer workers at the Centre has remained at about 20 at any point in time with some people leaving due to paid employment and study commitments. Ongoing training is provided to volunteer workers and their contribution is acknowledged with two social functions each year as a small token of our thanks. Feedback from volunteer workers suggests that people enjoy their time with the Centre and feel they gain both skills and knowledge from the work at the Centre. The best evidence of this is that seven of the current staff at the Centre have been volunteer workers at the Centre at some stage before they were employed (see also 6.5).

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# 4.0 Publications

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## 4.1 Long term goals

The Centre's overall publication goals are: "To produce and distribute clear, informed, effective and targeted, information and policy advocacy material designed to:

- increase accessibility to the Social Security system;
- educate and empower the community about Social Security issues, payments and rights; and;
- improve the Social Security system in Australia."

In pursuit of these goals, the key publications for 2005-2006 were:

## 4.2 "rights review"

"rights review" is the quarterly newsletter of the Welfare Rights Centre. Its purpose is to:

- provide information on recent changes to Social Security law and administration;
- raise awareness of Social Security matters;
- assist community workers to help their clients; and
- promote the services provided by the Centre.

In 2005-2006 "rights review" reported extensively every three months on changes to Social Security law and administration and in particular on the Welfare to Work proposals of the Government as they were announced and details became clearer. "rights review" also contained many case studies to highlight deficiencies in Social Security law

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and policy and the difficulties people experience in trying to assert their rights and to obtain their correct Social Security entitlement.

### 4.3 The Independent Social Security Handbook

In 2005-2006 the Centre continued to produce the ONLINE EDITION of the “Independent Social Security Handbook”.

The primary purpose of the Handbook is to inform community workers about Social Security law and Centrelink administrative practices and to assist them to better advocate for their clients with regard to Social Security payments.

The ONLINE EDITION was updated four times on time during 2005-2006 to take into account changes to Social Security law and policy. A major update was completed in June 2006 to take account the significant changes to Social Security law and policy as a result of the “Welfare to Work” changes.

The ONLINE EDITION continues to be available free to community workers in NSW, Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia due to arrangements made between the Centre and the relevant state government welfare departments in each state. In 2005-2006 the Centre entered into a partnership with the Queensland Department of Communities to make the ONLINE EDITION available to community workers and state government employees in Queensland from July 2006.

### 4.4 Factsheets and brochures

The Centre has more than 30 Factsheets available to assist and inform people about Social Security matters. Two Factsheets are available in five languages other than English

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(Spanish, Mandarin, Serbian, Arabic and Vietnamese). During the 2005-2006 year, all these Factsheets were updated to take into account the “Welfare to Work” changes. A complete list of the publications produced by the Centre and the NWRN can be found on the NWRN website.

#### 4.5 National Welfare Rights Network Website [www.welfarerights.org.au](http://www.welfarerights.org.au)

The NWRN’s website, which is hosted and managed by the Welfare Rights Centre, Sydney, has over 300 pages of information to assist people with Social Security and welfare rights matters. The website is constantly maintained and updated by the Centre’s Administrator.

## 5.0 Funding

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### 5.1 Major funders

Funding for the period 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 was received from:

- NSW Department of Community Services – \$339,955’
- Commonwealth Government - Welfare Rights Program – \$206,309
- CLC Funding Program - (NSW and Commonwealth Governments) – \$103,236

### 5.2 Welfare Rights Trade Union and HESTA Programs

During this period the Centre continued to provide service to and receive support from the following unions involved in its Trade Union Welfare Rights Program:

- NSW Teachers Federation;
- NSW Nurses Association;
- NSW Independent Education Union;
- NSW Branch of the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Worker's Union (Miscellaneous Workers Division);
- Public Service Association (NSW); and
- Police Association of NSW.

In addition, the Centre has continued its service arrangement with HESTA under which HESTA members who are injured or ill and without income support are provided with advice and assistance in relation to their Social Security entitlements and Disability Income Benefit (DIB).

The Centre is greatly appreciative of this support and the opportunity it provides the Centre to assist low income working people. Throughout the 2005-2006 period, the main features were:

- advising and representing trade union and HESTA members with regard to their Social Security matters;
- providing quarterly bulletins to each union with updates of changes to Social Security Law; and
- writing articles for publication in trade union journals to inform readers about their correct Social Security entitlements.

### 5.3 Income generation

The Centre continues to generate further income through sales of the newsletter ("rights review") and sales of the ONLINE EDITION of the Handbook.

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## 5.4 Auditor's Report

The audit for this period was conducted by Kazzi and Associates. The Auditor's Report forms part of this Annual Report and is attached at section 7.

# 6.0 Management

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## 6.1 Board of Directors

Throughout the period the following people played the very important role of planning and overseeing the Centre's work in their capacity as members of the Board of Directors.

## 6.2 The Directors who held office at any time during 2005-2006 were:

Estelle Adamek

Liz Biok

James Campbell

Diana Covell

Michael Deane

Tony Eardley

Angela Garvey

Carol Howard

Alan Kirkland (Chairperson)

Megan Magnusson

Terry Mason

Christina Pebaque

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Details of each of these Board Members are set out in the Auditor's Report.

### 6.3 Paid workers

Throughout the period, the following people were employed in a full-time capacity.

Dianne Anagnos – Solicitor/Caseworker

Melissa Coad – Education & Community Liaison Officer

Liva De Burgh – Administrative Secretary

Jackie Finlay – Principal Solicitor

Linda Forbes – Casework Coordinator

Catalina Loyola – Administrator

Amie Meers – Caseworker/ Handbook Researcher

Gerard Thomas – Policy and Media Officer

Michael Raper – Director

Danny Shaw – Publications Officer

### 6.4 Paid workers - part time

The following people were employed on a contract basis and in a part-time capacity.

Sam Trinity – Financial Administrator

### 6.5 Volunteer workers

Any success the Centre had in 2005-2006 could not have been achieved without the help of our unpaid volunteer workers. The Centre had about 30 people helping us through the year. At any given time the Centre has about 10 casework assistant volunteers who provide an invaluable

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service each week. Special mention should also go to our administration volunteer workers who help with the administrative functions in the office. These volunteers perform their duties with style, diligence, patience and much skill.

The casework volunteer workers, who have the challenging task of direct contact with people who contact us for advice or referral, assisted in 3,261 matters through the year. They displayed excellent communication and interpersonal skills in assisting many highly distressed clients. Their dedication and enthusiasm provides an inspiration to all of us at the Centre.

The Centre gratefully acknowledges the role played by all our volunteer workers.

These workers contribute services to the Centre valued at over \$150,000 each year. We hope they have enjoyed being at the Centre as much as we have enjoyed having them and we look forward to their continuing involvement with the Centre.

## 7.0 Auditor's Report

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The Auditor's Report, prepared by Kazzi and Associates forms part of this Annual Report but as it is produced in a different format, is available on request.