



Annual Report
2023
—
2024

Our Vision

Inclusive communities where all people are equally valued and enjoy human rights.

Our Values

Inclusion

Diversity

Self-determination

Social Justice

Integrity



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Acknowledgement of Country

Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion (QAI) respectfully acknowledge First Nations people as the Traditional Custodians of this land and recognises their role in our work, in the disability community and in society. QAI acknowledge the impact of colonisation and the continual social, emotional, and physical consequences it has for First Nations people and we commit to building a brighter future together.

About us

Our purpose is to advocate for the protection and advancement of the needs, rights and lives of people with disability in Queensland.

Established in 1987 by a small group of passionate Queenslanders with disability and parents of people with disability, QAI is an independent not-for-profit advocacy organisation and specialist community legal centre for people with disability. We are focused on building inclusive communities where all people are valued equally and enjoy human rights.

We have grown immensely since 1987 and now have accredited Economic and Social Council status with the United Nations, enshrining our human rights commitment in our Constitution and our local, national and international advocacy. We were the first organisation in Queensland to voluntarily opt-in to be bound by the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld). We are guided and informed by the wisdom and lived experiences of our Management Committee, members, and client stories.

Our people

Management Committee

President	Byron Albury	
Vice President	Fiona Kennedy	
Treasurer	Edward Cole	
Secretary	Deborah Jones	
Committee Members	Brendon Donohue Donna Best Mandy Kaur	Niki Edwards Trevor Boone

Staff as of 30 June 2024

Chief Executive Officer	Matilda Alexander	
Chief Operating Officer	Megan Pearce	
Chief Financial Officer	Fran Huestis	
Principal Solicitors	Carly Dennis	Sian Thomas
Principal Advocate	Caitlin De Cocq Van Delwijnen	
Principal Systems Advocate	Sophie Wiggans	
Deputy Principal Solicitor	Mary Burgess	
Senior Solicitors	Anna Brasnett Andrea de Smidt	Vinay Veerabhadra
Senior Advocate	Paula Herlihen	
Senior Client Services Officer	Cate Sudbury	
Systems Advocate	Sara Martins	
Solicitors	Brianna Bell Chloe de Almeida Jess Park Kerryn Luppi Louise O'Rourke	Ridmi Ambalanduwa Saibal Kar Sonia Oki Sophie Farnsworth

Staff as of 30 June 2024 continued

Individual Advocates	Annabelle Oxley	Julie Kirk
	Christen Hayter	Lina Zarta
	Gabrielle Hill	Louise Ostertag
	Glennis Gill	Sarah Ward
	Jack Gibney	Thomas Dixon
	Jesse Althaus	
Graduate Solicitor	Eve Newton-Johnson	Tara Seiffert-Smith
Paralegals	Eva Thelander	Savannah Spalding
	Neve Fraser	
Client Services Officers	Lisa Jones	Timothy Bloxsom
Information & Referral Officers	Abbey Taylor	Emma Moore
Communications Officer	Shannon Bell	
Bookkeeper	Helen Della-Ricca	

Our volunteers

We would like to thank our invaluable volunteers, pro bono legal support and the students who chose to complete their placements with us, for their time, energy and support.

Barristers: David Cormack, Grace Devereaux, Grant Thomas, Joshua Underwood, Nola Pearce, and Sarah Spottiswood.

Law firms: Allens, Clayton Utz, Clyde & Co., Gadens, Hall & Wilcox, MinterEllison, and Norton Rose Fulbright.

Universities and students: Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Social Work & Human Services students Daniel Baxter and Emma Wilson. Aurora Interns Amity Oakley from University of Notre Dame Australia and Amanda Mitchell from University of Canberra.

Our services

Over 2023-2024 QAI had three Advocacy Practices which covered a total of seven services across various areas of need for people with disability.

Human Rights Advocacy Practice

- Human Rights Law
- Justice Support Program
- Mental Health Law
- Systems Advocacy

NDIS Advocacy Practice

- NDIS Appeals Support

Disability Advocacy Practice

- Young Peoples Program
- Pathways

6,145

Services
provided

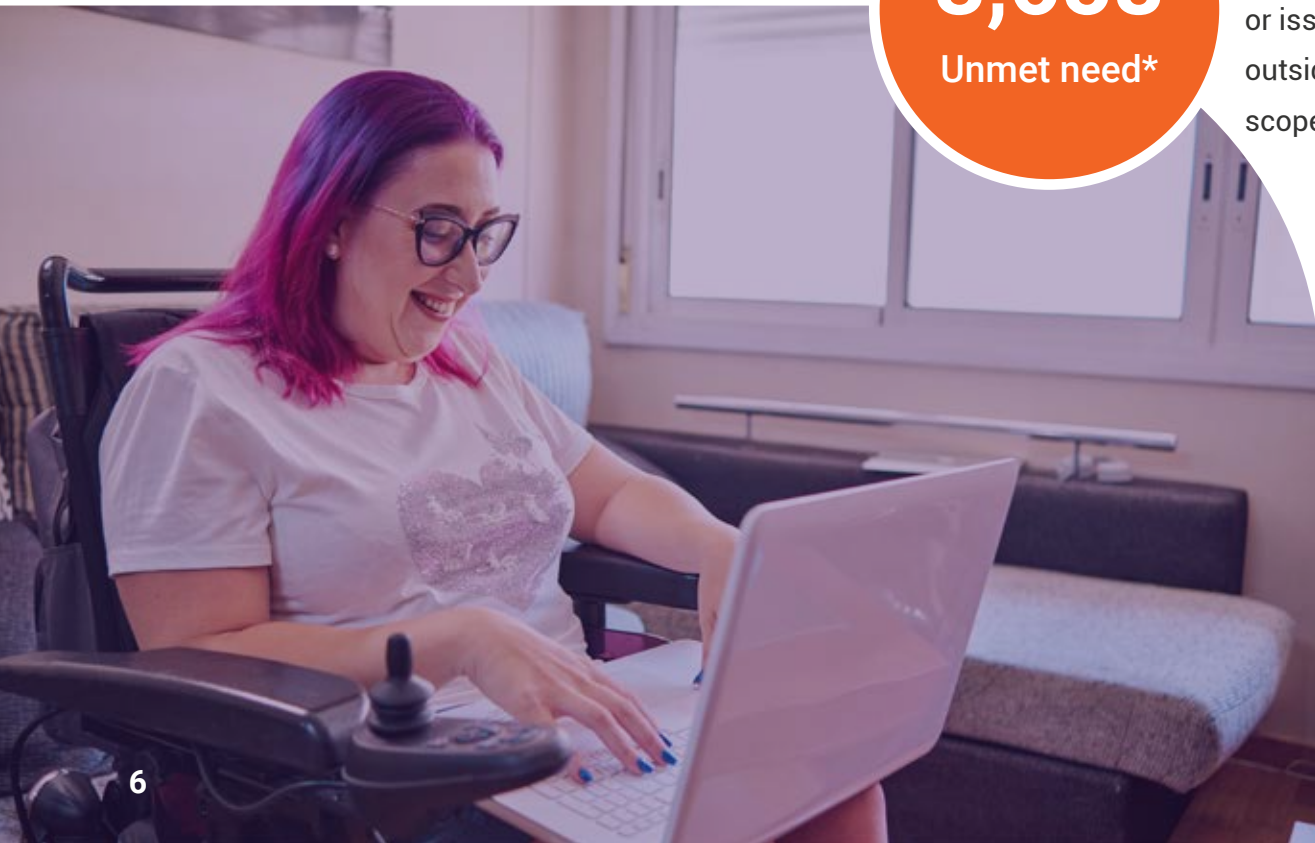
5,394

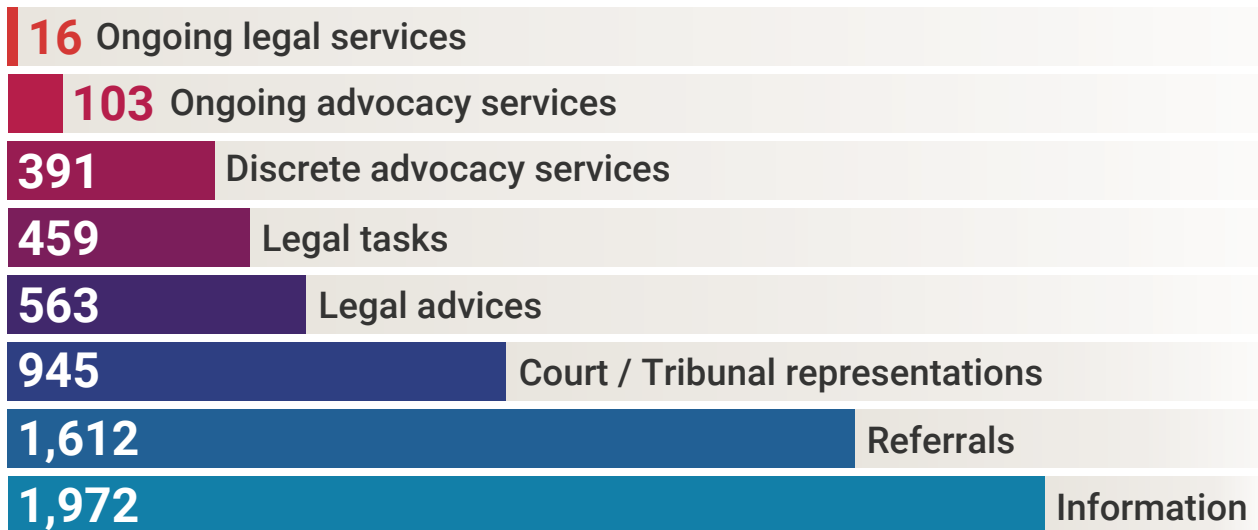
People
contacted
QAI

3,658

Unmet need*

*Includes referrals and information we gave due to limited resources or issue being outside of our scope.



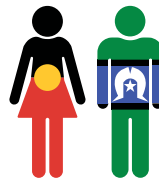


Who we helped



99%

were people with disability or experiencing mental illness



18.9%

were people who identify as First Nations people



93.2%

were people experiencing financial disadvantage



18.1%

were people experiencing or at risk of homelessness



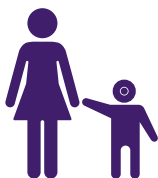
33.8%

were people experiencing domestic or family violence



30.6%

were people living in regional or remote areas of Queensland



24.4%

were children or young people under 18



8%

were people aged 65 or older

President & CEO report

In June 2024, Byron Albury delivered this speech to the United Nations in New York:

Around 1980 I was forcibly placed in an institution and special school for children with disability. I was 5 years old when my mother was not able to look after me anymore. In the institution, I was told I was dumb and would never amount to anything. I missed out on learning my Indigenous culture. Physical scars heal, emotional ones take years.

We were told when to go to bed, what to eat, who to be friends with. It was a hospital setting with communal showers and restricted movements. I was ashamed to tell other children I lived in a home with 72 other children with disabilities. When I turned 16, I was moved into what was called an independent living unit, but I was abused by the service I was forced to use there. I still didn't have my own room or independence. Toileting was done in the open in front of the other kids in my room. If you didn't do what you were told, you were tagged a difficult client and medication like valium was used to calm you down.

I was forcibly removed from this institution on 22 May 1994 because I turned 18. When I woke up on my birthday, I was told I had one hour to pack all my belongings and leave the building. I got help from the government to move to a 2-bedroom unit, but no one prepared me for living independently. I didn't even know how to buy a meal.

Not knowing what to do made me feel dumb, but it was just because I was never taught. The best thing about my childhood was the friendships for life I made with other children. However, the emotional toll is something I will never get back. Neither is my lack of culture.

Now, I have a university degree and have been the chairperson of QAI for over 2 decades. I have worked to reconnect with culture and family. I want to make sure that no one else goes through what I went through.



Welcome to the 2023-2024 annual report for Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion. It has been an important year to further QAI's vision of inclusive communities where all people are equally valued and enjoy human rights. Once again the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been our goal and our guidance as we navigate big policy and law changes while staying true to our core [values and principles](#).

After a decade of campaigning and five long years of people with disability telling their stories, the Disability Royal Commission handed down its [Final Report](#). Understanding the evidence, case studies and recommendations in this report has taken time. While the report did not address as much as we had hoped or take a steadily human rights based approach to recommendations, there is much in this work that can improve the lives of people with disability. The Final Report has become an important tool in our call for human rights, including ending solitary confinement of children. Ending indefinite detention of people with disability and requiring inclusion in accommodation, workplaces and schools.

Systems advocacy has always been at the core of our work at QAI. Campaigning for change is essential to improving the lives of people with disability. This year, we trained all staff in key campaigning tools and sought system wide solutions to the problems we repeatedly saw in our casework.

We saw a groundbreaking example of government taking time to listen to the voices of lived experience in the Supported Accommodation Inquiry.

Supported accommodation (also called group homes) in Queensland has perpetuated institutionalisation through congregating and segregating people with disability. We know that abuse and neglect happen in group homes and boarding houses for people with disability. This year, we were funded to visit these facilities to find out about the conditions and recommendations for change in the lead up to a Queensland parliamentary inquiry. With constant reference back to the United Nations Guidelines on Deinstitutionalisation, we gathered stories and called for [support for people, not accommodation](#).

QAI worked with [ABC Four Corners](#) to tell the story of Adrian, a man with cognitive impairment who has been subjected to seclusion and detention for over a decade. The practice of locking people up in prison-like conditions because of disability was brought to light, and within a short time of this media spotlight, all long-term detainees were released. QAI has been working on the issues of forensic detention for decades, so this change was welcomed. We will continue to campaign for changes to the law to make sure we never go back to indefinite detention.

Keeping young people in schools and making schools inclusive was a focus of our youth advocates and contributed to the success of the [A Right to Learn](#) campaign, part of our collaborative efforts to remove barriers to education and reduce school exclusions. Youth advocates also focused on providing advocacy to young people most in need such as in the prison system.

Legislative and policy changes in the NDIS space have seen significant attention and QAI has gained national attention as a leader and clear voice for human rights. Our case studies and recommendations for change are informed by our day-to-day work addressing barriers to support for some of the trickiest cases. When we identify a problem its always with a solution that is evidenced based and rooted in the stories we are dealing with daily.

QAI has provided support around the development of Mob 4 Mob, the new peak advocacy group for First Nations mob with disability. Support for a community-controlled entity has been on our organisational strategic plan and we are delighted to see government recognition of the power and integrity of the elders who have been working steadily towards autonomy, dignity and voice for first nations mob with disability. We look forward to ongoing work with Mob 4 Mob and continuing our internal commitments to Indigenous identified positions and advocacy across our programs. QAI works on land that was stolen where sovereignty was never ceded and is always conscious of our role in addressing systemic racism and supporting first nations leadership.

We were especially honoured to host the Reflections of the UNCRPD exhibition at the United Nations in New York this year. This exhibition features Queensland First Nations artists with disability and uses art to portray various Articles from the CRPD.

QAI is an employer of choice for people with disability and our internal disability inclusion working group has met regularly to provide

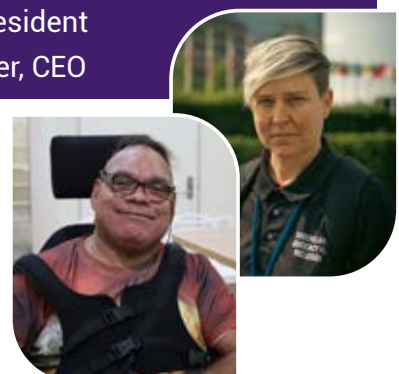
accountability and drive to our efforts at continuous improvement. QAI is led by people with disability, as required by our Constitution, and we are deeply appreciative of our management committee for their contributions to working groups, meetings and operations.

QAI has continued to take a leadership role in the disability advocacy community. The Queensland Independent Disability Advocacy Network (QIDAN) has continued as a powerful force for disability advocates, providing training and support and coordinating systemic and individual advocacy. We have also continued to answer calls from around Queensland on our Pathways hotline, linking folks with disability advocates and support. Anyone with disability can call and truly be put on the right path for assistance.

You can see in our statistics we have done 945 court/tribunal representations. Rarely do community lawyers spend so much time in a court or tribunals, and the steady commitment of our human rights lawyers is astounding.

Thank you to all staff, management committee and members for your hard work throughout the year. Together we are fighting for justice and human rights and creating a world where we can all live a good life.

Byron Albury, President
Matilda Alexander, CEO



Systems advocacy

Everyone has the right to live independently and be included in the community. However, for many people with disability, this right is not a reality. People with disability continue to be held in institutions, denied their legal capacity or forced to live with others in order to access the support that they need.

QAI continues to advocate for changes that will enable all people with disability to live in the community, make their own decisions, and access appropriate housing and disability related supports. Here is some of the work we have done this year.

ABC Four Corners report on the Forensic Disability Service



In October 2023, QAI contributed to an ABC Four Corners report on the inhumane treatment of people with disability under forensic orders inside Queensland's Forensic Disability Service (FDS). We released a position statement with proposals for reform to bring Queensland's treatment of people under forensic orders in line with the law and international human rights standards. We also lodged a complaint with the Queensland Human Rights Commission

regarding Adrian's* treatment. Since the Four Corners episode went to air, all long-term residents of FDS have been relocated to other accommodation in the community. QAI remains vigilant about the treatment of people in FDS and continues to advocate for changes that will prevent the indefinite detention of people with disability from happening again.

*Name has been changed

Supported Accommodation

A key focus of our work this year has been the inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland. QAI, along with Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) were funded by the Department of Housing to support current and former residents of level 3 supported accommodation facilities to share their stories and engage with the inquiry.

Between our two organisations, we visited all level 3 facilities across Queensland. We engaged over 700 residents, produced plain English guides and fact sheets, assisted residents to provide submissions in their preferred format, and supported residents during visits by the Parliamentary Committee. Of the 201 submissions received by the Committee, 147 came from current or former residents of supported accommodation facilities.

This level of resident engagement in a parliamentary inquiry is unprecedented and we thank the Department of Housing for committing to hearing the views and experiences of people with lived experience in this way. Our time listening to residents and seeing the environments they live in also informed our own submission and evidence to the inquiry. Once the final report was tabled in Parliament on 7 June, we revisited residents to 'close the loop' on the inquiry and provide information about the inquiry's recommendations.

A Right to Learn Campaign

This year, we have continued to collaborate with ATSILS, PeakCare, Youth Advocacy Centre and the Youth Affairs Network Queensland on the A Right to Learn campaign. The campaign is calling on the Queensland Government to implement changes that will support students to stay in school and avoid the use of suspensions and exclusions.

In March, several welcome changes were introduced by the Queensland Government in the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, including the right to appeal short-term suspensions, which QAI has long been advocating for. However, due to pressure from other stakeholders, these proposed amendments were removed from the Bill by the Minister for Education while the Bill was still being considered by the Committee. The Bill subsequently passed

without any changes to the way in which students with disability are supported around suspensions and exclusions.

Since then, QAI and our campaign partners have attended a series of roundtables hosted by the Minister to develop solutions to the rising use of school suspensions in Queensland. We also commissioned an analysis of the economic impact of school suspensions and will continue to use this data to ensure all students can enjoy their right to learn.

Voices for Change

We want to make sure our systems advocacy is grounded in the lived experience of people with disability. One way we do this is by having honest and informal conversations with our members. So this year, we continued with our event series 'QAI Conversations' under the new name 'Voices for change!'.



These events allow us to talk directly to people with disability and your families so that your experiences can inform the changes we recommend to government. In April, we travelled to Cairns and co-hosted an event with local advocacy organisation, Rights in Action.

We talked to local people about the barriers people in regional and remote Queensland face when trying to access disability supports. We also discussed some of the possible solutions, which will continue to inform our future systems advocacy.

Attending the United Nations

For this year's Conference of States Parties (CoSP) on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), we joined forces with Mob 4 Mob to take the art exhibition "Reflections of the United Nations CRPD" to the United Nations in New York.

The exhibition is made up of artworks by Indigenous artists from the NuunaRon Group that tell the stories of what the various Articles in the CRPD mean to them.

QAI's President and Chair Person of Mob 4 Mob, Byron Albury, also attended for the first time. He shared his story at the side event we held with the support of Disabled People's International from South Korea. With close to 100 people attending and Uncle Paul Calcott's and other artist's stunning artworks as a backdrop, the event was a huge success.



Photo above: Members of the QAI/Mob 4 Mob and South Korean delegations to the United Nations at the art exhibition.

Submissions

Topic	Submitted to
Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System	Australian Department of Education August 2023
NDIS Review	Independent Review of the NDIS September 2023
Suspensions in QLD State Schools, 2016-2020: overrepresentation, intersectionality and disproportionate risk	Research paper available in The Australian Educational Researcher September 2023
Queensland Residential Care Review	Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services - October 2023
Supported Decision-Making Publication	Office of the Public Advocate December 2023
Education (General Provisions) (Helping families with school costs) Amendment Bill 2023	Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee December 2023
Youth Justice Reform in Qld	Youth Justice Reform Select Committee January and March 2024
Inquiry into the provision and regulation of Supported Accommodation in QLD	Community Support and Services Committee - February 2024
Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024	Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee - March 2024
Removing legislative inconsistency in the Criminal Code regarding consensual sexual expression for people with intellectual disability	Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee March 2024
NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No 1) Bill 2024	Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee - May 2024
Independent Review of the Queensland Human Rights Act	Professor Susan Rimmer June 2024
Respect At Work and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2024	Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee - June 2024

Events

Voices for Change



We co-hosted an event in Cairns with Rights in Action where local people with disability were invited to discuss the issues impacting their community and share proposed solutions. It also provided a chance for QAI to share information about our current systems advocacy.

Forum on Disability Reform

We co-hosted a forum with the Queensland Public Advocate, Queenslanders with Disability Network and the Queensland Human Rights Commission called "After the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review: Disability Reform in Qld".



United Nations Side Events

In conjunction with the in person event and exhibition we held with Disabled People's International from South Korea, we also hosted an online side event.



Reflections of the United Nations CRPD

Australian Indigenous artworks bringing the CRPD articles to life using the ancient tradition of storytelling through art

Presented by



This online event included explanations from each of the artists about how each of their works represented the articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in a First Nations context.

Presentations

Topic	Audience
Experiences of people with disability in supported accommodation	National NDISDA Specialist Disability Accommodation Conference
Systemic advocacy and law reform priorities for disability organisations	Queensland Law Reform Commission
QAI Justice Support Program	Lunch Box Session to Magistrates
Unfit for trial - unfit for prison	Prisoners' Legal Service Forum
NDIS Housing Supports	Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ)
Legislation tools for advocates	Speaking Up For You (SUFY)
Getting the NDIS Back on Track Bill	QIDAN
The Voice to Parliament	Queenslanders with Disability Network 'Hot Topics' group
New Powers overview in the Getting the NDIS Back on Track Bill	National NDIS Appeals Community of Practice Forum
Disability Advocacy in Queensland	Functional Neurologic Disorder (FND) support group
Human Rights in Practice	University of Queensland (UQ) students engaged with the UQ Pro Bono Centre

“ I honestly can't thank you enough for coming to class today. I wanted to let you know what happened after you left...

I gave them the option to leave early, or stay and chat. The whole class stayed and chatted - I couldn't believe it! Tears were actually shed. They felt so rocked by what you said, and so inspired by what you do, so many wanted to know how they could help. It was actually quite emotional for me to watch.

I wanted you to know that many of these young people genuinely had their moment tonight. Thank you so much for that.”

Topic

Audience

Human Rights in Action: Supported Accommodation Legal Issues and Inquiry

Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS)

Disability, Disaster and the Law

Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ)

How to Get Heard

Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)

Right to Information Act

Youth Empowered Towards Independence (YETI)

Pathways service

Voices for Change

Annual overview of services and recommendations

Department of Education

QAI Young Peoples Program

Office of the Public Guardian Community Visitor Transition to Adulthood team

Pathways and Disability Advocacy in Queensland

Eureka Village (Supported Accommodation)

Disability Advocacy in Queensland

Support Coordinators

Right to Information

QCOSS

QAI Young Peoples Program

Intensive Family Support Service

Pathways service

Department of Child Safety Seniors and Disability Services

Queensland Independent Disability Advocacy Network

The Queensland Independent Disability Advocacy Network (QIDAN) is a coalition of organisations dedicated to providing independent advocacy services to Queenslanders living with disability. Our member organisations include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network Queensland; Aged and Disability Advocacy; Amparo Advocacy Inc; Capricorn Citizen Advocacy; Mackay Advocacy Inc; People with Disability Australia; Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion; Rights in Action; Speaking Up For You; and TASC.

QIDAN has three aims:

- Systemic advocacy: coordinated action to address systemic issues experienced by people with disability,
- Member support: a collaborative space for the exchange of information, resources and issues affecting disability advocacy organisations, and
- Sector advocacy: to promote the importance and value of independent disability advocacy on a local, state, and national basis.

In the past year, QIDAN focused on several key systemic priorities, including disability reforms following the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission, housing issues, access to the NDIS, supported decision-making and human rights.

QIDAN has been actively engaged in various advocacy efforts and consultations, including:

- Conducted consultations with the sector and produced a report on Targeted Foundational Supports in Queensland.
- Engaged key Ministers to discuss disability reforms and advocacy funding, including with Minister Charis Mullen, Minister for Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services.
- Attended Ending the Australian Housing and Homelessness crisis-time for a real plan.
- Attended the QCOSS Residential Care Review: Industry Consultation.
- Attended the QShelter housing forum.
- Attended the NDIS Registration taskforce round table: advocacy issues from the ground.
- Contributed to the National Advocacy Collective – Supporting Parents with Intellectual Disability, organised by Inclusion Australia and endorsing a focused response to the DRC Report.
- Facilitated quarterly discussions with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission to provide feedback from advocates.
- Initiated quarterly meetings with the Office of the Public Guardian to provide feedback.

Submission Topic	Submitted to
NDIS Review	Independent Review of the NDIS August 2023
Developing the National Housing and Homeless Plan – Issues Paper	Department of Social Services October 2023
Queensland Disability Advocacy Program (QDAP) data analysis and budget requests	Queensland Treasury November 2023
Supported Accommodation in Queensland	Inquiry into the provision and regulation of Supported Accommodation in Queensland - February 2024
Anti-Discrimination Bill 2024	Department of Justice and Attorney General - March 2024
NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No 1) Bill 2024	Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee - May 2024

A major highlight of the year was the successful advocacy for additional funding. The Queensland Government announced an additional \$5 million in 2024-2025 budget to expand individual and systemic advocacy, marking a significant achievement for QIDAN and its members.

QIDAN remains committed to advancing the rights and support for people with disability through systemic and sector advocacy, collaborative member support, and impactful engagement with key stakeholders. The additional funding secured this year underscores the importance of our work and the positive impact of our collective efforts. We look forward to continuing our advocacy to improve the lives of Queenslanders with disability.

Photo to right: QIDAN members meeting with Minister Charis Mullen in February.



Human Rights Advocacy Practice

QAI's Human Rights Advocacy Practice is a broad practice which includes both legal and disability advocacy. These diverse services are united by the strong human rights focus which underpins all of our work. Each of our services work collaboratively, with internal referrals frequently made between services to provide clients with wraparound support. There is a strong, positive relationship between our individual and systems advocacy work, with insights gained through our individual advocacy informing our prioritisation and understanding of systemic issues.

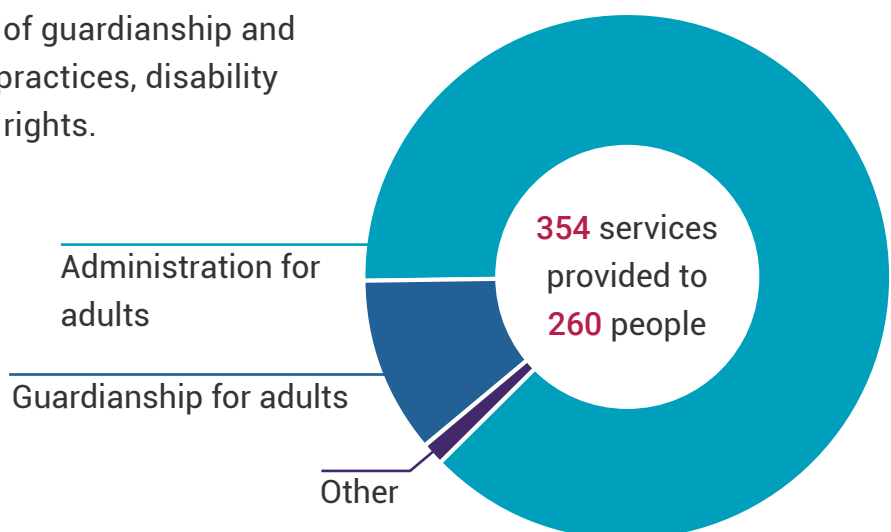
Human Rights Law

What we do

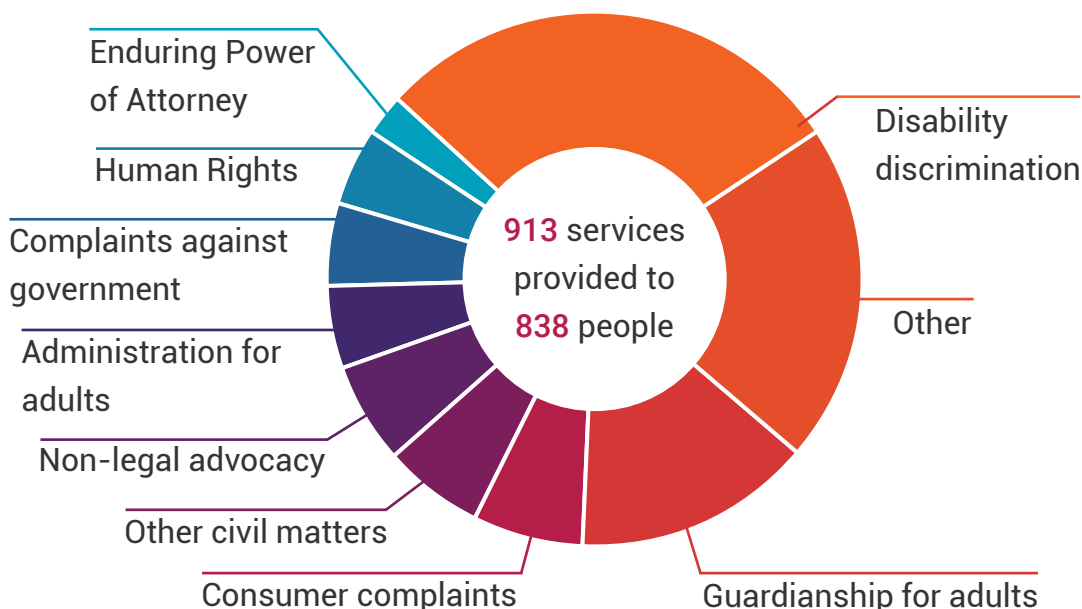
Our Human Rights Law service provides legal advice, assistance and representation for people with disability in the areas of guardianship and administration, restrictive practices, disability discrimination and human rights.

What we assisted with

Public Trustee Qld Clinic



Human Rights Law



Case study - Harry

Harry* asked for assistance from QAI with having his administration order, which appointed the Public Trustee as his financial administrator, revoked.

Harry was placed under the Public Trustee after a family member passed away and left their house and a large sum of money to Harry in their will. The Public Trustee was appointed in an effort to protect Harry's interests while the estate was being settled, as Harry's siblings had tried to contest the will. The Public Trustee was appointed only to manage a portion of Harry's savings, and legal matters relating to his financial and property matters.

QAI supported Harry at his QCAT hearing and argued that he had capacity to manage all finances, and there were no outstanding legal or property matters for the Public Trustee to make decisions about. We made submissions noting that Harry managed his own personal finances very well. He worked part time, and always made sure all his bills were paid well in advance. He also worked hard to save up money to use for overseas holidays, and managed his own personal savings, which was more than the Public Trustee managed for him. We also highlighted that Harry was very concerned about the financial administration fees that he was being charged when he felt that he could manage his own money.

QCAT ultimately decided to revoke the administration order, and Harry felt very relieved that he could manage all of his finances again.

*Name has been changed

“Firstly I want to thank you for all your time on our matter and for answering my questions and listening to my concerns. [I] really appreciated knowing I had someone on our side, when everyone was appointing lawyers and I had no one, it was the biggest relief when you were able to help us out. Again, thank you for all your time. You have been the best and we were so very lucky you helped us out.”

“Thanks for all your help getting me released from the Public Trustee. I really appreciate all you have done”

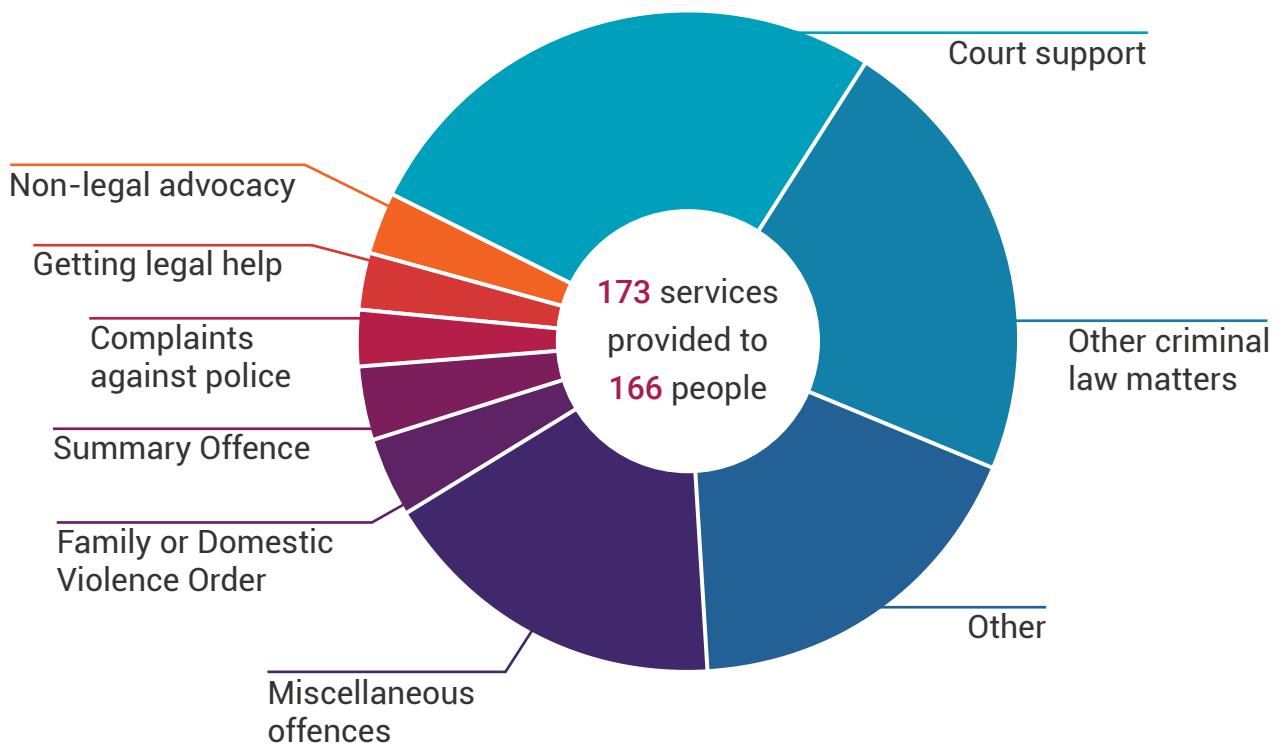
“Thank you, our talk today has given me hope. It makes me feel worthy as a human being that some people do believe in me.”

Justice Support Program

What we do

The Justice Support Program provides disability advocacy and support for people with disability who are involved in the criminal justice system. We help people with disability to understand and navigate the system.

What we assisted with



Case study - Kelly

Kelly* is a young woman with an intellectual disability and she was having trouble understanding what was happening after being charged with a couple of criminal offences. Kelly was unsure about what she needed to do for her upcoming court matters, or how to get help from a lawyer.

Our advocate was able to help Kelly understand when she had to attend court and how to ask for the duty lawyer to represent her on the day. Our advocate went with her to court to make sure she got to the right place and had the support of the duty lawyer. Thanks to the duty lawyer, Kelly's matter was adjourned, and she was referred to the Court Liaison Service for assessment and to Legal Aid for ongoing legal support.

Kelly also told our advocate about some concerns she had about her treatment by police during her initial arrest. Our advocate was able to help Kelly make a human rights complaint to police about their treatment of her during the arrest. Our advocate supported Kelly through the complaint from start to finish. Kelly was grateful for our assistance and told us that she felt like she had been given a voice in the process.

*Name has been changed

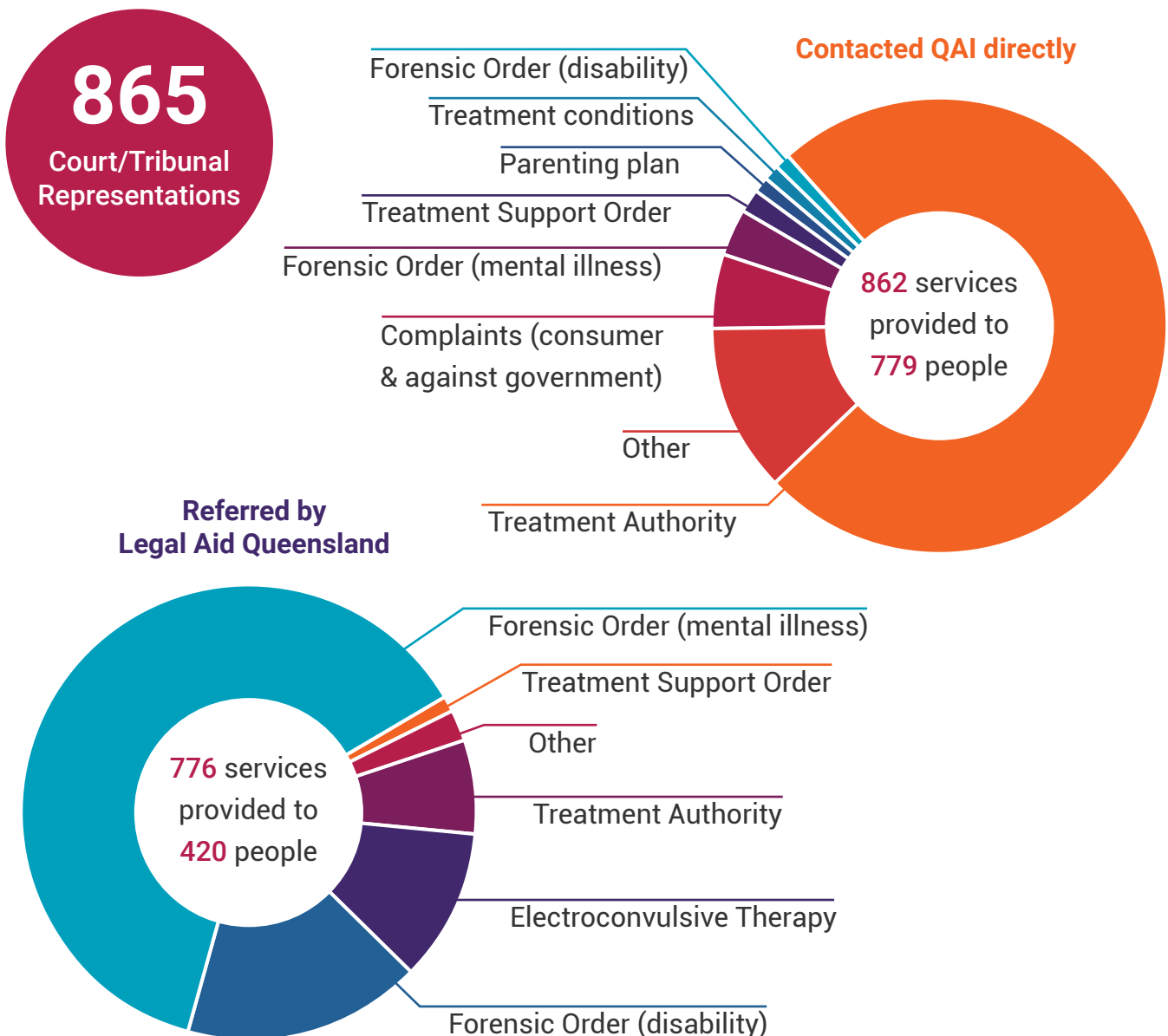
“We would like to again say a huge thank you to you for your support over the past year. We so appreciate everything you have done for all of us. Thank you again for the support and difference you have made assisting us all on this journey.”

Mental Health Law

What we do

QAI's Mental Health Law service helps individuals receiving involuntary mental health treatment in Queensland. Our solicitors provide legal advice for matters arising under the Mental Health Act 2016 (Qld) and representation before the Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT) for people subject to Treatment Authorities, Forensic Orders (mental health and disability), Treatment Support Orders, Fitness for Trial reviews, Confidentiality Order applications, applications for Electroconvulsive Therapy and applications for transfers to other authorised mental health services. In limited circumstances, we also appear in appeals before the Mental Health Court. Our team assist clients across Queensland by providing in person, telephone or video conference assistance as required. Our clients are either referred to us directly, or by Legal Aid.

What we assisted with



Case study - Jerry

Jerry* had been on a Forensic Order for over 10 years. He had been charged with numerous offences, which were discontinued when it was determined he had been of unsound mind at the time of the offences.

Since then, Jerry had worked hard to establish a supportive family unit and find work that he enjoyed. Jerry had remained stable and had a good relationship with his treating team.

We helped Jerry to advocate for the Forensic Order to be revoked at his MHRT hearing. Despite opposition from some parties, the MHRT agreed with our position and decided to revoke the forensic order.

*Name has been changed

“Marianne* and I would like to thank you very much for the hard work you have put in to support her regarding the forensic order. We truly appreciate you taking the time to research, write and put in the submission, and for supporting Marianne during the tribunal process. Marianne shared [that] it's nice to have someone listen to her and act on her behalf. Thank you again.”

“Sam* appreciated that even when the answer was no, we always provided a referral, or an idea, or passed on some experience to help the client find their way with whatever they needed help with. He said this stands out from other services.

“I appreciated my solicitor's assistance with my matter and I'm very happy with the Forensic Order being revoked and a Treatment Support Order being made with less conditions.”

“Although I did not get the changes I wanted, I am very happy with [my solicitor's] assistance (as are my parents) and I thank him for his help.”

*Names have been changed

Supported Accommodation Inquiry Project



What we do

QAI was engaged by the Department of Housing to support current and former residents of Level 3 Supported Accommodation facilities to make submissions to the Inquiry into the Provision and Regulation of Supported Accommodation in Queensland, which was conducted by the Queensland Parliament Community Support and Services Committee. The program also involved promoting and providing information about the Inquiry, as it was relatively low in public profile and a lot of residents were not aware it was taking place.

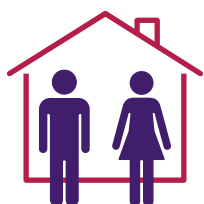
While QAI was initially approached to assist with the above, we negotiated to incorporate post-submission advocacy services into the project where appropriate issues were identified that we could assist with. This was an important aspect of the work as issues were routinely flagged while getting to know residents and assisting them prepare submissions. Advocacy services provided were in relation to a broad range of issues, including sheltered employment classifications and underpayments, aged care, health care, NDIS access, and financial abuse.

The program was delivered in conjunction with Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN), with the list of facilities divided up between our two organisations to account for QDN's existing connections with some sites. QAI's sites tended to be more outer-suburban and regional, and given we did not have established connections within these facilities a lot of work was required to make contact with and establish trust and relationships with residents. This involved several trips to regional areas such as Toowoomba and Cairns.

Following the Inquiry and release of its recommendations, the team revisited all of the sites we had worked in to 'close the loop' of engagement. We informed residents of the Inquiry's recommendations and next steps, such as the Government's response and further implementation. This included making physical copies of the report and our analysis of the findings and recommendations to give to residents, along with other printed documents such as an Easy Read version of the report.

During the program we learned that there is a lot of unmet legal and non-legal advocacy need amongst supported accommodation residents. Our experience was that as a cohort, they are unlikely to access services that are not made readily available to them through outreach and support.

What we assisted with



76

Visits to supported accommodation sites



30

Detailed resident submissions



Case study - Paul

Paul* lives in a Supported Accommodation where advocates met him during our second visit to the site. He was very interested in making a detailed submission, which an advocate assisted with by taking notes of a conversation documenting his concerns. These included poor value for money of the accommodation and services provided, including the food, quality of accommodation, maintenance and management of the site.

Paul's submission spoke to the trauma of living in group settings, the disdainful attitudes of the staff towards residents, and their unprofessionalism and lack of training, qualifications or skills. Ultimately, Paul felt that the operators saw residents as a commodity they were determined to squeeze every last cent out of.

In assisting with the submission, the advocate identified a few issues we may be able to assist with. With Paul's agreement we ended up helping him to access affordable health services and subsidised healthcare products. We contacted Givit who donated a fridge and blender to Paul. We also arranged for him to be assessed for an aged care package, which was successful and resulted in funding for community access and in-home supports.

Paul was very grateful for our work on the inquiry as well as the individual advocacy he received.

*Name has been changed

NDIS Advocacy Practice

NDIS Appeals Support



195
Clients

What we do

Our team of solicitors and advocates support individuals to appeal a decision of the NDIA primarily through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

It has been another busy year and one in which the NDIS itself has been under increasing scrutiny from the media, the public, people with disability and politicians.

On the frontline of appeals we see first-hand how participants of the NDIS can be supported to lead their best lives. We also see how decision makers within a large bureaucratic Government body can get decisions very wrong for individuals. This last year we have worked hard to take what we see and learn from our clients into our systemic contributions to the NDIS Review and the subsequent "Getting the NDIS Back on Track" Amendments Bill to the NDIS Act. On the tabling of the Bill we took a proactive role to share our knowledge of the amendments with Queensland wide advocacy groups (through QIDAN) and national appeals advocacy groups through the national appeals advocacy forum.

Our Senior Solicitor Andrea de Smidt has been a key driver to the operation of a monthly national appeals advocacy forum which addresses key systemic issues in NDIS appeals, and on a bi-monthly basis is able to raise operational issues directly with the NDIA. This forum has strengthened our relationship with key allies in other States, particularly the Justice and Equity Centre, Villamanta and the Rights Information and Advocacy Centre.

We continue to run two key services within our NDIS Appeals Support team, being our full representation service and our supported self-advocacy advice service. We supported 195 clients through these services this year. We provided full representation to 60 of these clients with 34 of those resolving during the year. Only one went to a full hearing and the remainder resolved by agreement. We had 10 clients gain access to the NDIS and 23 receive more supports. Of the 60 clients represented at the AAT 20% were First Nations, 6% from CALD backgrounds and 21% lived outside the Southeast Corner. The age groups where we see the most demand are young adults in their key transition stage of life and adults over 55.

The key issues we are seeing for supports:

Appropriate support for participants to live in the home of their choosing, whether that is with their family or on their own in their own home.

The NDIA not recognising all of a person's impairments.

In access, our clients often have complex multiple chronic health conditions whose primary health care has been through the public health system. Proving permanence and then obtaining a report by an occupational therapist are the key barriers.

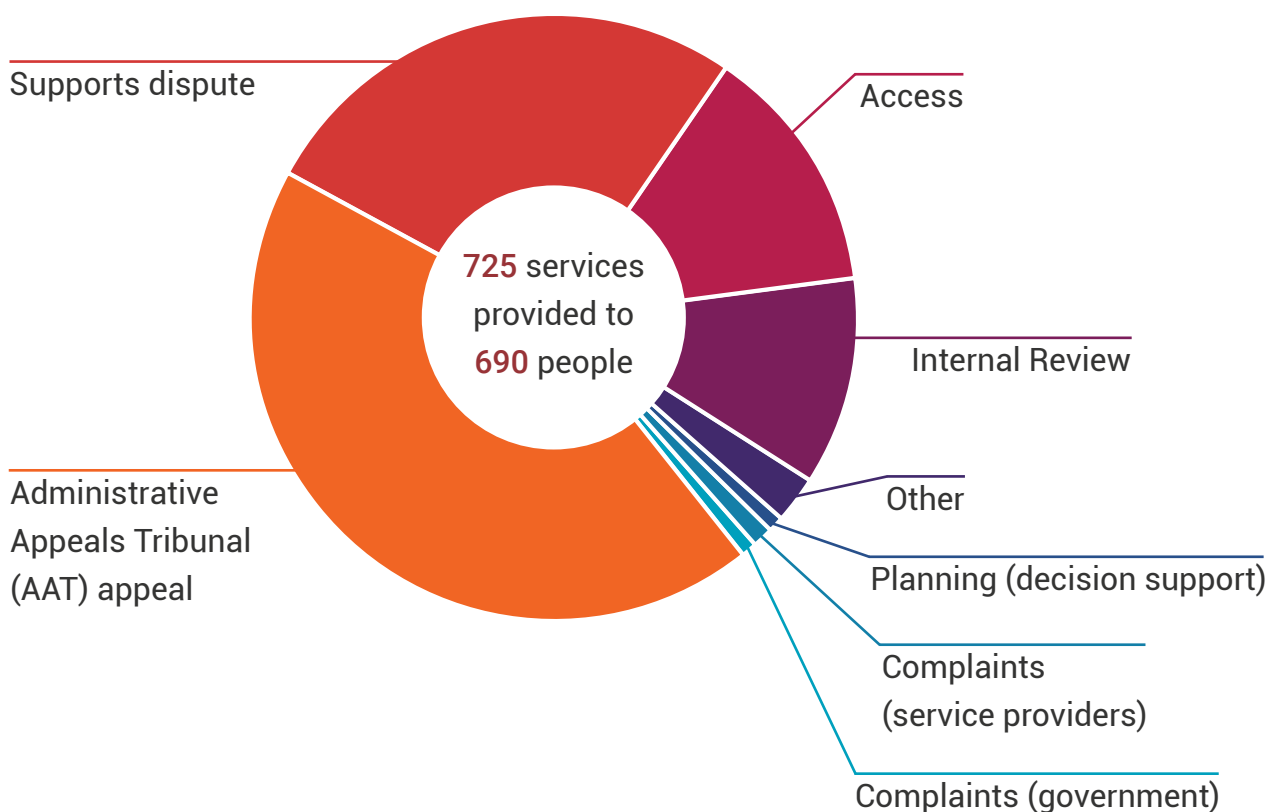
We also established a pro bono pilot project with the support of three national law firms. Through that project we ran training with over 50 lawyers interested in doing pro bono work at the AAT for NDIS appeals. The project has used pro bono lawyers to assist us with drafting statements for participants, with over 50 hours being volunteered. On one occasion we were able to refer a client to a firm who then took on her matter. She desperately required NDIS supports and was seeking access to the NDIS. Within 2 months of the referral, she was granted access to the NDIS.

Our community education included a webinar specifically on accommodation/housing hosted by Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ), attendance at the Inala Indigenous Health Service to speak with health professionals about appeals and preparing reports, attendance at the Moonyar Centre to provide information about the NDIS and our services, attendance at the Mt Ommaney Special School to speak to parents about their children's NDIS plans as they transition from school, a presentation at Redlands Disability Network meeting to provide information on NDIS appeals and our services.

We continued the development of resources with our self-advocacy fact sheets and templates on NDIS appeals for access, writing a statement of lived experience, and a letter to medical professional.

The resources can be found at qai.org.au/ndis-resources.

What we assisted with



“Thank you so much for your time last week and for this email. We greatly appreciate your advice and all the work you have spent on this for us. On reading your letter it has definitely given us more insight into what lies ahead in our appeal and more importantly, an understanding of the interpretation of permanent or likely to be a permanent impairment.

“It is AMAZING AMAZING EXCITING TREMENDOUS news!!!! Just incredible. I can't stop smiling. Everyone in the office now knows the good news too! It is such a pleasure working with you and I hope that there will be more opportunity for us to work together to make sure that people are getting the support that they need, particularly those in remote areas. You have been absolutely brilliant all the way through – so enthusiastic, so passionate, and so hard working and dedicated. Thank you so much because we would have never got it without you. Looking forward to the next steps and getting James'* new life underway! This really is life-changing for James.”

Case study - James

On the last working day of 2023, a social worker from Cairns reached out to ask us about accessing the NDIS for a client, James* who is First Nations man in his mid-50s living in a remote Northwest town. On reviewing his access decision, we identified he actually had an internal review decision and was a couple of months out of time to file at the AAT. The team responded immediately and filed his AAT application along with a request for an extension that same day.

James lives with a complex disability associated with his chronic joint pain, obesity, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, osteoarthritis, post-traumatic stress disorder, and bipolar affective disorder. He has high support needs, but a very limited support network of people who can assist him. He had been trying to gain access to the NDIS for years.

In 2018, James started receiving his first My Aged Care supports package, which has been life changing for him and has meant he can receive daily support worker assistance in his home and in the community. The only problem is that James requires a much higher level of support that cannot be offered through a federal program that is designed to provide age-specific rather than disability-specific support.

James was regularly being hospitalised due to self-harm. His main support worker was also providing significant unpaid support, which was unsustainable. With the assistance of our advocates, James put forward a strong case for his out of time application, which was not rejected by the NDIA or AAT. This meant he could pursue his appeal. During this time, James was represented by QAI as we worked closely with his social worker from Cairns, the Aboriginal Health Service and his support worker to gather more evidence.

In June 2024, James was told the fantastic news that he meets the NDIS access criteria. He has received a fantastic plan which will mean he can get the support he needs. We have already received more referrals from the same remote town.

*Name has been changed

“Have dealt with the service twice now and always feel very supported. It is very easy to tell that the team works together and in the end, we got the best result we could hope for. I couldn't be more grateful and appreciative.

Disability Advocacy Practice

Young Peoples Program

What we do

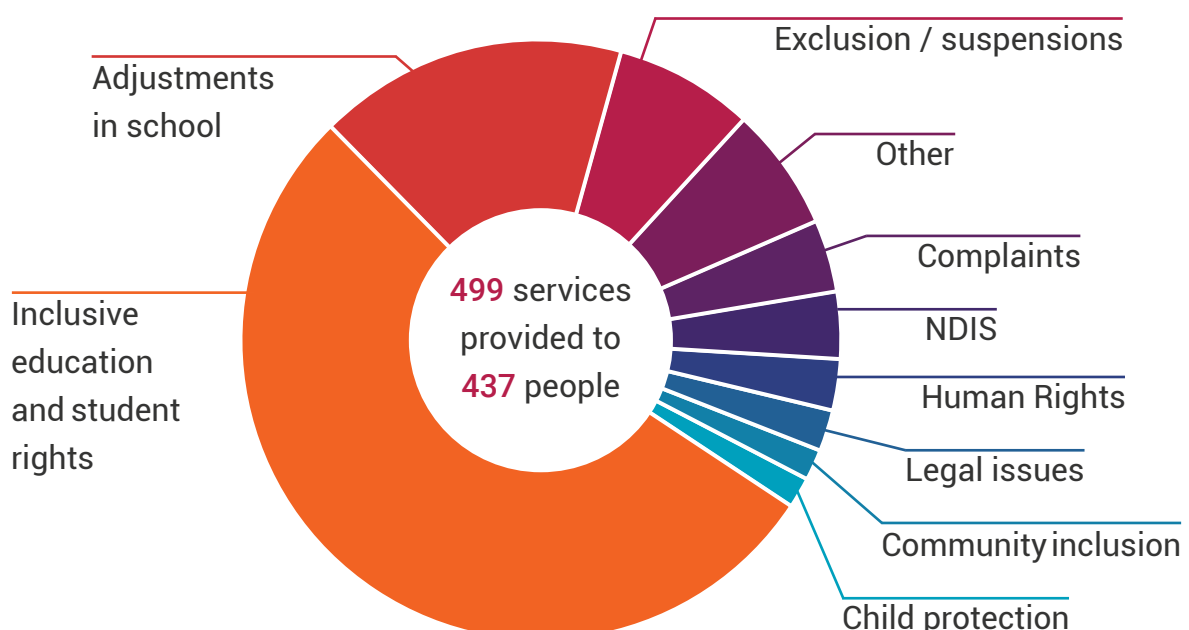
QAI's Young Peoples Program (YPP) is dedicated to providing individual advocacy for children and young people with disability, aged from birth to 18 years. Our goal is to support young people in upholding their rights, interests, and increasing their control over their lives.

Our advocates have been actively engaged in outreach ensuring access to advocacy for young people in detention with regular visits to all three youth detention centres in Queensland. Advocates developed relationships with young people, community and stakeholders across Queensland, with a particular emphasis on Townsville and Palm Island.

Based on our experience advocating for young people with disability, our advocates contributed to systemic change by providing feedback and advice directly to government through various departments, ministerial offices, commissions and inquiries as well as consulting with universities on research projects.

The Young Peoples Program was nominated for the Queensland Family and Child Commission 'Dedicated to Supporting Young Queenslanders Award' for their commitment to advocating for the rights and needs of people with disability.

What we assisted with



Case study - Mark & Matt

Mark* and Matt* are twins with complex support requirements often leading to dysregulation at school. Initially, they faced frequent suspensions and part-time education plans, and the school continually cited their lack of resources as the reason they were not able to provide adequate support in the classroom.

The advocate worked closely with Mark, Matt, their family, the school and other stakeholders to establish regular Complex Case management meetings. Following numerous discussions and stakeholder meetings, the advocate was able to foster agreement between all parties to best support Mark and Matt. The school applied for 'Exceptional Circumstances' funding from the Regional Office and the school was subsequently provided with extra teacher and teacher aide hours to support the boys.

The allocation of further resources had an immediate impact with the frequency of episodes of dysregulation decreasing dramatically. The boys' parent recently sent the advocate an email stating:

"Since the start of this year things have been much more positive and both boys are now attending school full-time within a classroom setting and accessing individual support in order to facilitate individual learning plans.

Some recent major achievements have been that Matt attended school camp a couple of weeks ago (Mark also attended but only during the daytime). Both boys competed in their school athletics carnival, they both completed peer level assessments (and sat Naplan), and we haven't had a single suspension this year. An outcome such as this would not have been achievable without your help."

*Names have been changed

“Thanks again for all your hard work. You really have been so supportive and helped me with things I would never have had any idea about. You have lightened my load significantly. I am extremely and eternally grateful. Thank you, thank you thank you!”

“I got the outcome that I wanted, the advocate was very helpful and they understood me well despite my struggles with autism.”

“Thank you for the team that you have. They are always friendly and very responsive. This made us feel like the Advocates were always there for us.”

What we do

Pathways was established in January 2022 as the 'Hub', to provide information and referrals to people with disability, their families and supporters. Pathways maintains systems and processes for reporting and monitoring service capacity across Queensland Disability Advocacy Program (QDAP) funded organisations. This ensures, as much as possible, that people with disability seeking advocacy assistance are not on a constant 'referral-round-about'. Pathways operate from a supported decision making framework and make simple and facilitated referrals based on the caller, their circumstances, preferences and expressed consent.

Pathways Information and Referral Officers continue to build strong connections with services across Queensland, increasing the team's abilities to make referrals. Additionally, Pathways Information and Referrals Officers have been undertaking community outreach to further connect with people with disability and their supporters in more difficult to reach settings. In March, the team attended the Metro North Disability Services Action Plan Launch Event to promote the Pathways service to hospital workers, and people with disability who may be in hospital environments. In April Pathways visited a Level Two Supported Accommodation in Cairns to speak with residents. In May, the team attended the Cairns Regional Disability Expo, and the Townsville Regional Disability Expo to promote the Pathways service to those living in regional Far North Queensland, sharing a stall with the local advocacy organisation Rights in Action.

988
Enquiries
received

Where we referred to



63%

Disability Advocacy
Organisations



19%

Community
Legal Centres

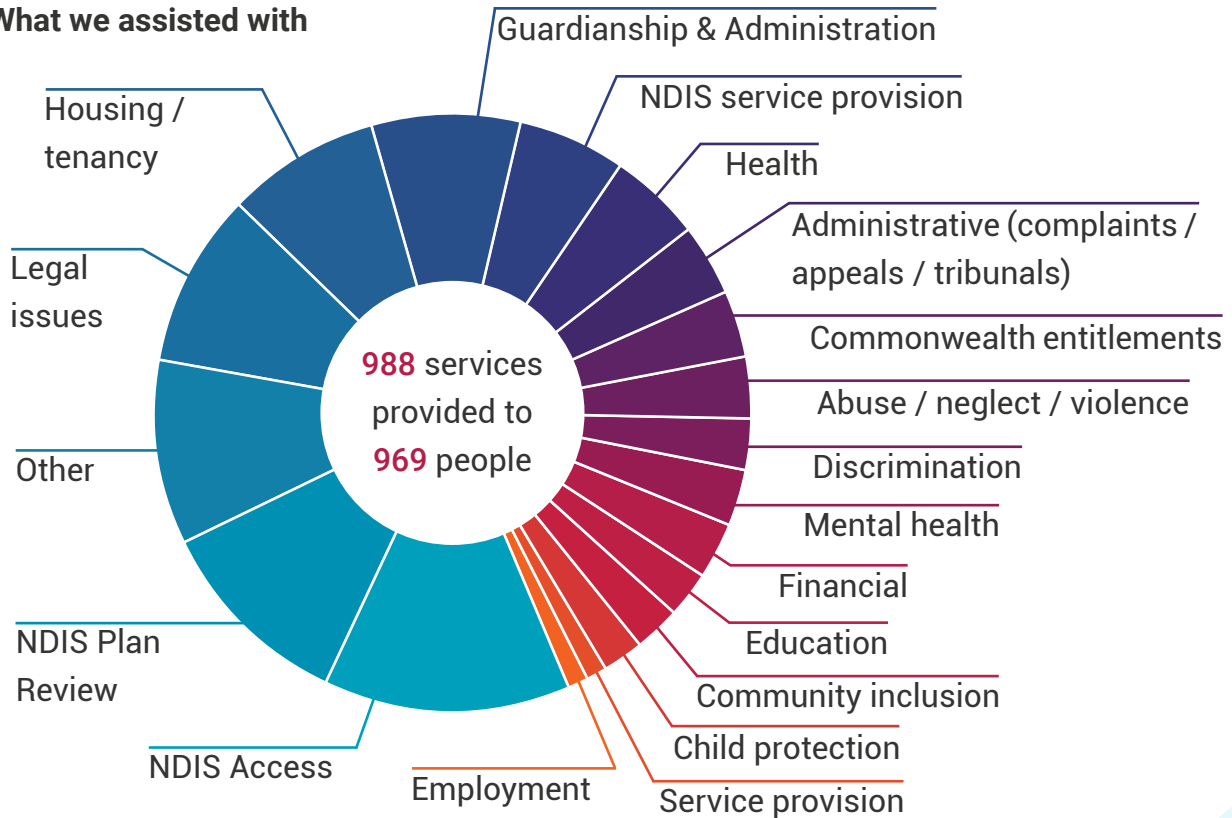


10%

Community
Support Services

“The hardest thing is to understand what areas advocates specialise in put in lay terms. Sometimes it is difficult to figure out where we fit in the bigger picture. Explaining timelines can also be helpful, to know what they can expect and when they can expect it. The Pathways worker was very terrific, very helpful. We are so grateful for your service. You help to keep people optimistic.”

What we assisted with



Case study - Jess

Pathways received a call from Jess*, a woman with disability who was being refused access to healthcare. Jess has physical disability, as well as Ehler Danlos Syndrome and Autism. She had recently left a domestically abusive relationship, which had left her with a fractured neck. She told Pathways that when she had presented to the Emergency Department at her local hospital, the healthcare professionals had been dismissive due to her disability. Jess has no formal or informal supports and felt she was slipping through the cracks. Pathways recognised the intersecting vulnerabilities for Jess and was able to provide her with a facilitated referral to the local advocacy organisation for her area. When the Pathways Information and Referrals Officer contacted the advocacy organisation, they were able to immediately accept the referral and help Jess to access adequate medical care access and support, such as the QCSS or NDIS. Pathways received the following feedback from Jess "[Pathways] made me feel like I had dignity."

*Name has been changed

“Truly amazing. Incredibly grateful for the service that [Pathways] offered that helped through a really hard time.”

“I wanted to thank you all so so so much for your help. I have an advocate! My matter is being sorted and I am so grateful for all of your help.”

Treasurer report

It is a great pleasure to present QAI's Treasurer Report for the year ending 30 June 2024.

We would like to thank Hayward's Chartered Accountants for the preparation of the Audited Financials and for their support throughout the year.

QAI's work continues to rely heavily on its Funding Agreements with the following funders:

- Department of Social Services (DSS) for our systems advocacy work, NDIS Appeals, and attendance at CoSP in New York.
- Department of Education funding and Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, for our Young Peoples Program.
- Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General (through which we also receive money from the Commonwealth Attorney-General under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services) to deliver our legal services in human rights, justice support and mental health.
- Legal Aid Queensland appointing QAI to perform representation services at

the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

- QAI received one-off funding of \$178,000 from Department of Justice and Attorney-General for our Public Trustee Qld (PTQ) Clinic, which is delivered through our Human Rights Law service.
- One-off funding of \$340,000 received from Department of Housing for the Supported Accommodation Inquiry Project.

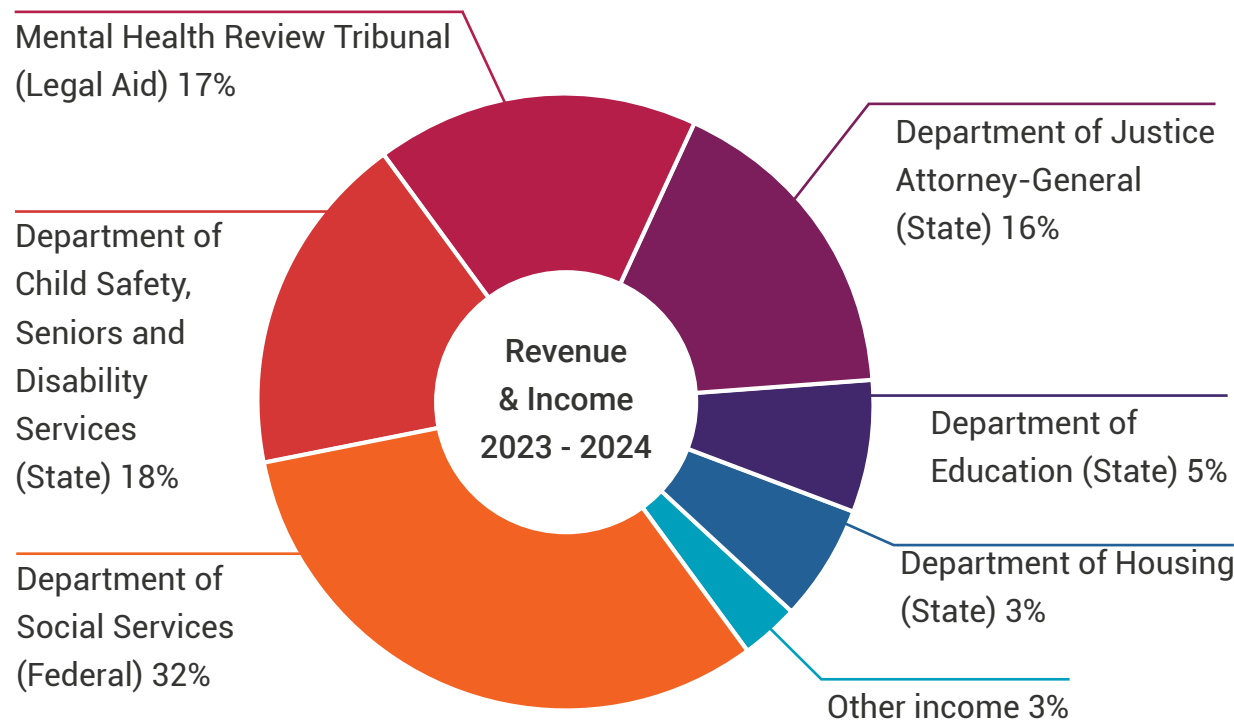
In May 2024 we said farewell to CFO Bill Kyle. We would like to thank Bill for his service to QAI and wish him well in his future endeavours.

QAI's income in the 2023-24 year increased by 11.4% to \$5.24 Million. We continue to endeavour to maximise our direct service delivery.

A focus on risk management and continuity planning remains a priority in protecting QAI's sustainability. We are well placed to continue delivering quality services and meet our ongoing financial commitments into the future.

Edward Cole, Treasurer

Financial summary



Profit and loss summary

Total revenue	\$5,062,361
Other income	\$177,710
Total expenses	- \$4,998,685
Net surplus	\$241,386

The full audited financial report is available upon request.

Our funders



Queensland Government

Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services
Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Department of Education
Legal Aid Queensland



Australian Government

Department of Social Services
Attorney-General's Department



Advocacy for people with disability

 9am-4:30pm Monday-Friday

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