



Annual Report 2008-2009

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The National Children's and Youth Law Centre

The National Children's and Youth Law Centre (NCYLC) is Australia's only national community legal centre dedicated to representing the rights and interests of children and young people. The Centre provides advice and information for children and young people about the law and their rights and responsibilities. It also works with those who support and advocate for children. The NCYLC lobbies governments to consider children and child rights when developing legislation and policies that may have an impact on young people. The Centre was established in 1993 and is a non-profit non-government organisation.

Our Mission:

The Centre aims to:

- Provide advice and information to children and young people about their legal rights and responsibilities
- Support test cases on behalf of children and young people to clarify or further their legal rights
- Bring about changes to laws, policies and practices to advance the rights of children and young people
- Promote the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Be a Centre for research, training and policy development in matters of children's rights
- Promote opportunities for participation by children and young people in decision making at all levels

Our Three Core Areas of Work:

ADVOCACY

The Centre is at the forefront of public advocacy for the rights of children and young people, and promotes the full recognition and acceptance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It plays a key role in the preparation of the NGO Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child on Australia's compliance with the Convention.

EDUCATION

The centre piece of the Centre's service delivery is to provide advice and information to children and young people as well as their parents and advocates and the wider community. In 1997, NCYLC established *Lawstuff*, a website providing legal information to all young Australians. Since its establishment, the site has attracted over 30 million hits. In 1998, the *Lawmail* facility was added, allowing young people to seek legal advice, referral and information via email. Currently the Centre responds to about 1000 requests every year.

INFORMATION

The Centre undertakes a range of projects to further the interests of children and young people. These projects are designed to raise community awareness with children and young people and the wider community including governments, advocates, educators and employers. Publications include research and discussion papers.

Board of Directors

The National Children's and Youth Law Centre is governed by a Board of Directors. Board members bring their expertise, vision and commitment to children's rights to guide the Centre through its challenges and to build its profile, performance, resource base and partners.

The Board meets during the year as required. It is supported by its own Finance Committee which monitors the financial health of the Centre on a more regular basis.

The Board currently operates as Sydney-based but is supported to have a national focus by the Centre's national networks – such as the National Youth Advocacy Network - and its partners that operate nationally - such as Mallesons Stephen Jaques.

Board Members

Simon Moran	Board Member, 2003 to the present <u>Chair</u> , January 2006 to the present
Pheona Arndell	Board Member, November 2004 to the present <u>Deputy Chair</u> , November 2006 to the present
Judy Cashmore	Board Member, August 2004 to the present
Christine Forster	Board Member, January 2006 to the present
Michael Chaaya	Board Member, January 2006 to the present
Garner Clancy	Board Member, November 2006 to the present
Jodi Nicholls	Board Member, November 2006 to the present
Sarah Winter	Board Member, July 2007 to the present
Rey Reodica	Board Member, March 2009 to the present
Moira Saville	Board Member, July 2009 to the present

The Staff

James McDougall
Director

January 2005 – Present

Benjamin Chinnock
Communications Officer

September 2007 - Present

Julianne Elliot
Kim Ivantsoff
Cyber Volunteer Project Officer

September 2007 – November 2008
January 2009 - Present

Ali Haberfield
Jeffery Candiloro
Web Development & IT Support Officer

July 2007 – June 2009
June 2009 – Present

Christine Pollard
Finance Officer

October 2006 – Present

Contract Staff

Anika Ebner
Design Consultant

November 2008 – Present

Placements, Mallesons Key Contacts and Volunteers

How We Do It

The National Children's & Youth Law Centre delivers its services to children and young people principally using the internet.

In this way our clients are able to access the information that we provide in their own time and to use the information as they see fit.

We believe that it is important to provide children and young people with accurate information that is explained in language that they can understand.

We also provide them with support to make decisions and link them with others in their communities who will support them.

For those of us that also operate in the adult world, our office hours are generally between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday each week.

The staff of the Centre comprise a Director (full-time), Communications Officer (full-time), a Placement Lawyer from Mallesons Stephen Jaques (full-time on rotation every 3 months), a part time Finance Officer, a part time IT Support Officer and a part time Cyber Volunteer Project Coordinator.

But much of the work of the Centre is done by our volunteers!

Our Mallesons Placement Lawyers

Bom Shin	May to August 2008
Simon Burnett	August 2008 – November 2008
Rebecca Dollisson	November 2008 to February 2009
Sarah Penman	February 2009 - May 2009
Kate McCrossin	May 2009 – August 2009

Our Mallesons Key Contacts

Kathryn Burke	May 2007 to March 2008
Sarah Penman	March 2008 to Present

Volunteers

On-site Volunteers

Ahram Choi	Amanda Hioe	Amy
Angela Lu	Anne Guroll	Anushree Tiku
Benita Rupan	Bobbie (Emily) Wan	Brooke Greenwood
Buffy (Beth) Gilbert	Casey Comans	Cassandra Case
Cate Mahoney	Caterina Kim	Charisse Hodgeman
Charlotte Grounds	Chloe Rees	Christina Nguyen
Daniel Beom-Joo Lee	Danielle Wakil	Dannielle Quinn
Dimitra Konstantinou	Elizabeth Chia	Eng Hwa Trinh
Fatima Malik	Gabriella Khoury	Ganesh Kumar
Hing Tai	Jacqueline Everitt	Jasmin Chin
Jason Vongratsau	Jeannette Fahd	Jessamy Downie
Jessica Lynn Gimenez	Jinny	Karen Fok
Karen Spencer	Katherine Gilbert	Lily Marinovic
Liz Larbalestier	Matthew Jessep	Mimi Lu
Naomi	Nicole Albertson	Oishee Alam
Olivia Stokes	Pathum Thilini Perera	Patricia Oey
Patricia Wentworth	Penny Vlahogiannis	Rebecca Gu
Rebecca Lewis	Rheza Tanudihardjo	Rita Caruana
Shefali	Simone du Toit	Stephanie Crowhurst
Subhaga Amarasekara	Tania Matovic	Tanvi Mehta
Tarryn Peckham	Tobias Freeman	Vinita Wasan

Overseas Interns

Ludivine Gentils (Germany)
Jennifer Schanes (Harvard Law School)
Karen Smith (Harvard Law School)

NSW Social Justice Interns

Penny Adams
Annabelle Frost
Aimee Wiseman
Shirley Zin Weng
Suzi Kim
Sally Rollinson

Mallesons Cyber Project Volunteers

Brisbane

Key Contacts – Cassie Burchill, Sarah Snip

Emmanuel Pappas	Rhys Casey	Samantha Duffy
Rowena Kennedy	Shelley Miller	Kate Muller
Carly Long	Lorelle Porter	Cassie Burchill
Ingrid Fuentes	Mel Graham	Sarah Svensson
Jennifer Passagne	Annabel Vadasz	Michelle Yeap
Drew Robinson	Adam Ryan	Jennifer Kuang
Kate Ashwood	Kathryn Purcell-Hennessy	Kate Ogg
Kathleen Simmonds	Alex Hill	Melanie Hyde
Kimberley Thorne	Bing Wang	Priscilla Lal
Cameron Mew	Bridget O'Brien	Tess van Weerdenburg
Clare McMurtrie	Suzannah D'Juliet	Sally Robb
Briana Cumming	Meghan Purves	Catherine Stapylton
Claire Schneider	Patrick Jeffers	Domenic Gallo

Canberra

Key Contact – Alison Gurr

Katie Weir	Natalie Ball	Hugh Bannister
Margot Brown	Brie Weatherstone	Fariba Aghili
Kirsty Champion	Nicole Davis	Sarah Ailwood
Steven Masterson	Mae Tanner	Katherine Urbanski
Sophia Rihani	Chris Iverson	Nicole Davis
Peter Baker	Jo Wright	Chloe Johnco
Lisa Quilty		

Perth

Key Contacts – Rachel Scogna, Jessica Harris

Fiona Cross	Tim Edwards	Deb Freilich
Tom French	Varun Ghosh	Jess Harris
Kate Higgins	Lyn Ladhams	Nancy Lim
Ben Martin	Michael O'Kane	Cam Roper
Diana Scolaro	Jo Siopis	John Tanner
Serena Wells		

Sydney

Key Contacts – Rebecca Dollison, Sarah Penman

Ryan Thorne	Mel Anders	Julie Walsh
Angelique Leondis	Travis Toemoe	Prashanti Ravindra
Jane Sebel	Belinda Cusworth	Stefanie Benson
Angela Chung	Lisa Hirowitz	Vicky Marchant
Fiona Robson	Rachael Falk	Rebecca Dollison
Michael Pond	Emma Croft	Andrew Hii
Mitchell Landringan	Sally Hamilton	Jane van Beelen
Nicholas Smith	Katherine Sheppard	Ahmed Saira
Duncan Campbell	Alexander Flecknoe-Brown	Preetika Gyaneswar
Marie Hennessy	Jana Kacir	Aishah Kerr-Zabidin
Danet Khuth	Ka-on Li	Norm Maamary
Kate McCrossin	Scott Nichols	Teresa Pang
Luba Poukchanski	Justin Rossetto	Clifford Sandler
Simun Soljo	Alice St George	Mandy Tsang

Melbourne

Key Contacts – Brinsley Saw, Taryn McCamley, Sam Porter

Alexander Nielsen	Richard Feely	Howard Choo
Kristian Imbesi	Cherie Canning	Maree Quinn
Tatiana Rudometova	Agata Bober	Emily Collin
Ben Jellis	James Hains	Justine Rowe
Katrina Howie	Robert Kovacs	Damien Coleman
Thea Schwartz	Phil McKeiver	Hannah Jones
Jane Tipping	Jane Sebel	Jade Adams
Nicholas Aird	Stacey Guo	Catherine Krol
Meg O'Brien	Belinda Parker	Sarah Parkinson
Michael Dunstan	Cindy Varalla	George Croft

Sponsors & Supporters

The Federal Attorney General's Department is our principal source of funding and currently our only confirmed recurrent source of funding. The Department has continued to demonstrate its confidence in the Centre by making a series of one-off payments to support our work. However it has not yet been able to translate these into reliable increases to recurrent funding. Special grants by the Attorneys General (**Philip Ruddock** in the Howard Government and **Robert McClelland** in the Rudd Government) have been used to establish a Future Fund for the Centre to support staff retention. In the current year a further grant (of \$22 500) has been made to support the final stages of the Web Access Project.

Mallesons Stephen Jaques is our strongest supporter from the private legal profession and has continued its longstanding commitment to the Centre in a variety of innovative and important ways. This year marks the first full year of the **National Cyber Volunteer Project** which provides the Centre with Mallesons staff members as volunteers in **Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Perth**. And we continue to welcome the wonderful contributions of our **Mallesons Placement Lawyers**.

Squiz a Web Development company has provide us with important technical support, training and advice in the roll-out of our important strategic Web Access Project.

The University of New South Wales has continued to provide the Centre with valuable and strategic accommodation to the Centre for nearly fifteen years.

The **NSW Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care** has provided us with funding to develop our websites for children with a disability and introduced us to our IT partner Squiz.

The Melbourne Community Foundation has provided us with project funding to develop more effective strategies for assisting Indigenous children.

The Reichstein Foundation has continued to support the development of our profile particularly in philanthropic circles in Melbourne as we work towards a sustainable model for child rights monitoring.

UNICEF, Save the Children and Oxfam and other members of **the Child Rights Taskforce** continue to work with the Centre on the development of child rights in Australia and reporting our compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The University of Sydney, the University of Technology Sydney, the University of New South Wales, the University of Wollongong and Australian Internships have continued to provide the Centre with law student volunteers and interns.

The National Youth Advocacy Network helps to ensure that the Centre is informed of youth justice issues around the country.

We have continued to develop our relationship with (and admiration for the work of **John Tobin** from the Melbourne University Law School in developing our understanding of the value of using a child rights framework in our policy development, advocacy and service delivery.

The Director's Report

It's been an interesting twelve months. The global financial crisis has caught its shadow over the Centre as it has for most of civil society. The promise of a new era that was tangible in our previous Annual Report has proved more elusive than we expected. Instead we have had to content ourselves with more incremental progress and consolidation.

Our staff team has undergone some change. Our Cyber Volunteer Project has completed its first full year of operation. Our Web Access Project has made slow but steady progress. We have maintained a solid focus on quality service delivery and policy development and advocacy for children and young people.

It's probably our policy work and our networks and relationships where we can see the most significant progress.

We have become more confident in the presentation of our policy work as we recognise the value of a considered child rights approach to policy development. It's about putting the Convention on the Rights of the Child into action in our work. We understand the principles – but we also recognise that children and young people are telling us every day through the Lawmails that they send us what matters to them.

Browse some of the policy work listed later in this report if you would like to see the views of children and young people influence the submissions and discussion papers that we prepare.

This does not justify complacency. As duty bearers ourselves under the Convention, we should continually challenge ourselves to find more effective ways to involve children and young people in our own decision-making processes. The issue of participation in our own work will become a focus over the next year as we prepare for the next NGO Report on the Convention's implementation in Australia.

We have already noted the work undertaken in the last 5 years on our internal foundations: - direction, service delivery, management, governance, finances and staffing. With those foundations, we have started to look out and to develop our partnerships and networks.

There are now emerging signs of the strength of those partnerships – the Child Rights Taskforce is becoming a strong and vibrant source of ideas and enthusiasm; our partnership with Mallesons is helping to develop a number of innovative new projects; our profile and the profile of child rights is slowly building and decision makers are starting to think about how to take children and their rights into account.

There's still along way to go but there are more positive signs than we have seen for many years. At the same time we are also seeing the gap between the rhetoric and the reality – in child protection; responses to youth homelessness; commitment to youth participation and meeting our international obligations in protecting human rights - to cite a few key national issues.

I pay tribute to our staff team. Ben has now made the role of Communications Officer his own and is settling in to developing our networks and resources to enhance the profile and work of the Centre.

Kim has quickly picked up the challenges of her role as Cyber Volunteer Project Coordinator. She has built strong relationships with the Mallesons Key Contacts and the volunteers around the nation. I am particularly grateful for the enthusiasm and skill that she has brought to the task of monitoring and maintaining the quality standards of service delivery to children that the Centre is committed to.

Despite starting in the position with no particular experience in children's law, her life experience and professional skills have enabled her to take on the responsibility of signing off advice and information for children in record time. This is an enormous relief for me after four years of handling that responsibility without assistance.

We thank Ali for her work as Web Access Project Worker and for the smooth transition of her duties to Jeffery Candiloro who brings his valuable experience in working with our partner Squiz to the Project.

Christine has continued to give us great service in managing our finances and has managed the reporting requirements of the Finance Officer's position with ease.

Once again I thank the Board for the solid support and guidance. Simon, Pheona and Sarah have also provided invaluable assistance as the Finance Committee by continuing to guide us through our financial challenges. Simon and Pheona have also filled the roles of Chair and Deputy Chair with strong and reliable leadership.

Our Mallesons Placement Lawyers (Bom Shin, Simon Burnett, Rebecca Dollisson, Sarah Penman and Kate McCrossin) provided us with personable and professional support in the 3 month placement roles. Their value to the Centre is crucial and it is always an absolute pleasure to work with them.

As always our team of volunteers are our greatest asset and this year's group was no exception. Special thanks to our longest-serving volunteers – Buffy Gilbert, Chloe Rees, Jess Downie, Matthew Jessep, Rita Caruana and Patricia Wentworth.

The local team was again joined by a number of interns from overseas. Thanks to Ludivine Gentils (Germany), Jennifer Schanes and Karen Smith (Harvard Law School).

Our ongoing relationship with Mallesons has continued to develop particularly with the national Cyber Volunteer Project. Our thanks to all those involved in the Project with special thanks to Key Contacts Sarah Snip and Cassie Burchill (Brisbane), Alison Gurr and Geoff Adams (Canberra), Brinsley Saw, Taryn McCamley and Sam Porter (Melbourne), Rebecca Dollisson, Diyana Mansour and Sarah Penman (Sydney) and Rachel Scogna, Jessica Harris (Perth).

Finally we thank Jane Farnsworth the Mallesons National Pro Bono Coordinator for her clear vision and Frank Zipfinger for his strong support for the partnership.

Our collaboration with the Child Rights Taskforce has continued to build with strong contributions from UNICEF, Oxfam and Save the Children, a number of the Offices for Children's Commissioners and youth and children's advocates around the country. This network will steer the next Alternative Report on Australia's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Squiz have provided us with good technical training and support and continue to contribute to our comprehensive web development.

Our partnerships will help us as we seek innovative and effective ways to involve children and young people in all our work. We want to hear their voices in the development of strategies to address their issues – and their inclusion in debates about homelessness, privacy, as consumers, as students, their security online, in public and at home and in reducing violence and abuse in their day-to-day experiences.

James McDougall

Cyber Volunteer Project Officer's Report

Project Outline

The National Children's and Youth Law Centre ("NCYLC") built on its existing relationship with law firm Mallesons Stephens Jaques in early 2007 to pilot a new pro bono program in the Mallesons Brisbane office called the Cyber Volunteer Project. Following the success of the pilot the project was gradually rolled out nationally to each of the capital cities where Mallesons has offices. The Cyber Volunteer Project is now held in the Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Brisbane and Canberra Mallesons offices. Each of these offices hold two hour weekly sessions (with the exception of Canberra who holds their sessions on a fortnightly basis) where cyber volunteers answer Lawmails, update the information provided on the NCYLC's Lawstuff website and occasionally undertake discrete policy tasks. Cyber volunteers are solicitors and other Mallesons staff as well as other organisations with close links to Mallesons (such as Telstra and the Australian National University).

Cyber volunteers report that they enjoy working on this pro bono project for a number of reasons, including that it expands their legal knowledge, it is helping young people and it provides a change from their everyday legal work.

The Cyber Volunteer Project Officer co-ordinates the volunteer sessions with a Key Contact at each Mallesons office. As a result of the project, the NCYLC's capacity to respond to Lawmails and update the information on its Lawstuff website has significantly increased. The NCYLC is grateful for Mallesons continued involvement with the project.

Training

In January 2009, Kim Ivantsoff replaced Julianne Elliot as the new Cyber Volunteer Project Officer. Since January 2009 over 50 new cyber volunteers have joined the project. This brings the total number of Mallesons' cyber volunteers participating in the project to over 150.

The Cyber Volunteer Project Officer has responsibility for training the cyber volunteers. The NCYLC conducted onsite and refresher training at least once in the past year in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Perth. The training included an introduction to working with a community legal centre, the NCYLC's relationship with Mallesons, how to use the NCYLC's websites and guidance on writing Lawmails and reviewing the legal information provided on the Lawstuff website.

Lawmails

The table below provides a snapshot of the Lawmails answered by cyber volunteers for the period 1 July 2009 – 31 June 2009.

	Number of Lawmails answered by NCYLC (total)	Number of Lawmails answered by cyber volunteers (in specified Mallesons' office)
QLD	121	132
NSW	310	186
VIC	140	111
ACT	52	57
WA	75	79
NT	9	N/A
SA	42	N/A
TAS	11	N/A

Of the Lawmailers who completed the NCYLC's client satisfaction survey there has continued to be a 100% satisfaction rate.

Lawstuff

Cyber volunteers have been involved in the ongoing process of updating and writing the online legal information provided on the NCYLC's website Lawstuff. Involving cyber volunteers has increased the NCYLC's capacity to update this information. In addition, with the assistance of our Mallesons secondees, and our Sydney Mallesons Key Contact, Sarah Penman, lawyers in Mallesons Sydney office have also been involved in updating and writing this online content, in their own time, in addition to during session times.

With Mallesons assistance from January 2009 the NCYLC has updated over 440 pages of the material on Lawstuff and created 90 new pages of legal information on the site.

Policy

Cyber volunteers have assisted with numerous policy projects this year, such as:

- preparing an Implementation Table summarising the extent to which the recommendations made in the *Seen and Heard Report* have been implemented in Australia;
- preparing briefing notes on on-line grooming of children;
- preparing case notes on cases with child rights implications; and
- attending seminars and lectures which focus on children's rights and preparing briefing notes in relation to the same.

Kim Ivantsoff

MALLESONS STEPHEN JAQUES

The National Children's and Youth Law Centre has now been partners with Mallesons Stephen Jaques since 2001.

The relationship has included targeted pro bono legal assistance, financial assistance, policy development, volunteering and other contributions. The success of our partnership with Mallesons was recognised at the 2005 Law and Justice Foundation of NSW Awards where it was awarded the Pro Bono Partnership Award. Judges commented that they were particularly impressed by the depth of support provided by this partnership.

Two of the key features of the partnership are:

- the placement of a Mallesons lawyer with the NCYLC for three month periods. This considerably improves the NCYLC's capacity to meet its objectives for children.
- the Mallesons Cyber Volunteer Project – where lawyers and other staff of Mallesons, as well as other organisations with close links to Mallesons (such as Telstra and the Australian National University), volunteer on rosters to assist the NCYLC answer Lawmails, update and prepare Lawstuff content and work on policy projects. This project has now been rolled out nationally and sessions are held in each of the capital cities where Mallesons has offices (i.e. Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Brisbane and Canberra).

The NCYLC and Mallesons are in the process of exploring several other projects to further advance the rights of children and young people in Australia.

Our relationship continues to strengthen and we thank Mallesons Stephen Jaques for their ongoing support and commitment and look forward to the further development of this partnership.

International and Social Justice Interns

The NCYLC continues its involvement in the UNSW Social Justice Project. The Social Justice Project was established in 2000 through the UNSW Law School and part of its role is to develop and coordinate joint activities on social justice issues with other centres, staff and students at the University.

The Social Justice Intern Program gives UNSW law students an opportunity as part of their course to gain experience working at one of the Centre's affiliated with the Law Society. Students undertake specific projects as well as contribute to the tasks involved in the day to day operations of the Centre.

Communications Report

Media Comment

We have increased our Media presence with staff asked for comment and quoted across all news mediums including SMH, JJJ, ABC, 3AW (with Derryn Hinch!), Hack ABC, Daily Telegraph, 2SM, 2GB, 2UE Radio News, FBI, ABC Radio Sydney, ABC Brisbane, Channel Nine, Radio National, ABC TV, AAP.

Conferences, Workshops and Trainings

During the year the Centre attended or spoke at various conferences, workshops and seminars for networking and / or community legal education. These included:

- Keynote Address to Protecting All Children Today Conference, Brisbane QLD.
- Presentations to Diplomacy Training Program Indigenous Advocates Workshops
- Presentation at Human Rights Commission to China Legal Aid delegation
- Presentation to Singapore Legal Aid Office
- Presentation with Child Rights Taskforce for Federal Attorney General
- Presentation to Australian Children's Commissioners, Adelaide
- Presentation to Philanthropy Australia, Melbourne
- Presentation to Cyber Space Law Centre Forum on Cyber Safety and Net Filtering
- Address to UNICEF J Rap Forum, NSW Parliament House
- Gave evidence to Productivity Commission Hearing on Parenting Leave
- Gave evidence to NSW Parliament Committee Hearing on Same Sex Adoption
- Gave evidence to Victorian Parliament Committee Hearing on Youth Offending
- Gave evidence to Parliament Human Rights Committee Hearing on Asia Pacific
- Training for Volunteers from Mallesons in Syd, Melb, Bris, Per and Canb
- Consultations with ACCC Consumer Liaison Staff
- Consultations with ACCC Commissioner Peter Kell
- Attended UNSW Social Justice Interns Presentations
- Attended International Conference on Child Labour + Exploitation, Cairns, QLD
- Attended International Conference on Human Rights and Policing, Melbourne
- Attended Alchemy launch by FAR Social Enterprise, Sydney
- Attended Australian Youth Forum launch by Federal Youth Minister, Adelaide
- Attended Q&A launch by FAR Social Enterprise, Melbourne
- Attended launch of Australian Law Reform Commission launch of Privacy Report
- Attended launch of ARACY Report Card on Wellbeing of Young Australians
- Attended NACLC Conference in Darwin
- Attended National Youth Advocacy Network meeting in Darwin
- Attended Sydney Centre for International Law Seminar by Ivan Shearer
- Attended Sydney Centre for International Law Seminar by Kiernan Fitzpatrick
- Attended Matrix Training at Squiz
- Attended Youth Health Forum at Westmead
- Attended ACT Now Community Seminar
- Attended ARACY web seminar on children's agency
- Attended Shopfront Legal Centre's 15th birthday
- Attended DTP Training cruise
- Attended RMIT Lecture on Youth and Media

Consultative Memberships

The Centre regularly contributed through its membership of the following:

- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Consultative Committee
- Australian Clearing House for Youth Studies Consultative Group
- ARACY Reference Group on Youth Engagement Research Project

Consultations with Government

- Consulting with Federal Attorney General's Department on child rights reporting
- Consulting with Federal Department of Broadband Communication & Digital Economy on cyber safety and net filtering
- Consulting with Federal Communication Minister's adviser on cyber safety and net filtering
- Consulting with Federal Youth Minister's adviser on various issues
- Consulting with Australian Communications & Media Authority on cyber safety
- Consulting with Victorian Department of Justice on Peer Panels
- Consulting with South Australian Department of Further Education on Youth law
- Consulting with New South Wales Department of Education on disability discrimination

Consultations

In building networks and policy work, we met with partners around the nation::

- Australian Youth Affairs Coalition Executive meeting, Adelaide
- Youth Advocacy Network Partners
 - Youthlaw Victoria and Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
 - SCALES WA
 - ACT Youth Law Centre
 - Youth Affairs Council of SA and Service to Youth Council SA
 - Legal Aid Qld and Nathan Frick, Darwin
- Child Rights Taskforce Partners
 - Oxfam
 - UNICEF
 - Save the Children
 - Australian Human Rights Commission (for Human Rights Consultation)
- Human Rights Law Resource Centre,
- NACLC Human Rights Network,
- Defence for Children International
- Indigenous Human Rights Network
- National Indigenous Youth Movement
- United Nations Youth Association
- Australian Council For International Development
- Mallesons – Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra
- Federal Attorney General's Department
- Reichstein Foundation
- NSW Department of Disability Ageing & Home Care
- Gilbert & Tobin
- Truman Hoyle
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre
- FAR Social Enterprise

- Twenty Ten Youth Association, NSW
- The Change Agency
- The Inspire Foundation
- Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria)
- Consumer Telecommunications Network (and its successor ACCAN)
- National Association of Community Legal Centres
- Victorian Student Representatives Council
- Rights 4 Fosterkids
- Paul Mason – Commissioner for Children, Tasmania
- Ms Pam Simmons, Children’s Guardian, South Australia
- Office of Children’s Commissioner, Western Australia
- Brian Tee, Parliamentary Secretary for Justice, Victoria
- Frank Brennan, National Human Rights Consultation

Consultations with Research Institutions

- Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne
- Cyber Space Law and Policy Centre
- Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young Australians (Per, Syd, Canb)
- Judy Cashmore, University of Sydney
- Mary Crock, University of Sydney
- Lyndon Ormond-Parker and Jane Freemantle, University of Melbourne
- John Tobin, University of Melbourne
- Anna Copeland, Murdoch University
- Michele Slatter, Flinders University
- Sally Nathan and Nicola Wenk, UNSW
- Harry Blagg, Criminologist
- Sally Varnham, UTS

Networks and Memberships

The NCYLC has maintained an active involvement in the following networks:

- Child Rights Taskforce (co-convened with UNICEF)
- National Youth Advocacy Network – convened
- National Association of Community Legal Centres
- Youth Justice Coalition – NSW
- Technology & Well Being Round Table

Policy Submissions

The Centre has made the following submissions in the past year:

- The Role of the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal in a Changing World – President’s review
- Joint Submission (with UNICEF, DCI and Save the Children) – National Human Rights Consultation
- Development of National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women
- Senate Inquiry – Inquiry into Access to Justice – Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
- Development of National Child Protection Framework
- Green Paper on Homelessness
- Further Submission on Draft Report: Paid Parental Leave – Productivity Commission
- Australian Youth Forum Consultation
- Graffiti Prevention Framework – Department of Justice – Victoria
- Wood Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection – New South Wales
- Parliamentary Inquiry into Serious Youth Offending – Victoria
- Parliamentary Inquiry into Same Sex Adoption – New South Wales

The Centre has also been involved in the following policy work:

- Red Cross – Save-a-Mate Program
- Position Paper – Bullying of Children and Young People.
- Report on Perception of Children and Youth in Government Policy.
- Research and Briefing Paper – Victorian Police Review of Antisocial Behaviour and Violence in Public Places.
- Report and Briefing Paper – Proportionality of Sentencing and the Restorative Justice Paradigm – Crime and Justice Research Network.
- Report and Briefing Paper – Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission – Operation of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.
- Report and Briefing Paper – Equality Before the Law Benchbook - Judicial Commission of NSW.
- Report and Briefing Paper – Attorney General’s Report on Improving Australia’s Federal Court System.
- Report and Briefing Paper – Child Protection Services in New South Wales.
- Briefing Paper – ABC Radio Hack – Getting Out of Juvenile Detention.
- Briefing Paper – Youth Electoral Study – Australian Electoral Commission.
- Position Paper – Binge Drinking.
- Briefing Paper – Guidelines for the management of health and safety risks posed to schools by a student with a history of violent behaviour - NSW.
- Briefing Paper – Child Pornography.
- Position Paper – National Safe School Framework.
- Report and Briefing Paper – Education in Juvenile Detention Centres.
- Position Paper – Raising the School Leaving Age in NSW.
- Briefing Paper – ALRC Privacy Report 108.
- Briefing Paper – Sterilisation of girls without informed consent.
- Briefing Paper – Inquiry into adoption by same-sex couples.

Save the Children Fiji – Consultancy

During the course of this year, the Centre conducted a Consultancy for Save the Children Fiji. The work involved the following tasks:

- Review of Data – Oct 08
- Consultation with Staff and Board and stakeholders in Fiji – Nov 08
- Consultation with Stakeholders – Nov- Dec 08
- Draft Strategic Plan – Dec 08
- Review with Board and Staff in Fiji – Dec 08
- Draft Commentary and Revise Strategic Plan – Dec 08 / Jan 09
- Further revision of Commentary and Plan – Jan to March 09
- Final Planning Workshop with Staff and Board in Fiji – June 09

Here is an excerpt from the commentary for the Strategic Plan produced:

“As an organisation committed to improve the world for children, Save the Children Fiji cannot ignore the adult world in which children live.

As a nation, Fiji has made some progress in developing a stable political environment that values human rights (including the rights of children), supports development and recognises the principles of equity and non-discrimination.

It is well recognised that political stability, democratic freedoms and the rule of law are important characteristics of those societies which are best equipped to provide and protect the rights of all those who live in those societies.

We also live in an international community and all nations share a common responsibility to promote fairness and support development. At the commencement of the twenty-first century, the international community still faces enormous challenges in ending conflict and ensuring peace, reducing the effects of poverty and disease and addressing the impact of climate change and terrorism.

Fiji is a part of this international community and will have the benefits (and face the challenges) of relationships with other nations and peoples and the attention of the international community. Save the Children Fiji is itself a member of one of the most respected international non-government organisations (the International Save the Children Alliance) that operates in this international community.

Save the Children Fiji is well placed to assess the impact that national government policy (or the absence of policy), natural disasters or the actions of humans can have upon the children that we are committed to protecting and providing for. Children in Fiji are not immune from the effects of poverty, discrimination, neglect, violence and abuse.

It is in this context that we develop our work – as we plan, act and learn.”

Lawstuff and Lawmail

Since its inception, Lawstuff and Lawmail have provided a vital avenue of service provision to children and young people. Children continue to demonstrate an eagerness for information and the website Lawstuff and the Lawmail service to search out answers to questions that they have not been able to find elsewhere or to test information that they have been given from other sources (peers, teachers, parents, media, other internet sources).

We understand that children like to access sites that are designed specifically for them. They gain access to the internet either at home, youth centres, libraries, cafes, school or at a friend's place). They often prefer the anonymity that the service provides.

From 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009, the Centre provided responses to 935 Lawmails.

We experienced a further decrease in the number of LawMails answered by the Centre. Again as we continue to review and improve the information on Lawstuff, this may be due to children and young people finding the information that they seek for themselves.

The gender breakdown remains roughly the same. The age breakdown indicates the average age is increasing – although the number of younger children asking questions is also increasing. This may reflect a greater capacity to use the internet at an earlier age.

Our work on the content, tone and accuracy of the responses continues to give us positive feedback from young people. As well as providing accurate information based on up-to-date research, responses seek to use language that is clear and easy to understand, tone that is appropriate to the age of the reader and treats the reader with respect and good humour.

Lawmail and Lawstuff are now given significant focus as the Centre's primary service activities. Both services rely on both onsite and cyber volunteers. All LawMails and Lawstuff text updates are signed off either by the Director or the Cyber Volunteer Project Officer.

The Centre continues to build its infrastructure and capability in order to extend the reach of our services whilst maintaining the professional standards of the Centre.

Website Statistics for the period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009

Lawstuff website

Visits: 1st 6 months = 55,807 2nd 6 months = 59,670 Year Total = 115,477
Page Views: 1st 6 months = 519,820 2nd 6 months = 653,966 Year Total = 1,173,786
Hits: 1st 6 months = 1,579,813 2nd 6 months = 1,960,580 Year Total = 3,540,393
Average Time per Visit: 6m 19 seconds
Average page views per visit: 9.2

NCYLC website:

Visits: 1st 6 months = 31,970 2nd 6 months = 33,498 Year Total = 65,468
Page Views: 1st 6 months = 124,008 2nd 6 months = 129,442 Year Total = 253,450
Hits: 1st 6 months = 246,213 2nd 6 months = 252,543 Year Total = 498,756
Average Time per visit: 5 minutes 29 seconds
Average page views per visit: 3.8

Where do our visitors come from?

Lawstuff:

1. Google (36%)
2. Live search (8%)
3. ReachOut (4%)
4. Bursting the bubble (3%)
5. CYH (3%)
5. Other sites (47%)

NCYLC

1. Google (45%)
2. Lawstuff (20%)
3. HREOC (7%)
4. Webwombat (7%)
5. Live search (4%)
6. Other sites (18%)

What search terms do they use to find us?

Lawstuff:

1. Law Stuff
2. Law stuff
3. www.lawstuff...
4. lawstuff.org...
5. Legal stuff
6. Australian laws
7. Laws in Australia
8. lawstuff.org
9. Know your rights
10. legal rights

NCYLC:

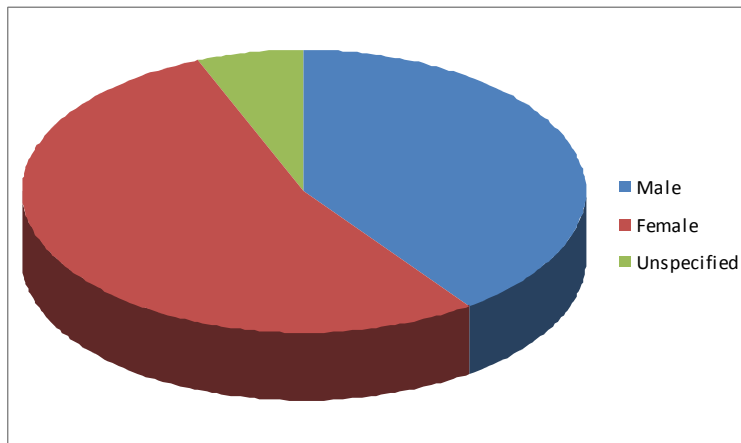
1. croc
2. national children youth law centre
3. ncylc
4. kerry graham
5. national childrens youth law centre
6. what up
7. what up croc
8. lawmail
9. croc download
10. whats up

LawMail Statistics for Period: 1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009

A total of 935 Lawmails were received (compared to 1102 in the previous year)

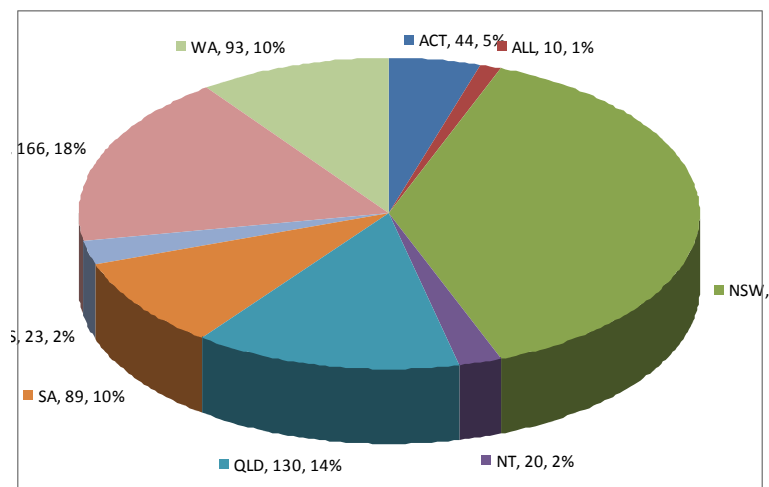
By sex

Male	374
Female	505
Unspecified	56



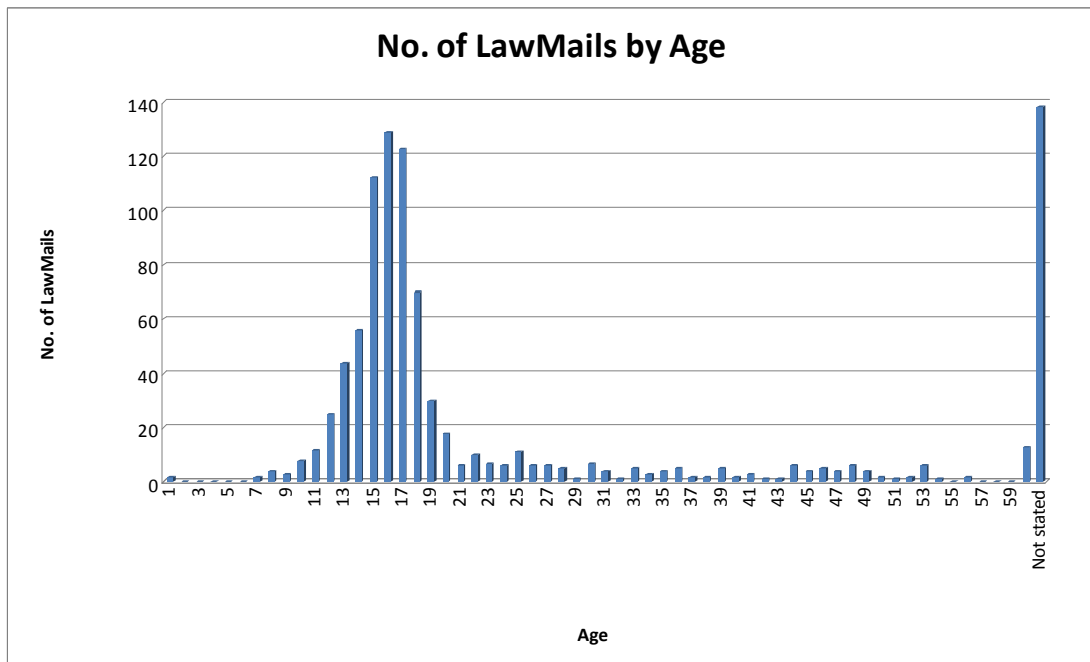
By State/Territory

ACT	44
ALL	10
NSW	360
NT	20
QLD	130
SA	89
TAS	23
VIC	166
WA	93



By age

Under 8	4
8	4
9	3
10	8
11	12
12	25
13	44
14	56
15	112
16	129
17	123
18	70
19	30
20	18
21 to 29	58
30 to 39	38
40 to 49	36
50 to 59	14
60 and over	13
Not stated	138



By Topic

Topic	Previous Year		Current Year	
family law + relationships	163	15%	161	17%
leaving home	100	9%	100	10%
police powers + criminal law	70	6%	74	7%
school powers	69	6%	69	7%
alcohol, drugs, smoking, tattoos, piercing	67	6%	61	7%
other	125	11%	55	6%
age of consent + sex	54	5%	49	5%
employment	45	4%	36	4%
Bullying, harassment + discrimination	36	3%	30	3%
motor vehicles + riding + transport	35	3%	29	3%
assault + domestic violence	32	3%	28	3%
consumer including internet	14	1%	28	3%
prank	20	2%	27	3%
assignment	74	7%	26	3%
sexual assault	32	3%	23	3%
care + protection	20	2%	23	3%
Health including pregnancy	14	1%	22	3%
law and process	20	2%	17	2%
property + goods	17	2%	17	2%
privacy + FOI	10	1%	14	2%
change of name + passports	7	1%	12	1%
Child rights	New	Category	11	1%
feedback	13	1%	9	1%
adult	37	3%	5	0%
immigration	9	1%	4	0%
counselling referrals	9	1%	3	0%
Marriage	6	1%	2	0%
	1102	100%	935	100%

Notes

1. In the event of a Lawmail with multiple issues, we categorise according to what appears to be the most serious concern.
2. Lawmails recorded as feedback does not reflect the full extent of our feedback system.
3. The enquiries that we receive in relation to sexual assault, assault + domestic violence and care + protection require special attention in view of the personal nature of some of the questions – and the mandatory reporting obligations that exist for most professional settings. There is a balance required between these obligations and the confidentiality required by the lawyer – client relationship. For more detailed information on the Centre’s approach, contact the Director.

Commentary on Lawmail Topics

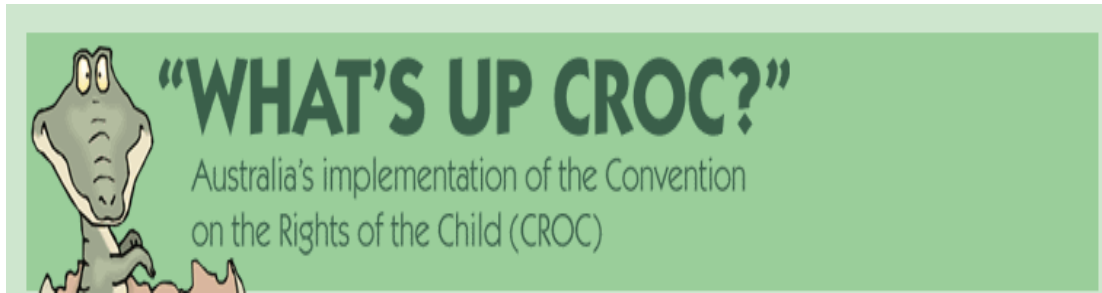
The most popular LawMail topics have been consistent for some years now: Family Law, Leaving Home, Police Powers, School Powers and Lifestyle issues (such as alcohol, drugs, tattoos + piercing)

Over the last five years the greatest number of questions for a topic has been about Family Law. It is clear that children want a say in Family Law proceedings and they want their opinion to count when decisions are made on family breakdown.

Questions about leaving home remain high. These questions come from children aged 13 to 17 but most often from 15 and 16 year olds. A significant number of young people are looking for a greater degree of independence at an earlier age than public policy acknowledges.

Questions about alcohol, drugs, smoking, tattoos & piercing and questions about policing powers and the criminal law have stayed steady. As much of a young person's life is spent at school it is not surprising that we receive a large number of Lawmails on this topic. Children aged 14 to 16 are particularly interested to know their rights in relation to disciplinary measures, appearance (specifically uniform requirements) and bullying.

There does appear to be an increase in questions asked by children about consumer issues.



Child Rights Reporting - the Story So Far

In signing and ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in December 1990, the Australian Government committed to reporting every 5 years on its compliance with the Convention. The monitoring process is undertaken by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (based in Geneva). This process also allows for an Alternative Report to be submitted by the NGO sector in each country – to assist the Committee in examining the Government Report.

The Australian Government submitted its 1st Report in December 1995. The Shadow Report was prepared and submitted by Defence for Children International Australia (DCI) the following year with assistance from a range of organisations including the fledgling National Children's and Youth Law Centre. The UN Committee issued its Concluding Observations in September 1997.

Australia combined its 2nd & 3rd Reports. This was submitted in March 2003. The UN Committee then set a date for Australia's attendance before the Committee (September 2005) and invited the NGO sector to submit and present its Shadow Report before the Committee (at a 'pre-sessional' hearing).

The National Centre coordinated the preparation and presentation of this Shadow Report in partnership with DCI. With support from UNICEF, Oxfam and others, we sent a delegation to attend the pre-sessional hearing in June 2005. In August 2005, the UN Committee presented the Australian Government with a List of Issues which asked questions not answered by the Government's Report.

The Australian Government responded to the List of Issues and attended before the Committee in September 2005. In October 2005 the UN Committee issued its Concluding Observations on Australia's performance - a diplomatically worded indictment of the Government's inaction on child rights.

The Current Reporting Cycle

The UN Committee asked the Australian Government to provide its 4th Report in January 2008. The Australian Government finally presented the Report in June 2009. The UN Committee has set the following timetable for the reporting process

Alternative Report due – mid 2011

Pre-sessional Hearing for Alternative Report and NGO delegation – September 2011

Government attendance before the UN Committee – January / February 2012

The Centre will work with the Child Rights Taskforce on the 4th NGO Report.