

The Chair
Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

socialhousing@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

**Inquiry into Social, Public and Affordable Housing
Response to question on notice**

On 12 May 2014, I gave evidence on behalf of Legal Aid NSW to the Select Committee's Inquiry into Social, Public and Affordable Housing and was asked the following question on notice during the hearing:

Ms Barham: *How many people do you see each year and do you have a breakdown of their circumstances? ... Please identify the issue or complaint and the advocacy sought.*

In answer, I advise that Legal Aid NSW's computerised record system is able to provide information about the services we have provided rather than the number of distinct clients and their circumstances. In 2013, we provided the following number of services in civil law¹:

- **192,180 information services** An information service is an initial inquiry about legal problems and processes, and may include the provision of printed material and/or a referral. We do not record the subject matter of these services.
- **36,667 advice services** Our legal advice is available at no cost and is not means tested. Our lawyers will help clients identify their problem, inform them of their legal rights and obligations and help them to understand what course of action can be taken. In 2013, the ten highest number of civil law advices were in the following identified legal matter types:
 1. Work development orders and fines
 2. Debt owed by client
 3. Consumer credit
 4. Motor vehicle property damage
 5. Insurance
 6. Mental health - civil commitment
 7. Debt owed to client
 8. Unfair dismissal

¹ These statistics include services provided by Legal Aid NSW's in-house staff and by Law Access NSW, a free legal information, referral and limited advice service administered by the Department of Police and Justice, and partly funded by Legal Aid NSW.

9. Immigration – permanent residence
 10. Disability support pension
- **16,752 minor assistance services** This service is provided following an advice and usually involves some basic advocacy or other assistance on behalf of a client, such as drafting letters or other documents, or making telephone calls on a client's behalf to help resolve their problem. In 2013, the ten highest number of civil law minor assistance services were in the following identified legal matter types:
 1. Consumer credit
 2. Work development orders and fines
 3. Debt owed by client
 4. Mortgage
 5. Unfair dismissal
 6. Disability support pension
 7. Insurance
 8. Public tenancy
 9. Consumer goods
 10. Civil – crime related matters (including victims compensation)
 - **1,256 grants of legal aid** Legal Aid NSW provides services of legal representation by way of grants of legal aid. In 2013, the ten highest number of civil law grants were made in the following identified legal matter types:
 1. Guardianship
 2. Sexual Assault Communications Privilege
 3. Forensic patient
 4. Financial management
 5. Disability support pension
 6. Immigration contract
 7. Eviction – public tenancy
 8. Complaint against police
 9. Refugee matters
 10. Mortgage

Legal Aid NSW also makes the point that in our experience, many of these areas of law are interrelated and impact on each other, for example, debt problems can impact on housing issues.

I trust that this information is of assistance to the Select Committee's Inquiry into Social, Public and Affordable Housing.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Hitter
Executive Director, Civil Law Division
Legal Aid NSW

18 June 2014