



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Pro Bono Centre

Mid-Year Report

UQ Pro Bono Centre

2025



Contents

Acknowledgment of Country	2
Director’s Report	3
Strategy 2022-2025	4
Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Justice Project	4
Embedding Cultural Safety in the UQ Pro Bono Centre	5
Multidisciplinary pro bono at UQ	6
Clinical Educator Report	7
Profile and Advocacy	8
Pro Bono in Legal Education, ACU Colloquium 27 November 2024	8
National Indigenous Legal Conference 2-5 December 2024	8
Queensland Pro Bono Lawyers’ Network Meeting 12 March	9
Law Reform Training Session with the Honourable Peter Applegarth AM 21 March.....	9
Pro Bono Panel and Pizza Event 28 March.....	10
QLD Legal Walk LawRight 20 May.....	11
Clinical Legal Education (Teaching and Learning)	12
Pro Bono Legal Work	13
Overview: Applicants and Projects	13
Key projects: Snapshots	14
Queensland Law Reform Commission	14
Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (QSAC) Research	15
Economic Justice Australia – Research support.....	16
Volunteer Support (External Placements)	18
External volunteering snapshot - Caxton Legal Centre.....	18
Law Firm Pro Bono Work Experience Program	19
Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Legal Education Outreach (LEO) Project	19
Case Law Databases	20
UQ Law School Staff and PhD Candidates’ Pro Bono Involvement.....	23



Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Yuggera and Turrbal peoples as the True Owners and Custodians of this land, the waters, and the skies. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

We acknowledge that TC Beirne School of Law sits on stolen land, sovereignty was never ceded, and no treaty has been negotiated.

We acknowledge the Traditional Law and Lore which was practised upon this land for millennia before the common law was forced upon it, and which continues to be practised today. We acknowledge the injustices faced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities as a result of settler law. We recognise their valuable contributions to Community through activism and advocacy and to wider Australian and international society.



This Acknowledgement of Country was drafted as part of a Student-Staff Partnership 'Embedding culturally safe processes, practices and perspectives in the programs and activities of the UQ Pro Bono Centre'. Ruby Traucnieks (student leader), Indi McKeown, Devsi Patel, Christina Gabiana and Grace Brunton worked with 2023 Practitioner-in-Residence Faye Austen-Brown on this project.



Director's Report

We have had a fantastic start to the year, with so many new projects, new students, new leaders and new staff.

It has been wonderful to have a full contingent of staff this semester. Bridget Burton, our Clinical Educator, has taken over coordination of our Clinical Legal Education program and is providing much-needed mentoring and career guidance to our clinical students. Loretta Smyth, our Administration lead, is closely supporting our students and partners, and ensuring our communications are timely and our information systems are rigorously organised. This semester, we welcomed an Administrative Assistant, Georgie Maxwell, to the team. I am grateful to all of the staff for their dedication to our students and to the Centre's important work.

Thanks also to Peter Applegarth, who has become a regular visitor to our Law School; he has addressed and advised our students on more than one occasion during semester 1.

In semester 2, we hope to reintroduce our Practitioner-in-Residence program. It will take a slightly different format: instead of a 12-month residence, it will operate as a three-month secondment during the 13 weeks of semester. This will provide us with additional support so that students in our internal projects can be more closely supervised and mentored. It will also ensure that our students are exposed to new practitioners each semester, with fresh ideas and approaches, and different career paths to provide them with inspiration and information about the range of employment opportunities before them.

We are so proud of the community we are building through the Centre's activities. At the end of 2024, we conducted a survey of students who had participated in Roster projects during the year. We had 48 responses from students, most of whom had participated in our internal projects. These are projects we run from our Pro Bono room each week during semester: there are currently 10 of them, including our case law database projects.

Overall, students said that the best thing about pro bono for them was connecting with other students and developing teamwork skills. This reminded us that the pro bono community we are building in the Centre is one of the most important aspects of the pro bono student experience. We want to foster that by providing a supportive, educational environment where students feel they can make a difference.

And our students are making a difference! This semester, our new NDIS website was finalised and it will soon become available to the public. Next semester, we will launch a new Human Rights case law website, and a new version of our Deaths in Custody website. These online resources make law accessible to the public. Anyone is able to go online and read about past cases – this assists lawyers by cutting down their research time, and provides community members with additional resources to assist them to self-advocate.

Next semester, we plan to expand our Legal Resources team so that we can create both written and audiovisual legal resources for vulnerable population groups, including young people. I look forward to updating you on our progress.

Prof Tamara Walsh



Strategy 2022-2025

Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Justice Project

Our RRR project continues to be a success. The RRR clinical program has now become a fixture at the UQPBC.

This sets us apart from most other universities across Australia. To our knowledge, La Trobe University is the only other metropolitan law school that offers a dedicated RRR clinic.

Our RRR placements are run as a LLB elective (LAWS5180). The students travel to a RRR community legal centre (CLC) and spend two working weeks there. They participate in client interviews, legal research, project work, community engagement, and more, under close supervision. The students undertake an additional three days' work from home after they return.

Over the 2024/25 summer, we placed six students in total. Two students were placed at both TASC Toowoomba and Suncoast Sunshine Coast, one student was placed at Townsville Community Law and another student was placed at Wide Bay Burnett Community Legal Service. Most of these students were of RRR origin themselves and were going home for summer break. These clinics aim to inspire students to consider a career in RRR legal practice, and we have found that the clinics have increased students' rural practise intentions.

As always, the students indicated that they thoroughly enjoyed, and enormously benefitted from, the experience. They said:

Clinical Legal Education is an invaluable experience not offered at every Law School. It is a unique opportunity to work with clients and offer real legal advice before you graduate. The team at the community legal centre work closely with you to provide feedback and advice, and you will surprise yourself with how much you improve over the course of the two weeks. I took the course in my final year and found that it was an opportunity to test my broad knowledge of different areas of law that I had studied, as well as researching areas that I was unfamiliar with.

Student placed in Hervey Bay in January 2025

Prior to clinic I had limited practical experience in the legal field. I was confident in my theoretical knowledge of the law but had not had the opportunity to apply this in the working environment. Clinic afforded me the opportunity to start to develop these skills in a supportive, professional environment. All of the lawyers were genuinely interested in the development of the student and I'm grateful for their mentoring. I was nervous prior to commencement due to my limited experience, but it has given me the confidence to start applying for jobs in the field - something I have been putting off to this point.

Student placed at Suncoast CLC in January 2025

The successes of our RRR clinical placement program have been written about in a journal article by the Centre Director. This paper will appear in the next edition of the *Legal Education Review*.



Embedding Cultural Safety in the UQ Pro Bono Centre

The Centre is committed to culturally appropriate practices that are sensitive to the needs and experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We have been implementing the 'roadmap' produced by our 2023 Staff-Student Partnership (SSP) team. All students complete the AIATSIS Core Cultural Competency Learning Modules prior to commencing clinical legal education placements. Students are invited to identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander when they sign up for Centre projects and we prioritise those students in our allocation process.

We have taken action to progress other goals in the roadmap, including improving the website and building partnerships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations. Those activities are detailed throughout this report.

Walking together

A roadmap towards embedding culturally safe processes at the UQ Pro Bono Centre

Core Cultural Learning Modules

We will require students who are commencing a clinical legal education placement to complete the AIATSIS Core Cultural Learning Modules. We will encourage all pro bono students to complete the modules, and will offer lunchtime sessions to complete these collaboratively.

Community engagement

We will continue to build partnerships with First Nations-led organisations to support their work in improving access to justice in Queensland.

Student Development

We will fund students to attend conferences relating to Indigenous law and legal issues.

Our website

We will feature a page that outlines our commitment to cultural capability, including details our cultural safety research project, resources for students, and our publications and partnerships with First Nations-led organisations.

Advocacy

We will advocate for embedding cultural safety at a School and University-wide level, e.g. access programs, Indigenous the curriculum, recognition of cultural load.

Screening for cultural capability

We will interview students who have applied to volunteer pro bono on a project for a First Nations-led organisation and/or which engages with Indigenous law and legal issues so as to minimise cultural load.

The findings of the 2023 SSP project, 'Embedding culturally safe processes, practices and perspectives in the programs and activities of the UQ Pro Bono Centre', were written up in a journal article this semester. This article was recently published in the [UQ Law Journal](#).

Congratulations to the team, led by law student Ruby Traucnieks!



Multidisciplinary pro bono at UQ

One of the UQPBC's priorities is to increase our level of engagement with staff and students from other schools and faculties. This semester, several of our partnerships have continued:

UQ School of Anthropology and Fryer Library

Sadly, our partnership with the UQ School of Anthropology and the Fryer Library, which would have supported the Queensland Truth Telling and Healing Inquiry, did not progress.

However, in February 2025, Bridget and Tamara met with the Director of First Nations Strategy at the Queensland State Archives, to see if we can assist with their work. We are hopeful this will be the start of a new partnership so we can draw on our wonderful resources at UQ for the benefit of First Nations Australians.

UQ School of Business

We acknowledge with thanks the tireless work of Joshua Hartmann, Senior Web Application Developer in the Business School, on our Deaths in Custody project. Josh's new version of the Deaths in Custody website is complete, and the Deaths in Custody Team is currently uploading content in preparation for its release in June 2025.

UQ Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Information Technology

Krisna Bou, a student in EAIT, has created an entire website for the NDIS project so we can make our NDIS case law database available to the public. We formally recognised Krisna's contribution to our Centre at the Law Awards with a Certificate of Appreciation.



Photo: Advisory Board Chair Joanne Rennick presents Krisna Bou with his award.



Clinical Educator Report

This has been my first full semester back at UQ and I feel I'm starting to understand the rhythm of the environment again, and to get a handle on the key priorities for this new role. This has also been a period of forward thinking and looking at opportunities for development, particularly within the clinical program.

As well as supporting Tamara with the student pro bono projects featured throughout this report, and looking after the clinical course, I have spent significant time with the first-year cohort this semester, which has been a real pleasure. I am looking after three weekly workshop groups in the 'first year skills workshops' section of the foundations of law subject and presented five sessions in O Week to new students (with assistance from alumni Anna Reynolds from Caxton Legal Centre and Sienna McInnes-Smith from Legal Aid at four of those). I have also engaged with early year students in other ways including facilitating two panel sessions on pro bono and sitting on one myself about legal careers.

There have been many opportunities this semester to build or consolidate relationships with partners and within the university. It was a nice full circle moment for me to host the Chief Justice of the PNG Supreme and National Courts earlier in the year after having been given such wonderful hospitality when I visited PNG during my time at UQ previously.

The relationship development work undertaken by the whole team has also led to an upswing in project opportunities for students, with larger numbers able to participate in both out-placed and in-placed projects. January and February were particularly busy with large numbers of students taking up out-placed volunteer opportunities with existing and new partners.

I have also enjoyed seeing students out in community in their pro bono projects, as well as in clinics. I particularly enjoyed watching the student group providing community education to Elders on a project with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health's (UIIH) legal team. It was also great to pop along to court to watch part of a case being run by Caxton Legal Centre, and to witness PBC student volunteers integrated into the legal team for the hearing.

I have also begun thinking about research to support the work of the Pro Bono Centre as well as legal assistance sector lawyers in their human rights work. We have access to an incredible suite of resources here at UQ, including colleagues across the university, time and library resources, and I'm keen to use this privilege to continue to be useful to the people and issues I care deeply about.

Bridget Burton



Profile and Advocacy

Pro Bono in Legal Education, ACU Colloquium | 27 November 2024

In November 2024, Tamara spoke at the Australian Catholic University's national colloquium on pro bono in legal education. Delegates were surprised at the level of commitment to the Centre shown by the Law School, and the extent of our students' commitment to pro bono activities.

National Indigenous Legal Conference | 2-5 December 2024

In December last year we received a philanthropic donation to mark the retirement from the Bench of the Pro Bono Centre's outgoing Patron (and continuing dear friend) Peter Applegarth. We used that money to support two First Nations students to attend the National Indigenous Legal Conference in Naarm Melbourne.

One of the students reflected on the experience.



In December of last year, I had the opportunity to attend the National Indigenous Legal Conference (NILC) in Naarm (Melbourne). It was an incredible 3 days, full of learning, connection, and community.

The conference program included sessions about treaty-making and truth-telling in Victoria, reforms being made in the native title space, hearing from community organisations that work with our young mob in detention centres, and strength-based approaches to delivering legal services for all mob.

A stand-out session for me was a yarn between Gunditijmara Elders about their peoples' history in fighting against the destruction of their cultural heritage. They shared stories of growing up with staunch Blak Matriarchs who fought for their Country and raised the next generation to do the same. It reminded me of the importance of grassroots advocacy for our people.

On a personal level, the conference allowed me to connect with other blakfulla law students from across the Country and build a stronger sense of purpose in terms of my career pathway. It is no secret that a law degree can be a long slug, but the conference reminded me of my purpose. I am equipping myself with the skills and knowledge to work with my mob, to create better outcomes for ourselves and our communities.

I would like to thank the UQ Pro Bono Centre and donors for providing me with this incredible opportunity.



Queensland Pro Bono Lawyers' Network Meeting | 12 March

Tamara was invited to attend the March meeting of the Queensland Pro Bono Lawyers' Network. This was a wonderful opportunity to inform the profession of the work our students do, and the extent of the UQ Law School's commitment to pro bono and access to justice. In attendance were members of the Advisory Board, Joanne Rennick and Robert Reed, and other friends of the Centre, including past and present students.

Law Reform Training Session with the Honourable Peter Applegarth AM | 21 March

In Semester 1, 2025, we increased our support for student-led law reform submission writing and created an opportunity for any interested students to join a dedicated law reform team. Students were given the opportunity to receive training from Peter Applegarth in legal writing, writing for law reform purposes and writing in a team.

Students then formed self-directed teams to research and make submissions or write letters on any policy matter of interest to them. Their initial projects have been to:

- write a submission to the Queensland parliamentary committee on the expansion of 'adult crime adult time' changes to the youth justice regime. Their submission refers to established successful alternatives, and has been [published on the Queensland Parliament website](#).
- work on a submission to the Australian Parliament on whistleblower protections.
- write a letter to the Queensland regulator of retirement villages to recommend improvements to the design of, and information in, disclosure materials, to reduce the risk of financial exploitation of older people.



Pro Bono Panel and Pizza Event | 28 March

On 28 March 2025 two former Pro Bono Centre students, Rachna Nagesh and Maddie Jensen, joined two current students Liisa Kuru and Jayden Lavatai, to talk to other current students about pro bono and legal careers. The pro bono pizza panel is an annual event, aimed at students new to the UQ Law School.



Highlights including hearing from Rachna and Maddie about the way projects they undertook as undergraduates shaped the practitioners they have grown into.

Jayden and Liisa also spoke about their pro bono contributions, in particularly the longer-term projects they have both engaged in. Liisa, for example, has been with the PBC/Caxton human rights case note project for five years and now leads that team.

The student audience was smaller than usual, with the event having been shifted from two weeks prior due to the cyclone. However, the level of student engagement was high and many wanted to know how they could get involved. Discussion continued into the evening over pizza. Several students in attendance have now joined, or have applied to join, projects.



QLD Legal Walk | LawRight | 20 May



To celebrate National Pro Bono Day on the 20th of May, the UQ PBC participated in LawRight's Annual Legal Walk with colleagues and partners.

The Queensland Legal Walk raises funds to support LawRight services, which provide access to justice for people representing themselves in court, and those

experiencing disadvantage or homelessness. This year, 11 students joined the Centre team for a 5km walk looping from the Supreme Court of Queensland to Southbank and back. Many other Centre students walked with the CLCs where they work or volunteer. The walk was led by Chief Justice of Queensland, the Honourable Helen Bowskill.

Every Day is a Pro Bono Day | Panel Event | 20 May

To mark National Pro Bono Day 2025, the Centre hosted a panel of guest speakers to share insights with students on the role pro bono work plays in access to justice and human rights. The panel featured Peter Applegarth AM, Leanne Collingburn, Josh Underwood, and Abi Ketheeswaran.



Clinical Legal Education (Teaching and Learning)

Around 100 students each year pass through our clinical legal education program. Many students take this course in their final or penultimate year at university, making it a capstone opportunity to consolidate their learning before they move into practice. In Semester 1, 2025 we placed 43 students into 10 clinics.

A new clinic has joined the Brisbane based group in Semester 1 this year; the generalist legal tasks clinic (also called the form-filling clinic) at YFS Legal. This clinic assists clients to take the next step in their matter by helping with the necessary forms. Students from this clinic were also able to support a wills and enduring powers of attorney clinic day at Logan Elders with pro bono lawyers, assisting to prepare these important documents for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander older people living in the Logan area.

There are nine other clinics around Brisbane, at Caxton Legal Centre, YFS Legal, Prisoners Legal Service, LawRight, the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service and Tenants Queensland.

We are grateful to the many lawyers in these centres for the support, teaching and guidance they provide to UQ students every semester.



(Groups from left to right: Tenants Qld, YFS Generalist Tasks Clinic, LawRight Mater Clinic)

'This semester UQ students have been working with LawRight through our partnership with the Mater Young Adult Health Centre. This service has enabled the students to work directly with children and young people who have chronic health conditions and are experiencing financial hardship to resolve everyday legal matters relating to their money, housing, and experiences of violence.

Students have shown significant growth in their interpersonal skills during their time with LawRight, both working with each other and LawRight staff and their confidence and capabilities interacting with clients. The students play a valuable and significant role in the work we do with the Mater, allowing us to support more children and young people in a very busy hospital setting – a challenge the students have all risen to and managed with enthusiasm.'

Kate Adnams (LawRight)



Pro Bono Legal Work

Overview: Applicants and Projects

We have officially surpassed 1000 students signed onto the roster, with the exact number as of May 2025 being 1,150 students. This represents around two thirds of the UQ Law student cohort.

The Centre continues to expand its capacity to facilitate opportunities for our students. In previous years, the Centre has enabled 200-250 students to undertake pro bono work across approximately 50 projects. So far this year, we have already commenced 38 roster projects. In the first four months of this year, we placed at least 170 students, including:

- 58 students newly placed in external organisations;
- 40 students across four case law database teams;
- 70+ students across 11 other internal projects; and
- 4 students in the work experience program at law firms.

We continue to maintain strong relationships with more than 20 organisations and entities, who engage our students in a diverse range of pro bono activities, many of which are profiled in this report. We have also continued to build new working relationships with not-for-profit organisations such as The VacSeen Project Limited, who provide outreach health care and services to people who are experiencing homelessness and other under-served groups.

We have another wonderful cohort of student leaders heading up our large ongoing projects. They have the difficult task of managing their peers and they do us proud with the level of commitment and humility they bring to their role. We make particular mention of Liisa Kuru, who manages the Human Rights Case Notes project which has 18 student members, and a new website being launched this year.





Key projects: Snapshots

Queensland Law Reform Commission

The popular Queensland Law Reform Commission research project ran again in Semester 1, 2025. This semester there have been two research teams.

One group is working with the QLRC criminal defences team. They have looked at the complex problem of aggrieved women who are misidentified as perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

The other group is working with the QLRC non-fatal strangulation team. They are summarising key reported non-fatal strangulation cases from jurisdictions with offences comparable to those in Queensland. They are focusing on definitions of the behaviours of concern (e.g. strangle), how the courts have handled issues of consent, and the types of relationships to which the offences apply.

The QLRC provides excellent support to these student groups with an in-person meeting at the outset, a mid-semester catch-up online, regular contact with supervisors, and the opportunity to present key findings directly to the QLRC team in their offices in the city at the end of semester.

Undertaking case law research for non-fatal strangulation offences developed our understanding of the real-world impact that broad or overly specific laws can have on our community...

Beginning the task, our team was challenged in how to conduct our research and the delegation of tasks. However, we quickly overcame this as we not only divided and conquered but we pooled together our skills and collaborated as a team on all areas of the report.

Working with the QLRC on this project has been an invaluable experience. It is quite a different task from what is normally asked of us as law students, and being able to apply our skills in a real-world context has proven both challenging and rewarding.

Taking part in a law reform project is great for broadening your understanding and testing out your skills, with the added benefit of making a real difference, as small as it may seem.



Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (QSAC) Research

After enjoying the opportunity to work with QSAC in 2024, the same (entire) group of students returned to the project in Semester 1, 2025. On this occasion they researched the sentencing of female perpetrators of intimate partner violence, looking at cases and literature focusing on aggravating and mitigating factors, and characteristics of offenders. They will again present their findings to the Secretariat late in May.

Working with the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council on the sentencing of female perpetrators of intimate partner violence has been an incredibly thought-provoking and rewarding experience. Our research challenged many assumptions about intimate partner violence. One of the key challenges we faced was navigating the ambiguity in the courts' application of aggravating and mitigating factors, particularly when trauma, bi-directional violence, and victim-offender overlap were present.

The limited availability of sentencing case law and underdeveloped research in this area in Australia also made it difficult to find clear policy or sentencing precedents. Balancing competing narratives and acknowledging women's accountability without overlooking their experiences of victimisation required careful and critical analysis. Despite these complexities, the project has deepened our understanding of the gendered dimensions of criminal justice and highlighted the importance of nuanced, trauma-informed, and culturally safe approaches to sentencing reform. It's been a privilege to contribute to such timely and meaningful work.

The below photo was taken after the presentation last semester in late November.



Economic Justice Australia – Research support

Over summer, four students volunteered for an intensive week with Economic Justice Australia (EJA) to assist in pulling together research from interviews about social security payment types and impacts on recipients. Each of the students looked at a different aspect of the payment regime: youth allowance, payment amounts, exiting prison, carers and natural disaster payments. The students received great feedback from the team at EJA.

I just wanted to reach out to thank you and the UQ Pro Bono Centre. We remain impressed by the calibre of the students who come to us. The standard of their work and attitude is consistently high... All the students were nuanced in their reflection about preconceptions they held about social security recipients, and how these were challenged during their placement with EJA. We spoke about stigma and presumptions of privilege with all students critically engaged.

Taylah Bell (EJA)



IUIH | Talking to Elders about wills & Enduring Powers of Attorney

A group of four students have been working on a slightly longer-term project with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health's legal team. Over summer, the students, accompanied by an academic staff member and an IUIH lawyer, travelled to two respite centres on Brisbane's northside to engage in a series of conversations with Elders about wills and decision making. They have been working throughout this semester on the final phase of this project, a short factsheet package to support the Elders to maintain and share their legal knowledge with others. This project has been supported by Dr Ruthie Jeanneret as well as PBC staff.

Researching wills and other legal mechanisms that assist with decision-making for people without capacity for this project has given us the opportunity to learn more about a valuable and pertinent area of law we knew little about prior...

It has been a privilege to work alongside IUIH's staff and community members to learn more about the role that the law plays in people's lives, and ways we can talk about the law in community that are informed by this understanding.



PNG Supreme and National Court - coronial jurisdiction and powers

In 2024, a group of students began working on a report on coronial powers in PNG for the PNG Supreme and National Courts. The project was not complete when two of the three students graduated at the end of last year. We have picked that project back up again this semester with the remaining student from the earlier group, Jenna Matus, leading a new team to bring the project to completion.

Jenna was fortunate to meet and share afternoon tea with the Chief Justice of the PNG Supreme and National Courts, Sir Gibbs Salika, when he visited us with some of his team in February 2025. She was able to discuss the project and its direction with him at that time.

This team is supported by Professor Emerita Jennifer Corrin and by staff of the PBC.



Volunteer Support (External Placements)

The Pro Bono Centre assists community legal centres and similar organisations to recruit students to volunteer directly within those organisations. This semester, **58 students** were recruited for these opportunities. Students were placed at:

- HUB Community Legal Centre | **17 students**
- Caxton Legal Centre | **13 students**
- My Community Legal | **2 students**
- Environmental Defenders Office | **4 students**
- Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion (QAI) | **2 students**
- QAI / Clayton Utz | **1 student**
- Refugee and Immigration Legal Service | **8 students**
- The VacSeen Project | **1 student**
- TASC National | **2 students**
- Qld Council for Civil Liberties (QCCL) | **2 students**
- Economic Justice Australia | **4 students**
- QAI – Survey volunteers | **2 students**

External volunteering snapshot - Caxton Legal Centre

Two students volunteered with Caxton Legal Centre to support a test case in the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT). They spent time at Caxton in the month before and after the April 2025 hearing, and attended QCAT during the week-long hearing as part of the litigation team.

Working at Caxton Legal Centre on a human rights case has been one of the most eye-opening experiences of our legal studies so far. The case, which challenges the prolonged detention of children in a watchhouse and its breach of fundamental human rights, gave us a front-row seat to the intersection between law and justice...

The experience has already had a profound impact on us. It has shown us how legal principles, particularly in the area of human rights, can be used as powerful tools for change. Being part of a case that could lead to a possible breakthrough for human rights was both humbling and inspiring, and we are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to contribute to such meaningful work.



Law Firm Pro Bono Work Experience Program

In semester 1 2025, the Pro Bono Centre again partnered with Minter Ellison and Clayton Utz to offer four students the opportunity to attend a pro bono work experience placement. The students attended their respective firms one day per week for seven weeks and were exposed to pro bono legal matters in a range of areas.

If we can secure additional administrative resources in the future, we would like to expand this program as it provides like-minded students and firms with a great opportunity to meet and get to know each other while the students are still early in their studies.

My work experience placement in the MinterEllison Pro Bono and Community Investment team has been both enjoyable and enriching. It allowed me to apply my research skills and interest in commercial law to meaningful, real-world issues. While large commercial law firms are often associated with Pro Bono targets, this experience helped me see the deeper value of community engagement and the tangible impact legal professionals can have beyond billable hours.

I gained a holistic understanding of how Pro Bono work operates within a large firm – from how matters are sourced and allocated, to how different sector teams are encouraged to participate. This experience also gave me insight into the collaborative nature of the firm, and how Pro Bono work serves as a bridge between commercial practice and community contribution.

I would highly recommend this placement to any law student with a passion for social justice who is also considering a career in commercial law. It's a great example of how you can integrate both into a fulfilling legal career.

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence | Legal Education Outreach (LEO) Project

The DFSV program has continued to develop education materials for schools and community groups and has delivered presentations throughout 2024/2025. They are also continuing to explore opportunities to co-design materials and presentations that are relevant to specific populations and community groups, and look forward to developing these relationships throughout 2025. The group has an active student membership, with recruitment rounds receiving strong interest each time.

This project team is supported, and managed, by Dr Rebecca Wallis who provides excellent support and leadership to students interested in this important initiative.



Case Law Databases

The Pro Bono Centre runs four case law database teams: NDIS Appeals with Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion; and the Elder Abuse, Deaths in Care and Human Rights Case Law databases all with Caxton Legal Centre. There are currently 40 students in these projects.

Human Rights Case Law Project | Caxton Legal Centre

One of our largest roster groups is the Human Rights Case Law project. It lost its long serving leader, Laura Rowswell, when she graduated last year, but it has expanded this semester with 12 new students, bringing the total to 18 volunteers.

This group meets weekly to draft case notes on the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld). This project delivers a useful tool for practitioners, researchers, students and members of the public to readily access all published cases that refer to the Act.

NDIS Appeals Database | Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion



The NDIS Appeals database is a collaboration between the Pro Bono Centre and Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion. The database collates key information about NDIS appeal cases allowing users to group cases by various criteria making it easy to see how different types of decisions are being made by the Administrative Review Tribunal (and, previously, the AAT).

For several semesters, this database was an excel spreadsheet internal to QAI. Over the past year, computer science student Krisna

Bou has joined the team to create a [public facing web application](#). The new application has also simplified data entry for the law students.

Krisna received a special award at the UQ law awards ceremony, recognising his significant contribution to this project and to access to justice for people with disabilities.

Credit must also go to project student leader Cleo Shave, who has done a wonderful job guiding this project and her team through a complex transition and in their day-to-day work.

The NDIS Appeals project has been a meaningful experience for our team. Over the last couple of years, we've compiled summaries of review matters for Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion. The project aims to collate relevant information for applicants navigating the NDIS review process and hopefully provide guidance as to legislative requirements under the NDIS Act 2013. Summaries of the matters are now publicly available on the NDIS Appeals Database. Overall, this project has exposed us to administrative law early in our degrees, allowing us to apply knowledge in a practical aspect and gain insight into the workings of NDIS Appeals.





Elder Abuse Database | Caxton Legal Centre

The Elder Abuse Periodical is a partnership between the UQ Pro Bono Centre, Caxton Legal Centre and the Older Persons Legal Services Network. Students prepare case notes on elder abuse cases and publish these in a Periodical format. The Elder Abuse Periodical is now in its third iteration, having published volume one across two issues in 2024.

Issue [one](#) and [two](#) are published on the Pro Bono Centre page of the Law School website.

Unlike most other case note projects, this team collates cases from across a wide range of areas of law, with a common theme of Elder Abuse. This reflects the variety of ways elder abuse appears in legal disputes, including succession law, equity and others.

In 2024 the team was led by Indrani Bose and in 2025 leadership has transferred to Luke Taylor.

The student team are supported by Dr Andrew Fell and staff of the Pro Bono Centre.

Working as part of the UQ Pro Bono Centre's Elder Abuse Case Law Periodical has enabled us to participate in developing the prominent legal issues surrounding Elder Abuse whilst working in an insightful and collaborative team environment. The project has also served to better our legal writing and teamwork skills and has given us confidence that those who are in these difficult positions have greater access to justice.



Deaths in Care Project | Caxton Legal Centre

The Deaths in Care Project helps Caxton Legal Centre and other community legal centres to keep track of coroners' findings in cases where people have died in care, eg. disability care, mental health care and aged care.

Students research coronial inquests into deaths in care in Australia and enter key information into a database. Students in this team are also working towards producing research outputs to highlight some of the findings revealed by their work.

Working on the Deaths in Care Project through the UQ Pro Bono Centre has been a deeply insightful and meaningful experience. The project involves collecting and analysing coronial findings related to reportable deaths in care across Australian jurisdictions. Through this work, I have gained a nuanced understanding of the systemic vulnerabilities within care facilities, where even minor oversights can have devastating consequences. Importantly, I have also seen that some deaths occur despite best efforts, revealing the complex interplay between human error, institutional limitations, and uncontrollable circumstances.

Each report carries unique details and lessons, reinforcing the reality that death is indiscriminate and shaped by diverse, often unpredictable factors. This role has not only allowed me to contribute to a valuable national database aimed at informing reform and risk mitigation but has also challenged my assumptions about how statutory definitions shape inclusion and exclusion. Engaging with cases that fall outside definitional boundaries has highlighted how legal frameworks can unintentionally obscure or exclude vulnerable individuals. Learning from the expertise of long-standing team members has enriched my perspective, and the project has given me a deeper appreciation of both the human and legal complexities involved in addressing deaths in care.

Being a member of the Deaths in Care Project has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my time at law school. It truly inspires me to see passionate young scholars come together and volunteer their time and effort towards making meaningful change in our society.

I joined the Pro Bono Centre because I wanted to feel connected to my community and give back where I could.

When I came across the Deaths in Care project I was hit by the weight of the untold stories and unrepresented data present in coronial reports across the nation. These individuals led rich, unique and complex lives and their care towards the end of their lives is documented through our coronial database. I feel like I am taking part in and writing a piece of history. These are stories that must be told, data that must see the light.

I would implore anyone interested to join the Pro Bono roster and I hope you can gain as much knowledge and passion for the field as I have in my time at the PBC.



UQ Law School Staff and PhD Candidates' Pro Bono Involvement

Most Centre projects are supervised and coordinated by Centre staff, with the help of our Student Leaders. In addition to this, UQ Law academics and PhD students provide academic supervision across some projects.

Academic supervisors undertake a range of tasks, including advising on subject matter, reviewing and editing draft content, proofing case law database entries, and providing overall project management and supervision. We operate an opt-in Staff Pro Bono Roster to identify suitable academic supervisors for upcoming and existing projects.

Current projects that are supported by academics include:

- Dr Andrew Fell
 - Elder Abuse Project
- Dr Thea Voogt
 - Police interaction factsheets/videos for young adults with autism
- Dr Rebecca Wallis
 - Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Education Project
- Dr Ruthie Jenneret
 - Talking to Elders about wills and EPOAs
- Professor Emerita Jennifer Corrin
 - Papua New Guinea Colonial Powers Research

Other staff members help students as needed, including Dr Stevie Martin who helped the law resources student team understand *Gillick* competence during this semester.

Students also receive ad hoc support by external partners for projects that benefit another service or program, or which are student initiated. For example, during this semester staff from the Human Rights Law Centre, Equality Australia and Caxton Legal Centre provided expert feedback and guidance to students working on law reform and community education projects. It is wonderful for students to be exposed to this community approach to public interest legal work.





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