



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Pro Bono Centre

Mid-Year Report

UQ Pro Bono Centre

2026



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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

What a privilege it has been to continue to see our students, and past-students, thrive this semester.

It has been a pleasure to welcome back several alumni as panel members at our events, and to hear about how the Pro Bono Centre helped shape their career paths in law. Seeing past students go on to become supervisors in our Clinical Legal Education Program (LAWS5180) also demonstrates the enormous and lasting impact that student pro bono at UQ can have.

In February, two Centre alumni, Daisy Rice and Marnie Ball, published an [article](#) on prone restraint deaths in custody which they commenced as pro bono students. They have since graduated, but they continued their research after graduation and received due recognition for their work, appearing on radio and in print media.

The contribution made by our students to the important work of the legal assistance sector should not be underestimated. Many of our students undertake more than the recommended amount of pro bono work for practitioners each year, which shows the extent of their commitment to access to justice.

Our law reform project is a particular success and has been a highlight for me during my time as Director. Students have the chance to write to members of parliament and contribute submissions to inquiries on topics of their choosing. Watching them develop skills in legal research, writing and advocacy is a real delight.

It has been wonderful to have Kate Adnams (from LawRight) with us this semester. She has brought an infectious sense of enthusiasm and passion for law and legal education to the role of Practitioner-in-Residence. We are so grateful to her for all she has contributed to the school and our students these past three months.

We have also been fortunate to welcome two new administrative staff members: Donna Moodie (in February) and Rhian Smith (in May). They are such warm, friendly people and we are lucky to have them. We are so sad to say goodbye to Georgie Maxwell, as she moves to Canberra to pursue a career in law. We wish her all the very best. I am so thankful to her for steering the Centre through a time of renewal, as we updated our policies and improved our internal procedures over the summer.

I will be stepping down from the role of Centre Director at the end of this semester, after almost four years back in the role. It has been lovely to come back after so many years and build on what I started almost 20 years ago. I am looking forward to getting back to my teaching and research projects within the school, but I anticipate remaining involved in several Centre projects.

Thank you, as always, to Joanne Rennick (Chair of the UQPBC Advisory Board) and to Professor Rick Bigwood (Dean of Law) for their unwavering support of me, and the Centre. I am excited to see where the Centre heads next, under its new leader.

Prof Tamara Walsh



Clinical Educator Report

Semester one for me includes significant engagement with the incoming first year cohort beginning with speaking to students in small groups during orientation week. I was joined again by Anna Reynolds and Sienna McInnes-Smith for those talks this year.

This semester I have supported five roster project groups; the NDIS, Elder Law and Human Rights database teams; and the QLRC report writing group. The Human Rights database group have made significant progress this semester, building on work commenced last year to identify and plug gaps in the database, bring it up to date, and complete the transition to the new format. That group will launch their database in semester two this year. Credit must go to student leader Liisa Kuru who has been involved in this project since 2021, and who has stepped up over the past 18 months to bring the project to this point. Her leadership has been quite exceptional.

The clinical program this semester has been delightfully stable and routine – it's been wonderful to see so many students enjoying their first experience of community work with capable and experienced supervisors. I've enjoyed having the company of Kate Adnams for many of the clinic visits – Kate is herself an excellent clinical supervisor and we had a lovely tour of the other clinics together. Just before Christmas last year I learned that our 2024 article *Developing Cultural Safety in Law; Clinical Legal Education as a Means of Getting it Done* about the YFS Cultural Safe Criminal Law clinic received a special mention at the Law and Society Conference at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand for its 'pragmatic wayfinding'. It was lovely to see this special clinic recognised for its unique contribution.

Bridget Burton

Practitioner-in-Residence Report

Joining the UQ Pro Bono Centre this semester and working with so many students who have such care and genuine interest in pro bono in their communities has been a wonderful experience.

This semester I supported the Rights of the Child, Homelessness Law, QSAC, Victim of Crime, Youth Justice LEO and Law Reform groups. So many of these student groups worked on projects that related to areas of professional interest, allowing conversations about how the law works in practice and the impact it has on people's lives. Thank you also to Bridget for sharing the clinic visits with me - I have loved hearing from the students about their time in the community sector and the hopes they have for their professional futures.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge the incredible effort of the Pro Bono Centre students, student societies, and rest of the Law School in their fundraising efforts for the Queensland Legal Walk. Whilst the event was unfortunately cancelled due to inclement weather, it showed the strong pro bono culture at UQ and hopefully, a sign that the Law School fundraiser trophy is within reach next year!

Being in the Pro Bono Centre this semester has been wonderful experience and while I will miss my time here, I look forward to seeing, what I am sure will be many of the Pro Bono Centre students, as future colleagues in the legal assistance sector.

Kate Adnams



Profile and Advocacy

End-of-Year Panel Event and Celebration | 31 October 2025

The Pro Bono Centre ended 2025 with a well-attended end of year event on 31 October 2025, bringing together students involved in various pro bono activities. The evening opened with a panel discussion, *Careers in Social Justice*, facilitated by Tamara Walsh, and featuring Kent Blore (Crown Counsel), Kirsty McRuvie (Federal Attorney General's Department, Human Rights Branch), Bridget Burton and Oscar Kawamata, who shared reflections on their professional pathways.

A highlight was the presentation of more than 70 Service Awards, recognising students who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to Pro Bono Centre volunteering across two consecutive semesters.

The strong turnout reflected the community within the Centre, and it was a pleasure to celebrate the individual dedication of our volunteers and the collective strength of the Centre.



National Indigenous Legal Conference | 26 November 2025

The Centre supported student attendance at the 2025 National Indigenous Legal Conference (NILC), held locally in Brisbane this year. Final year law student, Sam Hudson, attended with full funding provided by the Centre.

Sam also participated in the Indigenous Law Students Day. This opportunity supports First Nations students to engage directly with legal practitioners, scholars, and community leaders as they explore critical issues affecting Indigenous peoples and their interactions with the legal system. Sam reflects on his experience below.

In December of last year, I had the privilege of attending the 2025 National Indigenous Legal Conference ('NILC'), and the preceding Law Students' Day, which was held at QUT's Gardens Point campus and Ashurst's Brisbane office, respectively. The workshops and lectures which took place as part of the NILC provided me with an opportunity to put into practice and gain deeper insights into some of the theory taught at Law School. While some of the topics were quite confronting, it was a pleasure to be able to participate in a 'no holds barred' discussion of the legal and justice systems as they relate to Indigenous issues. What stood out for me as part of the NILC, in terms of the speakers that I listened to, was hearing about the constant battle to protect Indigenous cultural and intellectual property ('ICIP'); and some of the strategies being employed, in the ultra-modern age that we now live in, to give legal rights to ICIP – in order to assist in safeguarding it for the benefit of future generations.



BELfest Orientation Week Stall | 17 February 2026

During O-Week, Pro Bono Centre volunteers, supported by PBC Administration Officer Donna Moodie, represented the Centre at the BELfest Stall for the Business, Economics and Law Faculty. The event welcomed approximately 600 new undergraduate and postgraduate students and introduced them to the support and opportunities available throughout their studies at UQ. Our volunteers spent time chatting with new students, sharing what the Centre does and encouraging them to get involved. Around 250 additional students have since signed up to the Pro Bono Centre roster this semester.



Pro Bono Panel and Pizza Event | 6 March 2026

Our BELfest stall also gave us a perfect opportunity to spread the word about our annual Week 2 Pro Bono Panel and Pizza Event. This year we were delighted to welcome back PBC alumni Isaac Gill, now a lawyer at the Australian Government Solicitor, and Alani Tenaglia, a lawyer with the Working Women Queensland team at Basic Rights Queensland. They were joined by current volunteers Cleo Shave, who leads the NDIS database project, and Zoe Zhang, who is part of the leadership team of the Human Rights Case Law database and who has contributed to several other PBC projects.

The panel spoke about their time with the Pro Bono Centre, shared how those experiences have shaped their careers, and spent time answering questions from students. Although the session is aimed at first-year law students, it's open to anyone curious about getting involved. The turnout and engagement were fantastic. After the panel, the conversation continued over pizza and refreshments.



Visit from Fijian guests | 16 March

We were pleased to welcome visitors on behalf of the Fijian Law Society on a study tour looking at how pro bono legal work is structured in Australia. Fijian lawyer Nemani (centre left) was accompanied by four lawyers from Ashurst and Norton Rose Fullbright (on the right). The guests met with PBC staff, as well as students undertaking projects, to see how pro bono is integrated into the student experience through the UQ Pro Bono Centre.



Queensland Legal Walk | 19 May 2026

On National Pro Bono Day, the Pro Bono Centre, on behalf of the Law School and in partnership with the UQ Law Society, Justice and the Law Society, and Women in BEL, coordinated this year's Queensland Legal Walk team. With our Practitioner-in-Residence, Kate Adnams, on secondment from LawRight this semester, it felt like the perfect moment to rally the Law School community and aim for the Law School Champion Fundraiser Award. The walk raises vital funds to support access to justice, and our team was proud to have raised \$3557. Although the walk itself was rained out, we were thrilled to have had more than 60 staff and students registered to walk – the largest group of any law school.

Law Awards Ceremony | 20 May 2026

At this year's annual Law Awards Ceremony, hosted by the Law School, we celebrated the commitment and leadership demonstrated by 13 students, who received Leadership awards for their PBC involvement throughout 2025.

The PBC Advisory Board also conferred the Randal Dennings Award on two graduating students, Imogen Ryan-Kerr and Rupert Hoare, whose contributions to pro bono work were deemed equally outstanding. The Centre congratulates both Imogen and Rupert and acknowledges the dedication and leadership they have shown throughout their years of service to the UQ Pro Bono Centre.



Clinical Legal Education (Teaching and Learning)

Forty-two students undertook clinical legal education across two iterations of the clinical program this semester: the Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) summer clinics and the Brisbane-based clinics during semester 1. We are grateful to the four RRR and seven Brisbane based community legal centres who hosted and guided the clinical students this semester.

Our clinical legal education students contributed approximately 3,800 hours to community legal centres in semester one this year.



RRR Summer Clinics

This summer we placed eight students into RRR clinics, two each went to community legal centres in Townsville, Toowoomba, Hervey Bay and the Sunshine Coast. Students reflected on the opportunity to see a different side of their home community as well as develop legal skills and make a positive contribution to the community.

I learned so much from my clinical experience at Townsville Community Law. Putting into practice the foundational skills and conceptual knowledge we develop during our legal studies in a way which makes a positive difference to the community was deeply rewarding. The program allows us to be immersed in the day-to-day client experiences and advocacy work of the solicitors, and connects the law to a meaningful push for access to justice, reform, and human rights protection. Going through the placement with another like-minded student significantly enhanced the experience, as we were able to collaborate on tasks, overcome challenges together, and support one another during our time. I would recommend the clinic to not only those interested in pursuing a career in the community legal sector, but to all law students, as it provides valuable insight into working with a vast range of clients, as well as a greater appreciation of the complex and intersecting barriers vulnerable persons are navigating – which should be integrated into any future practice.



Semester 1, 2026 Semester Clinics

This semester, Kate Adnams was with us at UQ as Practitioner-in-Residence, so we did not have students placed in the Mater, but all other Brisbane clinics ran as usual with partners Caxton Legal Centre, the Environmental Defenders Office, LawRight, YFS Legal, Prisoners' Legal Service, Tenants Queensland and the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service. Thirty-four students took clinic in semester one.

I spent an hour and a half on the M3 to drive to Beenleigh every week, and I didn't regret a second of it. The location of our clinic made me appreciate that justice needs to physically reach out to the communities in need. The Beenleigh Magistrates Court sees the highest number of domestic violence cases, so it is natural that there is a community legal centre nearby.

I learnt practical skills on filling legal forms and writing letters. What differentiates Clinical Legal Education from UQ Pro Bono rosters, not to discredit experience earned from volunteering, is the increased amount of time you spend with the lawyers and clients, and the guidance you receive. The lawyers are generous with their time and work hard to ensure you are receiving an education.



Pro Bono Work – Roster Projects and Placements

Overview: Applicants and Projects

Since the beginning of 2026, 156 students have been placed in pro bono centre roster placements and projects, a similar number to each of the two semesters in 2025. However, this semester, just 19 students were outplaced as volunteers in community legal centres and other legal practices (down from 46 in semester one of 2025). The remaining 135 students were engaged in internal projects with more than half of those in the three biggest teams: the law reform team with 32 students, the domestic and sexual violence education team with 36 students, and the human rights case law database with 19 students.

We also began estimating total student hours. This is an imprecise exercise given variable contributions, but we estimate that UQ law students have contributed more than 5000 pro bono hours this semester. This reflects an exceptional culture of service within the school.

Additionally, one student was selected for a paid role.

Currently there are 1085 students on the pro bono roster. Around 1/5 of those will be actively engaged in pro bono work or clinical legal education during any given semester. The challenge going into semester 2 and beyond is to generate and support opportunities for more of the other 80% to also make a meaningful contribution.



Key Projects: Snapshots and Highlights

Homelessness Law | LawRight and Basic Rights Queensland

This semester we drew on Kate's expertise as a senior lawyer in the Homelessness Law program at LawRight and initiated the Homelessness Law project as a new roster project. In this project, students worked on delivering a best practice protocol for Queensland councils who are engaging with people who are sleeping on public land.

Students met with lawyers from Basic Rights Queensland (BRQ), who acted in a significant recent judicial review of a council decision to forcibly move on a homeless community. The final output will support organisations such as BRQ and LawRight in their ongoing advocacy for people experiencing homelessness.



As a first-year law student, I was admittedly very nervous coming into the Homelessness Project in my second week of university but was hopeful I would be able to contribute to the team to make a positive difference for people experiencing homelessness. Working with an amazing team of friendly and supportive students, and Kate the Practitioner in Residence, we quickly began developing a tangible protocol for councils to improve practices and help address the issues surrounding the homelessness sector in our local area. Through the project, our group met with many legal professionals in the homelessness law space, which was an amazing opportunity that greatly benefitted our understanding and supported our research.

I will definitely continue to apply for pro bono roster opportunities in the future and would highly encourage everyone to participate in the Pro-Bono Centre — especially first-years, no matter the experience, to get involved.

Victims of Crime | Victims of Crime Working Group

This six-week student project was established and supervised by Kate to support the advocacy work of the Victims of Crime Working Group, which is co-chaired by lawyers from Clayton Utz and LawRight. The project was initiated in response to recent changes to the application of the limitation periods under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009 (Qld)*.

Through their research, the students identified that narrow limitation periods do not reflect the substantial body of evidence that survivors of many forms of violence often take significantly longer to disclose harm or engage with legal processes. The group also examined the practical barriers some survivors face in obtaining supporting documentation, particularly from general practitioners and other health professionals, and noted that strict limitation periods may prevent survivors from compiling the documentation required to access assistance before the limitation period expires.



In addition, the students undertook a comparative review of legislative approaches in other Australian jurisdictions to assess whether Queensland's framework aligns with emerging best practice.

The students presented their final output to the Working Group, providing a resource that will assist the Group in its advocacy for reforms that better ensure access to justice for victims of crime.



Mental Health/Disability Law | Involuntary Treatment Orders Group

The Mental Health and Disability Law Project was established to support research and advocacy in the mental health law space. The project focused on concerns raised by Queensland's mental health sector about the high use of involuntary treatment orders (ITOs) in Queensland, particularly for people with mental illness and cognitive impairment.

A team of four students examined Queensland's ITO rates and reviewed comparable data from other Australian jurisdictions. Their research aimed to determine whether Queensland's ITO rates were disproportionately high and to provide an evidence base for future policy and law reform discussions.

The Mental Health Project has been an incredibly rewarding experience. The research into the rates involuntary treatment orders, as well as comparative research into other jurisdictions' Mental Health laws, has been eye opening into how the systems operate and the exorbitant number of people being subject to involuntary treatment orders.

My team are compiling a briefing paper outlining our findings to present to Office of the Public Advocate. It has been great to draw on our individual skills, particularly the team members with a science background, to analyse and discuss the data. Overall, the project has shone a light on the role of statute in socio-legal contexts and developed my research skills.



Rights of the Child | LawRight

Students in this project prepared an issues paper on age discrimination, human rights and the Rights of the Child, focusing on young people who are not in the care of their parents. They met with social workers from the Brisbane Youth Service, who shared their experiences in practice and highlighted the challenges commonly faced by young people. The perspectives offered during this discussion helped refine the students' thinking and guided their selection of the themes they went on to examine in their research.

Being able to be a part of the research project for the Rights of the Child has been an incredibly interesting and eye-opening opportunity. This topic is one that is not widely researched or examined, and it has been really enjoyable to be able to dive into it more deeply. Prior, I had a basic understanding of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and Australia's obligation to implement it through policies and legislation, however, looking into it deeper and identifying all the gaps and issues being faced by children subject to these systems has been educational.

Additionally, as a first-year student, it has been an excellent opportunity to not only improve my writing and research skills but also to connect with other people in the legal field which has been an amazing experience.



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

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence education group, supported by Dr Rebecca Wallis, is one of the Pro Bono Centre's largest teams. This group provides legal education to school groups, with a longer-term vision to expand their reach to other groups in the community. This group has the important objective of educating young people about these important issues.

It has been a rewarding experience working within the Diverse Populations team on the DFSV education project. I have enjoyed collaborating with my peers to research the unique challenges faced by marginalised groups and explore ways to address the impacts of multifaceted disadvantage. Given the significant impact of domestic, family, and sexual violence across the Queensland community, it has been particularly meaningful to contribute to work aimed at prevention, education, and improving community understanding of these issues. I look forward to continuing this work and presenting to students in the future.



Law Reform Research | Queensland Law Reform Commission

The Queensland Law Reform Commission (QLRC) research project continued this semester, this time contributing to the Commission's review of the *Evidence Act 1977* (Qld). The Commission is examining options to modernise and simplify Queensland's evidence law.

Students this semester undertook a comparative analysis of how Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada approach the relationship between state evidence laws and Indigenous law. Their research examined the extent of recognition by the state and whether Indigenous laws are treated as law or as fact in the courts, including by examining relevant case examples.

The students' work will assist the QLRC in identifying potential opportunities for reform.

The students presented their work to the QLRC on Monday 25 May and are grateful for the involvement of their QLRC supervisors Steph Payne and Nia Emmanouil, as well as Emma Phillips and Matt Corrigan who provided guidance as the outset of the project. A major benefit of this project for students is the engagement and oversight provided by the staff of the QLRC and we are grateful for their continued support of our students.

The Queensland Law Reform Commission is dedicated to broad and deep engagement in the law reform process. Our collaboration with the UQ Pro Bono Centre provides an opportunity for students to conduct critical research that informs our recommendations. In turn, we find the experience enables them to see what they can do with the law and supports the realisation that they can contribute to its development.

Queensland Law Reform Commission



The opportunity to construct a report to the Queensland Law Reform Commission has wholly been an engrossing, intellectually stimulating experience. Our team canvassed other jurisdictions' treatment of First Nations laws and customs as evidence, namely New Zealand and Canada. Personally, this experience opened my eyes to the law's capacity to be multivalent with respect to its recognition and practical integration of the pre-existing and extant legal systems and customs of First Nations people. As case examples, New Zealand and Canada have exemplified the point that a view of Indigenous laws/customs and Common Law as being mutually exclusive is a myth which inhibits meaningful engagement.

Generally, the project has grown my ability to research across jurisdictions, to better understand foreign legal systems and, more generally, to appreciate the complexity and importance of First Nations peoples' laws and customs.

As a group, we have enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate and develop our skills beyond research questions you would generally encounter in law school. As the project draws to a close, we are all excitedly looking forward to presenting our work to the QLRC at the end of the semester!



Sentencing Research | Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council

As part of our ongoing collaboration with the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (QSAC), a new group of students undertook a focused research project this semester. QSAC invited the students to investigate a current area of interest that would benefit from additional research.

Students researched the purpose and effectiveness of fines as a sentencing sanction for offences involving personal violence. They presented their report to QSAC staff in person on 19 May.

Participating in the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council project has been a highlight of my semester. Our team constructed and presented a report examining the effectiveness of fines as a sentencing sanction for offences involving personal violence, using the purposes of sentences outlined in the Queensland Penalties and Sentences Act as our metric of assessment. Undertaking this research has not only allowed me to further refine my research skills, but it has also highlighted the importance of reviewing sentencing trends, particularly where the effects disproportionately affect vulnerable members of the community.



We asked the UQ Pro Bono students to explore the purposes for, and effectiveness of, fines as a sentencing sanction for offences involving personal violence. The students engaged enthusiastically with this topic and approached this research in a considered and evidence-based way. They drew on legal and criminological research and analysis, as well as relevant Queensland data sources. While determining their own position on this topic, the issues they identified aligned with those identified by legal practitioners and scholars. They considered not only theoretical problems with the use of fines for personal violence offences, but also practical issues and barriers, the impacts of fines and SPER debts on marginalised and already disadvantaged groups, and the lived experience of those subject to these forms of penalties. They also provided practical suggestions for areas of future research and consideration. They presented their findings to members of the Council and Secretariat in person in an engaging and accessible way. Their work will be shared with the broader Council for their awareness of these issues and to inform any future projects we might undertake.

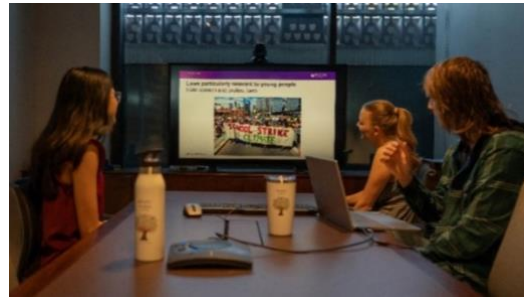
April Chrzanowski – Director, QSAC



Youth Justice | Legal Education Outreach (LEO) Project

This semester marked a fresh iteration of the Youth Justice Project, with a new cohort of six students taking over from last year's team. This semester's group brought strong skills in presenting, performing and public speaking.

This project presents legal information about youth justice and police powers to young people in Queensland, mainly via invitations from high school legal studies teachers.



This semester students presented to six times to four schools, Proserpine State High School, Indooroopilly State High School, Brisbane South Secondary College and Bundaberg State High School reaching over 100 high school students. Most sessions were in person, but one was delivered online (to Proserpine).

The group were pleased to find that engagement was particularly strong. Many of the high school students had already encountered aspects of youth justice in their Year 11 Legal Studies curriculum, and had brilliant and thought-provoking questions, which meant the presenters were challenged to think more critically when delivering their presentations. Throughout the semester, students worked on adjusting the presentation, ensuring it remained engaging for students already familiar with the topic.

Volunteering for the youth justice project at the pro-bono centre has been one of the most rewarding parts of my studies. We have been developing and delivering presentations to high school students about youth justice and interactions with the police which has been both challenging and deeply engaging. The hardest part has been narrowing down exactly what topics we wanted to talk about, but I have been so surprised and impressed by the level of insight and curiosity the school students brought to these sessions, particularly when discussing issues that affect them and that they really care about. Hearing their questions, ideas and perspectives not only enriched the sessions, but made me reflect on the issues that matter to me and on how I can be more engaged in the political process and law reform.

Coronial Law in Papua New Guinea | Supreme and National Courts

This project, which was developed over several semesters in 2024 and 2025 was delivered early this year to the Supreme and National Courts. The Chief Justice Sir Gibuma Gibbs Salika wrote to us in March 2026 expressing his thanks to the students for their work.



Law Reform Team | Student-Driven Law Reform Advocacy

The Law Reform Project is the Centre's largest and most flexible project. It is open to all students interested in pro bono work and is a valuable entry point for students wishing to get involved in their first project, particularly as it allows them to select topics that genuinely interest them and to work together with similarly interested students. This semester we welcomed 33 students across seven groups.



At the beginning of each semester, the PBC team consults with law reform agencies and community services, and scans current and upcoming parliamentary committee and other inquiries, to identify areas where advocacy by students may be valuable. From this, we compile a list of potential topics, and students form groups of three to seven members to research and advocate for their chosen area of reform.

This semester, we paired most groups with an internal or external expert to provide real world context to their work. These meetings offered students the opportunity to learn from practitioners and other professionals, understand the real-world impact of law reform, and observe how legal policy skills can lead to a meaningful career. The interactions also enhance the quality and diversity of the work produced by our students.

While these organisations generously share their insights with students, the final output is created independently by the students and does not constitute a publication or position of the organisations.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the law reform project this semester as I have been able to build on my legal research and analytical skills outside the classroom while contributing meaningfully to the community. My team constructed a report detailing why Australia should implement a federal human rights act which we will send to MPs, which was an exciting and new opportunity for me. This large task highlighted the importance of teamwork as my group built our understanding of human rights in Australia together, but delegated individual tasks to efficiently produce a polished report. I have learnt a lot about how the law can fail vulnerable Australians and the importance of effective statute to better protect our basic rights.



A summary of each law reform team sub-group and their work is provided below.

Group	Output of Project
Group 1	A letter to the Minister for Corrective Services requesting an amendment to the <i>Corrective Services Act 2006 (Qld)</i> , to provide automatic formal statement of reasons, with recommendations, to prisoners who have been refused parole.
Group 2	A letter to the Hon Tim Nicholls, Health Minister, advocating for the reversal of the ban on gender affirming care to Queensland children.
Group 3	A letter to the Director of the State Penalties Enforcement Registry, requesting information about why certain fines were not included in the Domestic and Family Violence Withdrawal process. A letter to the Minister for advocating for provisions to cancel fines for people who have experienced domestic and family violence and other hardship within the <i>State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999 (Qld)</i> .
Group 4	A letter to the Minister for Police and Community Safety advocating against the re-criminalisation of public drunkenness in Queensland.
Group 5	A letter to the Attorney General and Minister for Child Safety advocating for better options for financial assistance for children who experienced harm or abuse while in the care of an institution in Queensland.
Group 6	A letter to two Federal MPs advocating for a Federal Human Rights Act in Australia.
Group 7	A letter to the Hon Laura Gerber in response to the <i>Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Act 2026 (Qld)</i> .



Volunteer Support | External Placements

The Pro Bono Centre continues to support community legal centres by assisting to recruit student volunteers. This semester, we placed 19 students across 7 organisations. Once students commence their volunteer roles, we maintain contact through check-in emails to see how they are progressing and to offer any support they may need.

These placements are highly competitive, as students value the opportunity to apply their academic knowledge in fast-paced legal environments and gain insight into how community legal centres operate. They assist in a variety of different roles, including administrative support, data entry and evening advice sessions.

- Hub Inala Intake Volunteers | 4 students
- QCCL | 2 students
- LawRight Social Media Volunteers | 2 students
- QAI Client Survey Volunteers | 1 student
- Caxton Consumer Credit Volunteers | 2 students
- Basic Rights Client Survey Volunteers | 2 students
- HUB Inala Client Survey Volunteers | 5 students
- Shearer Doyle (Paid Paralegal Role) | 1 student

The number of students out-placed in semester one this year is substantially less than the bumper run of placements at the start of last year. In part, this reflects the retention of many students we placed in 2025 including:

- HUB Inala | 10 continuing from 2025
- TASC | 1 continuing from 2025
- Caxton | 8 continuing from 2024/25
- My Community Legal | 1 continuing from 2024

Some government partners who had previously taken PBC students are now participating in the Law School's new internship course. Internships are now available for students at Legal Aid Queensland, the Queensland Human Rights Commission, the Queensland Law Reform Commission and the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council, among other agencies.



External Volunteering Snapshots

CLCQ Client Survey Volunteers

Every year, Community Legal Centres Queensland supports community legal centres to conduct their annual client and stakeholder surveys. This year, CLCQ again reached out to the Pro Bono Centre to confirm that centres could contact us directly to arrange student volunteers for this work, and we were pleased to continue supporting this partnership. Over the semester, we assisted Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion, Basic Rights Queensland and HUB Community Legal to recruit student volunteers for their survey activities. Sometimes students continue with these organisations in an ongoing volunteer capacity after the survey period concludes.

HUB Community Legal

We regularly place students at Hub Community Legal in Inala to ‘top up’ their student volunteer cohort. This placement is often the first client-facing work students have done. Students gain a strong sense of meaningful contribution as they handle first-contact calls and complete intake procedures with clients.

Working pro bono at HUB Community Legal has been an amazing experience, allowing me to contribute to meaningful social justice work. It has exposed me to a variety of complex legal issues that clients could seek advice on. This experience has shown me the high demand for free legal support in communities, which emphasises the importance of the work that CLCs do. Not only has the intake work been interesting, but the staff and other volunteers are amazing and incredibly supportive. I have loved this opportunity to provide legal administrative support in a field that I am passionate about.

Queensland Council for Civil Liberties (QCCL)

QCCL takes two students at the start of each year to support their law reform and policy work through the year ahead. Students work on law reform submissions, research briefs and other content, and are integrated into the organisation.

Working for the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties has been an enriching experience for me. I've greatly enjoyed getting to draft parliamentary submissions – it's a great opportunity not only develop your research and writing skills but to really critically engage with the law's political context, which I find is something we miss out on in class. I think being able to feel like your voice has a chance at being listened to is pretty rare right now, but this project and the exposure to other vocal, like-minded people I've gained because of it have given me a little slither of hope that it's possible.



Pro Bono Work Experience Program

The work experience program is one of our most popular opportunities attracting applications from up to 100 students each time it is advertised. We prioritise students with a strong history of pro bono contribution for these roles. This semester we worked with Clayton Utz for this project, placing students one day per week for six weeks within their pro bono team in the Brisbane office.

Clayton Utz is proud to partner with the UQ Pro Bono Centre to provide students with hands-on pro bono work experience. During their 6-week placement, students gained practical exposure to a wide range of legal matters, including elder financial abuse, victims compensation, employment and discrimination, general civil disputes, and not-for-profit governance. Pro bono work is a core part of our firm, and this program allows students to experience life in a commercial law firm while contributing to important pro bono work. We've greatly appreciated the students' participation and their enthusiasm for access to justice, which is the core focus of our Pro Bono practice - providing advice and representation to individuals who cannot access Legal Aid, as well as to the not-for-profit organisations that support them.

Shaun Chng – Clayton Utz lawyer

My pro bono work experience at Clayton Utz has been incredibly rewarding, providing me with the opportunity to engage in client meetings, assist with court filings, and undertake legal research. This experience gave me insight into how pro bono work is embedded within a large firm's structure and culture, and how lawyers across different practice groups contribute to it in practical ways. These hands-on experiences have strengthened my practical skills while allowing me to contribute to meaningful community outcomes, reinforcing the importance of access to justice.



Case Law Databases

Deaths in Care Project | Caxton Legal Centre

This semester, students in the Deaths in Care project finalised a journal article on deaths in disability care. The students' research has shown that many deaths in disability care are preventable and avoidable, and often occur as a result of accidents and choking. Their paper will be published later in 2026.

The students will now work on a Statistical Report summarising the results of their research across all types of deaths in care. Many of the students in the Deaths in Care team have been involved in the project for many years, so it is wonderful to see all their hard work come to fruition.

Participating in the Deaths in Care Project with our team has provided invaluable insight into the coronial process as well as demonstrated the importance of research in understanding how systemic reform can be achieved. Specifically, through our review of the inquests and the national database collation, we have been able to deeply understand the recurring features contributing to deaths in disability, mental health, and aged care environments.

This project has strengthened my research and collaborative skills as well as emphasised the significance of accessible legal information and using data-driven evidence to identify shortcomings within our legal system and informing public interest advocacy.

We are now preparing a report presenting our findings from the national database highlighting the key trends and markers linked with preventable deaths in care.



Human Rights Case Law Project | Caxton Legal Centre

Now in its sixth year, the Human Rights Case Law Project has continued strongly this semester, supported by two student groups. The project involves drafting and settling case notes on the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)*, which are published on a database accessible to practitioners.

The project has had a strong, productive semester and the team is on track to launch the database early in semester 2 (late July 2026).

The project's success this year has been strongly supported by its leadership team. Student leader Liisa Kuru has been joined this year by co-leaders Bethany Jones and Zoe Zhang.

Liisa has been part of the project since her first year of law school. Over the past three years, she has led the project with exceptional commitment. As she prepares to graduate at the end of this semester, the Pro Bono Centre team warmly acknowledge her long-standing contribution to this project and to the Centre more broadly.

In addition to her leadership of the Human Rights Case Law Project, Liisa has also volunteered as a representative of the Centre in first-year activities, served as a panellist at Pro Bono Centre events, and attended advisory board meetings as a student representative. She reflects on her time in the project below.

I joined the Human Rights Case Law Database group through the UQ Pro Bono Centre in my very first semester my first year of law in 2021. This semester, after five and a half years, will be my last as I graduate this July. It has been a wonderfully unique pleasure to not only watch this project grow and develop, but to meet and spend time with each wave of passionate law students that volunteer their precious and scarce free time to contribute to this database. I am excited for the value that our project will bring for practitioners and students once made public, and I hope it will serve to develop the human rights jurisprudence in Queensland. However, the project has already proved invaluable in teaching group members valuable skills and improving their comprehension and awareness of human rights, as well as building interpersonal relationships. I wish the continuing and future members the very best and hope they gain as much from this project as I have.

Liisa Kuru





Working on the Human Rights Case Law Project has been a highly valuable experience, allowing me to engage directly with a broad range of human rights decisions. I found it particularly interesting to observe how decision-makers balance competing interests, and how subtle differences in reasoning can significantly influence outcomes for individuals.

What I valued most was the purpose-driven nature of the work. Contributing to a publicly accessible resource required careful attention to clarity and precision in writing, with an awareness that it may be used by practitioners and academics. The collaborative environment with like-minded students also made the experience particularly rewarding.



NDIS Appeals Database | Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion

After two big semesters in 2025 that involved transitioning to and launching the NDIS Appeals database, the team has been in maintenance mode this semester as they methodically work through new cases as they are published.

In January the team were invited to attend legal content training hosted by Gadens Lawyers where they participated as peers alongside lawyers engaged in appeals work. Their inclusion into the broader service landscape was appreciated by the students.

After contributing to the NDIS Appeals Database since my second year and having read hundreds of Tribunal decisions over the course of those years, it was invaluable to attend the appeals training session by QAI hosted at Gadens. It brought the work we've got to do off the screen, connecting our work on the database to real advocacy and people. Knowing the practical, day-to-day impact these decisions have on participants and their supports bought a new sense of value to our pro bono project I'm grateful for.

Team leader Cleo Shave continues to provide excellent leadership and management to this project. You can find the NDIS Appeals Database at <https://ndis.project.uq.edu.au>.



By participating in the NDIS Appeals Case Law Project, I was able to develop a deeper understanding of the NDIS, including its operations, eligibility criteria and appeal processes. I found these insights incredibly valuable, not only from an administrative law perspective, but also in highlighting the importance of understanding the legal reasoning underpinning these decisions as a law student. Engaging with a range of cases has also strengthened my case-reading skills, improving my attention to detail and ability to identify key issues. What I found most rewarding about being part of this project is the unique opportunity to contribute to a student-created database that directly assists NDIS applicants and legal practitioners.



Elder Abuse Periodical | Caxton Legal Centre

The Elder Abuse Periodical team have this semester gone back through past issues of their periodical and developed a spreadsheet of the cases, organised in a way that allows for cross-referencing and thematic comparison. This is the first step towards making their existing content shareable in other formats, as is planned by the project partner Caxton Legal Centre. The team also delivered volume 2, issue 2 of their periodical to Caxton this semester, and finalised volume 3, issue 1 for publication. Both 2025 issues, and volume 2, issue 1 from 2026 will be published on our website shortly.

This project team are a small, committed group of four members including team leader Luke Taylor who gently and competently guides the project. Academic oversight is provided by Dr Andrew Fell and PBC staff.



Working as a team on the Elder Abuse Case Law Project has provided us with significant skills, legal knowledge, and practical insights that go far beyond our progress in class. We have developed great relationships working under the guidance of Law School academics and liaising with practitioners who specialise in Elder Law in Queensland. Previously, the Project has focused on summarising Queensland case law centred on elder abuse related issues and collating these summaries into an accessible online periodical. Undertaking this work has greatly developed our legal awareness in identifying trends and patterns in complex legal issues, providing us with a comprehensive framework that we can take back to our studies.

These periodicals have served as an increasingly useful tool for legal practitioners working in the emerging field of Elder Law. This semester, whilst working closely with Caxton Legal Centre, we are not only continuing with the next publication of our periodical, but we have also redirected our focus towards compiling these case notes into database form. This will further enhance the availability, accessibility, and awareness of our work in practice. We are continuously working towards a publication date and are excited for the future of the Project.



Acknowledgments

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The Centre's long-term community legal centre partners are the backbone of our client facing opportunities as well as much of the research and internal projects undertaken by students. We acknowledge the many individuals and teams that welcome and support our students. You, your clients, and the communities you serve are at the heart of our Centre.

We gratefully acknowledge the direct support that many community and industry friends provided to groups of students this semester on an ad hoc basis including:

- Molly Ashworth and Mia Nestor from Knowmore Legal Services
- Helen Blaber and Angelene Counter from Prisoners Legal Services
- Jake Sheehan and Bonnie Kubler Shaw from Basic Rights
- Pree Sharma from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service
- Cameron Lavery from LawRight
- Daniela and Kerryn from Women's Legal Services Queensland
- Kirra Glanville and Denise Buccan from Brisbane Youth Service
- LGBTI Legal Service
- Shaun Chng from Clayton Utz.

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We warmly and appreciatively acknowledge the leadership of students within the Centre. We particularly acknowledge the leaders of the largest groups; Liisa Kuru, Bethany Jones and Zoe Zhang in the human rights case law database, Claire Reid in the law reform team, and Macy Quinn in the deaths in care team.





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