

3

Other initiatives



LAWHELP

Approximately 60 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations are located in remote or very remote parts of Australia and do not have ready access to quality legal services.

LawHelp is a pro bono legal scheme designed to assist not-for-profit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations registered under the CATSI Act. It was set up by the Registrar, with the support of the Australian Government Solicitor, volunteer lawyers and major Australian legal firms in response to a clear need.

Between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2013 there were 11 participating lawyers and law firms on the LawHelp panel:

- ⊙ Allens
- ⊙ Ashurst
- ⊙ Australian Government Solicitor (AGS)
- ⊙ Clayton Utz
- ⊙ DLA Piper Australia
- ⊙ HWL Ebsworth Lawyers
- ⊙ Jackson McDonald
- ⊙ Minter Ellison Lawyers
- ⊙ Lipman Karas
- ⊙ Williams, Love and Nicol
- ⊙ Tress Cox

The LawHelp assessment panel consists of three members—the manager of pro bono services from the Australian Government Solicitor, a lawyer from the community services sector and an Aboriginal lawyer with the Department of Health. ORIC manages the LawHelp secretariat and provides administrative support.

Corporations registered under the CATSI Act can apply to LawHelp for assistance with a range of legal matters, from basic tax issues to drafting employment contracts to interpreting the law. The scheme cannot, however, help with matters already funded by government

such as native title or legal action in any court or tribunal, or matters that could conflict with the interests of the Australian Government. LawHelp can only help corporations not individuals.

During the year 16 applications were received. Fourteen of these applications were approved and successfully referred to some of Australia's top law firms.

Figure 16: Number of LawHelp applications received by state and territory 2012–13

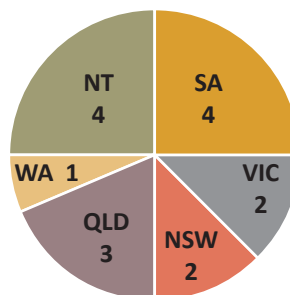
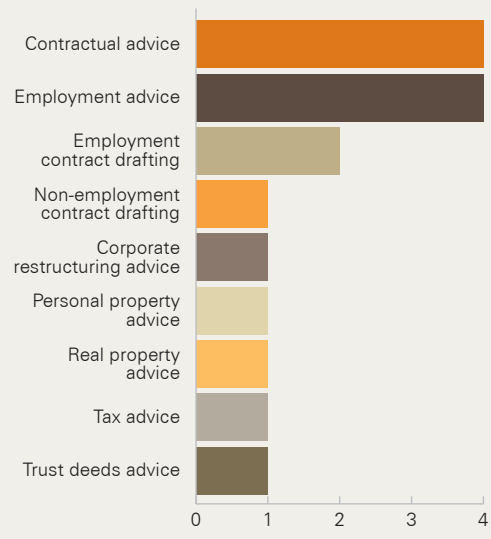


Figure 17: Number of LawHelp applications received by types of matters 2012–13



LawHelp application forms and guidelines are available at www.oric.gov.au, by emailing LawHelp@oric.gov.au or by telephoning freecall 1800 622 431 (not free from mobiles).

PARTNERING WITH THE ANU

Early in 2013 the Australian National University (ANU) approached the Registrar to extend the research project started in July 2010. This was to allow further time to finalise the report. Originally the closing date was set at 30 June 2013.

The project is investigating how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations can improve their accountability both to government and their communities. A post-doctoral fellow and a PhD student from the ANU have completed their field research as well as collated information from ORIC's databases. It is expected that the final research report may inform ORIC's approach to corporate governance training in communities.

VOLUNTEERING

As part of ORIC's volunteer opportunities program seven staff from the Canberra office volunteered their time and skills to help out Ngunnawal Aboriginal Corporation at its NAIDOC event in Yass on Tuesday 9 July. Staff set up tables and chairs, decorated the hall and helped to serve lunch.



ORIC staff volunteering at the Ngunnawal Aboriginal Corporation

NAIDOC WEEK

Each year ORIC staff look forward to participating in NAIDOC* week. This year it was held in the second week in July with the theme 'We value the vision: Yirrkala Bark Petitions 1963'. As usual, the week for Canberra-based staff was filled with activities such as:

- ⊙ the NAIDOC ball, black tie event at the Canberra Convention Centre on Saturday evening, 6 July
- ⊙ ORIC stall at the NAIDOC family day on Acton Peninsula in Canberra on Sunday 7 July
- ⊙ the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander memorial ceremony at the Australian War Memorial on Wednesday 10 July. As in previous years, ORIC staff laid a wreath in recognition of the service and sacrifice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Australian Defence Force
- ⊙ the Aboriginal Hostels Limited luncheon at the National Convention Centre, Canberra, on Friday 12 July.

* National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee.



ORIC staff during NAIDOC week

ORIC wreath laid at the War Memorial

