

Record numbers seeking legal help with housing and tenancy problems: demand grows by 19% in one year

Increased demand for legal aid in NSW as cost-of-living and housing pressures rise

Record numbers of people in NSW are seeking legal assistance because of housing and tenancy problems.

New figures show almost **4,500** people per year are now seeking help from Legal Aid to deal with those issues.

In addition, the Legal Aid annual report shows **overall** demand for free legal help in NSW has also grown significantly, with tens of thousands more people seeking assistance as cost-of-living pressures increase.

The sharp rise comes as Legal Aid considers how to meet this additional demand with available funding.

Our annual report has been tabled in parliament and shows we provided more than half a million services in 2023-24, up **10 per cent** on the previous year. 36 per cent of those services were in regional NSW.

The report also reveals a **19 per cent** increase in the number of legal assistance services we provided to people with housing-related problems last financial year. We delivered **6,200** of these free services compared to 5,200 in the previous year. In almost half of these cases last financial year our clients were tenants facing eviction.

“We have seen enormous demand for our services in recent years and expect it to rise further,” says Legal Aid CEO Monique Hitter.

“Many NSW people are dealing with more legal problems but are less able to pay for a lawyer due to financial pressures.”

Annual report key figures

- There was a **20 per cent** increase in our mediation services that help separating couples reach out-of-court agreements. We provided a record **3,307** mediation services.
- Our free legal help line and web chat service handled almost **200,000** enquiries. Calls to that service grew **25 per cent** last financial year. Many enquiries related to legal problems regarding family law and parenting arrangements, employment issues, driving, disputes over goods and services, and debts.
- There was a **14 per cent** increase in the number of legal representation services we provided to people dealing with family, civil or criminal law issues.
- There was a **10 per cent** jump in the number of services provided by our duty lawyers who deliver on-the-spot free assistance at courts across NSW.

Cost-of-living pressures can lead to a wide range of legal problems relating to:

- housing stress including mortgage and tenancy issues
- family breakdown
- elder abuse
- domestic violence
- employment
- debts and fines
- criminal law issues
- consumer protection.

“Early access to our free legal assistance can help to resolve those legal problems before they worsen significantly,” says Ms Hitter. “That’s good for families, the court system and the wider community.

“We will continue to work closely with the Commonwealth and State Governments to ensure we can continue to meet growing demand for our services.”

For free legal information and support, call us on 1300 888 529.

**Legal Aid NSW housing specialist solicitor Natalie Bradshaw and Civil Law Director
Meredith Osborne are available for interview.**

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