



**QUEENSLAND WORKING
WOMEN'S SERVICE INC
ANNUAL REPORT
2011/2012**

QWWS
queensland working
women's service inc



1) Contents

Contents	1
QWWS Mission, Vision, Value and Objectives	1
From the QWWS Chair	4
Management Committee	6
Director's Report	6
Staff	9
QWWS Service Delivery Report	9
Young Workers Advisory Service Report	16
Auditor's Report	Attachment

QWWS Inc. Mission Statement

QWWS provides a service that empowers and advocates for the attainment of social justice for women in the workplace.

YWAS provides a service that educates and advocates for the attainment of social justice for young people in the workplace.

QWWS Inc. Vision Statement

Our vision is for equitable and fair outcomes for Queensland women and youth in their employment.

We strive to be a leading source of expertise in improving the status of women in the workplace.

QWWS Inc. Value Statement

We promote equality in the workplace through:

- challenging gender-based inequality
- challenging the exploitation of young people in the workplace.

Our work is characterised by:

working with each other and those outside our organisation in ways that are inclusive, collaborative, consultative, respectful and consistent with a feminist approach.

QWWS Inc. Goals

1. QWWS Inc. has best-practice governance systems and processes for service delivery, administration and sustainable management.
2. QWWS Inc. makes a significant contribution to systemic advocacy about workplace equity for women and young people.
3. QWWS Inc. has strong networks with relevant government and non-government agencies.

QWWS Inc. Objectives

- Provide accessible services that support women from diverse backgrounds throughout Queensland to make informed choices about issues that affect them in the workplace.
- Take appropriate action to assist women to achieve workplace justice.
- Increase both women's knowledge and confidence in the workplace and community understanding of workplace issues.
- Foster complementary relationships with women's sector organisations and other work-related services provided by unions, government and other agencies to enhance the status of women.
- Seek opportunities to build the capacity and sustainability of the organisation to further the above objectives.

QWWS was funded for the 2010/2011 financial year by the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General and by the Federal Government Fair Work Ombudsman.

From the Chair

Shanti Thompson

I have had a long association with the Queensland Working Women's Service as an employee (first in Rockhampton then Brisbane) and as a committee member. I have now finished my first year as QWWS Chairperson. It seems that there is never a dull moment for our community-based service and this year has been no exception.

The service this year has again been at the forefront of policy around women's work issues and has contributed to public enquiries and social debates and has provided support and advocacy to over 2500 individual women.

The Young Workers Advisory Service auspiced by QWWS continues to respond to requests for assistance from young people in resolving their workplace issues as well as providing community education on rights and responsibilities for young people in the community and in high schools.

It was most devastating for QWWS and YWAS and for all staff and Management Committee members to be informed with almost no notice that state funding for these services was to be axed as of 30 June 2012. While a community-based campaign revealed high levels of support for the service, without a funding base the YWAS has now been closed with QWWS continuing to manage web-based information. Similarly QWWS received broad state and national support in the instance of our defunding and was pleased to recently receive advice of assistance from the Commonwealth with funding for the 2012/2013 year that will keep the service open.

Despite our uncertainty, being a model employer in the community sector forms part of the QWWS strategic vision and the 2012 QWWS Certified Agreement, which has been recently renegotiated, maintains support for flexible employee-initiated work arrangements, provides for training as well as up to 6 months paid parental leave and wage increases for employees.

QWWS has continued to support the Federal Pay Equity Test Case (following the success of the Queensland case) through grassroots campaigning with the Australian Services Union, as

well as provided client education on this important and historic issue that is necessary to provide recognition of the work performed in our sector in the delivery of services to the community's most vulnerable groups. The sector was pleased with the interim decision in May 2011, and subsequent decision in December 2011, which found that community sector workers were undervalued and acknowledged the gendered workforce of predominantly female workers. Wage increases of between 18 and 37% were awarded.

On behalf of the Management Committee I would like to thank the Directors and the staff who have delivered such professional and competent services to the women and youth who access the service.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of our Management Committee in providing support and solutions to the problem of working in such a challenging funding environment as the recent months have provided.

Management Committee

The QWWS has now operated since 1994 with the ongoing commitment and work of a volunteer Management Committee, which oversees QWWS governance and operations. The Management Committee is made up of representatives from a broad range of organisations and individuals, and the service relies on the volunteer efforts of this group of women who provide strategic direction and support for the service.

Loretta Gibbs (QWWS Financial Controller) and Michelle Patterson (Dept Justice and Attorney General) also performed consulting roles on the committee during 2011/2012.

Committee Achievements

Strategic planning meeting conducted July 2011

Annual General Meeting October 2011

QWWS Certified Agreement negotiations with the Australian Services Union and staff – Feb to June 2012.

Elected Management Committee 2011/2012

Shanti Thompson (Chair)	Individual member
Alison McClintock (Deputy-Chair)	Individual member
Samanthi Gunawardana (Secretary)	Griffith University
Leah Mertons (Treasurer)	Individual member
Anna Herzog	Australian Services Union (Services)
Roslyn Monro	Youth Advocacy Centre/ Women's Legal Service
Jan Sheppard	Together Union (Clerical)
Kerriann Dear	Management Rep (Co-Director)
Sue Assad	Management Rep (Co-Director)
Alana Heffernan	Individual Member (Youth)
Lee Matahaere	Staff Representative

Director's Report

Queensland Working Women's Service Inc. continued to deliver advisory and advocacy services to vulnerable working women in the state during 2011/12 with funding from the Commonwealth provided through the Fair Work Ombudsman and the Queensland Bligh State Government.

With funding limitations and service capacity we are conscious of the need to target our service provision to the most vulnerable and marginalised workers. These groups include older women, young women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women (CALD), regional women and women with disabilities.

Clients who contact QWWS for assistance are seeking information on their rights and options on courses of action available to them to redress unfairness in the workplace. QWWS clients typically reflect the level of disadvantage that women often experience in their employment, still (in 2011 from the Census) earning 17.5% less than men on average and facing particular and sensitive issues such as pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment and gendered discrimination at work. An overview and analysis of the frequency and issues working women have raised with the service over the past year is contained in the QWWS Service Delivery Report.

This past year we have continued to take a lead role in a number of projects around domestic violence and work including the convening of the Domestic Violence Workplace Action Group, endorsing the submission by The Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House for the consolidation of anti-discrimination laws with the inclusion of DV as a ground of discrimination and participating in face-to-face consultations conducted by the Human Rights Commission in relation to domestic violence protections available for women in the Workplace at a day-long consultation in Sydney in November 2011. Two staff and one of our Management Committee members attended the Safe at Home, Safe at Work Conference in Melbourne in December 2011. The new QWWS Certified Agreement 2012 also has provisions for family and domestic violence leave and support for staff.

The QWWS 2011 AGM was held on Thursday 20 October at the Country Women's Association at Spring Hill, which has become the regular venue for our functions and also for the Management Committee and staff planning days, which took place during July and August.

Kerriann Dear and 3 staff attended and made presentations at the 4th *Our Work Our Lives: Women and Industrial Relations Conference* in East Timor in September 2011, which coincided with the opening of the Working Women's Centre Timor L'Este. The centre has been supported in its development by the National Working Women's Centres and in particular South Australian Director Sandra Dann, who spent significant time in Dili assisting with the structure and strategic vision for the centre. The conference was attended by over 100 delegates, mostly from Australia and East Timor but with guests also from Indonesia. Ged Kearney, ACTU President, was the keynote speaker at the conference and acknowledged the importance of the work of the Australian Working Women's Centres. Additionally, during the conference,

Australian Senator Jacinta Collins announced the Commonwealth Government's commitment to supporting the National Working Women's Centres through the Community Based Employment Advisory Services funding from the Fair Work Ombudsman. Papers from the Conference are available on the QWWS website, www.qwws.org.au. QWWS will host the 2013 *Our Work Our Lives: Women and Industrial Relations Conference* in Brisbane in the middle of next year.

As part of the National Working Women's Centres group QWWS also participated in the Review of the Fair Work Act and the ACTU Enquiry into Insecure Work, and the House of Representatives Enquiry into Workplace Harassment, and highlighted the issues for vulnerable women workers in the community.

During the past 6 months we have undertaken a cultural accreditation with the Council of Elders at Griffith University to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who contact the service receive culturally appropriate services, and we have been grateful to Professor Boni Robertson and the IDCP at Griffith University for their support of QWWS and recognition of the importance of QWWS developing and maintaining cultural competence in working with Indigenous women in Queensland.

QWWS is a long-term and active member of the National Women's Alliance (Economic Security 4Women), and through this alliance we network and share information with women around Australia as well as the Office for Women and national policy makers. Sue Assad attended meetings in Sydney and Canberra as a representative of QWWS and the National Working Women's Centres.

Between November and December 2011 QWWS delivered over 20 seminars in the private sector on the topic of prevention of harassment and discrimination in the workplace, with extremely high satisfaction ratings from participants.

The strategic focus of QWWS has continued to be six priority areas, which are: capacity, financial governance, ideas and philosophy, internal relationships, sector development and partnerships and access to our services. However, our strategic planning for this year was interrupted with the news of our defunding by the new Newman State Government whereby

with only 8 days notice and no consultation, state funding was withdrawn as of 30 June 2011. This has drastic consequences for the service, our staff and clients with the loss of over \$747,000 in funding (including the Young Workers Advisory Service, which has now closed).

QWWS will remain open during 2012/2013 with assistance from the Commonwealth via a one-off grant from the Office for Women while we restructure and look for additional funding. This is in addition to our core funding from a four-year contract with the Fair Work Ombudsman.

QWWS Inc. Staff

With another year of funding uncertainty and some operational changes, the staff at QWWS remained committed and dedicated to service delivery and our service objectives. Our team included QWWS and YWAS Industrial Officer staff and our financial and administration workers. This year we saw the departure of Alana Heffernan who accepted a position with Maurice Blackburn and the addition of Nikki Candy as Principal Industrial Officer. Andrew Marsden was also made a permanent staff member of JAG in the workplace inspectorate. We thank our temporary staff, Wendy Greenhill, Marilyn Davis and Amelia Richardson who covered the positions while staff were on secondment. Lee Matahaere has continued to lead the telephone advisory service as team leader with Industrial Officers Fiona Bucknall, Tricia Pagliaro, Kate Flynn and Jessie Westaway. Sue Assad performed the Co-Director role during the period working closely with myself in a jobshare role. Our casual staff included Seamus Bundy and Rohan Hilton in the YWAS team. I sincerely thank all our staff, whom I value enormously, for their efforts during this period.

QWWS Service Delivery Report 2011/12

1. Provision of a telephone advice "advisory-line" for women on employment matters

During the reporting period, QWWS provided a telephone advisory service between 9am and 1pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday (until 4pm). The office is closed on Thursdays. QWWS receives a consistently high volume of requests for assistance and prioritises these through our triage/intake system. QWWS provided assistance to 2343 women during this period.

2. Casework assistance

This includes assistance with responding to workplace issues, advice on contracts, negotiating conditions of employment or leave, mediation and dispute resolution as well as individual advocacy and representation in relevant industrial relations commissions where a claim is accepted.

QWWS assisted 176 women with casework, including representation, during the period. Through this service over \$100,000 was recovered from employers for women by way of entitlements or compensation for unfair dismissal, underpayment of wages or discrimination. Reinstatement, apologies and the provision of positive references were also sought and achieved by many clients.

Referrals and partnerships for industrial advocacy for women

During the period, QWWS maintained and developed a number of referral partnerships to assist women with matters that could not be progressed by QWWS. This included clients who wished to take their complaints to a tribunal hearing, those who needed higher-level legal advice or callers who fell outside our target groups.

QWWS has maintained our long-term referral relationships with Hall Payne Lawyers, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers and Rob Stevenson of Australian Workplace Lawyers. These organisations have provided assistance to QWWS' clients as well as to our Industrial Officers when we have needed expert legal opinions on industrial matters.

3. Community outreach to women on workplace issues

QWWS delivers workshops and information sessions to groups of women in the community aimed at increasing awareness of workplace issues, preparing for and re-entering work and developing negotiating skills in the workplace. During this period, 23 workshops were delivered. Evaluations of the seminars indicated that over 99% of women agreed or strongly agreed that they increased their knowledge through attendance and that the information was

easy to understand.

4. Client statistics

From 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012, QWWS received a total of 2343 client queries. These included:

- 2275 specialised assistance calls
- 176 new casework clients and
- 78 general inquiry clients.

Client demographics

- 2% of clients identified as being from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.
- 9% of clients identified as being from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- 53% of women were in the age group 25-45.
- 67% of client queries came from outside the Brisbane metropolitan area
- 15% of women were employed on a casual basis.

Issues for QWWS clients

During the past year, the majority of enquiries to QWWS (752) concerned dismissal (unfair, unlawful or invalid). Discrimination (327) and workplace harassment (375) also represented a high proportion of enquiries. QWWS clients often present with multiple and complex concerns in relation to their employment.

The most common industries represented by QWWS clients during the period were health and community services (20%) and the retail and wholesale sectors (13%). These have consistently been the most common industries employing QWWS clients over the past 7 years.

Consistent with previous reporting periods, 50% of our callers were permanent full-time employees, with 15% casual and 16% permanent part-time employees. This compares to 50%

full-time and 19% part-time and 16% casual clients in 2010/2011.

In the period, (20%) of our referrals came from state government agencies (including Legal Aid). Federal government agencies, including the Fair Work Ombudsman, referred around 48% of callers. Calls referred by federal government agencies mostly originated from the Fair Work Ombudsman and Fair Work Australia Info lines.

5. Media/promotional activities

QWWS engaged in 15 media and promotional activities in the 2010/2011 year, including:

- International Women's Day Breakfast
- Revamp and update of QWWS website to include Indigenous Working Women's Portal
- Sunday Mail interview on QWWS defunding
- Attendance at the *Our Work Our Lives Conference on Women and Industrial Relations* in East Timor (August 2011) and presenting and chairing presentations
- Health and Community Services Workforce Conference
- IRSQ Women in IR High Tea
- National Women's Conference in Townsville
- Economic Security 4 Women National meeting in Canberra

QWWS website (www.qwws.org.au)

Website details:

- 12,147 visits with 31,628 Page views (75.44% new visitors) over 12 months
- 73.4% of all visitors to the site came via a search engine such as Google, and around 25% of visitors came to the site by clicking a link on another website. Of the latter, 488 came via links on the Queensland Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR) websites.

QWWS client feedback

QWWS conducted regular client evaluations of casework clients and education/information sessions. Over 98% of clients are consistently very satisfied or satisfied with the assistance they have received from QWWS.

Emerging issues for QWWS clients

Industry issues

This year, clients working in health and community services, personal service, wholesale or retail and hospitality/accommodation represented over 38% of QWWS callers. These industries all have high rates of complaints about discrimination and dismissal, with the health and community services sector displaying the highest percentage of calls relating to workplace harassment. This last trend is one that has continued over the last 4 years and may indicate industry-wide and industry-specific problems regarding the management of workplace harassment. Incidents of reported workplace harassment overall decreased in the past 12 months from 462 to 375.

2010/11 complaint comparisons:

Compared with the previous financial year, pregnancy discrimination increased slightly from 2% to 3.5% of callers. Dismissal complaints rose from 32% to 33% of callers. Enquiries about redundancy increased from 3.7% to 8% of callers.

Case studies

*names and identifying information have been changed

Unfair dismissal

*Lola was a 22-year old apprentice hairdresser in her third year of training. When Lola informed the manager of her pregnancy her employment was terminated the same day and she was told it was because the employer "could no longer afford her". The employer hired another new employee that week. Lola lodged an unfair dismissal, arguing the termination was not a genuine redundancy, and the QWWS represented her at the conference. Lola received

compensation for lost wages in an amount equivalent to 6 weeks wages.

*Stevie had worked as a Gaming Machine Operator at a veterans club, in a casual position for 7 years. She had never had any issues with her performance and never received any warnings. Another staff member had left \$1500 in cash unattended near a gaming machine and the money was subsequently stolen, which was later confirmed by video surveillance of the premises. Stevie was called in to a meeting the following day and her employment was terminated despite the employer acknowledging that she was not responsible for the money. Stevie lodged an unfair dismissal application and QWWS represented her at the conciliation conference. Stevie received \$5000.00 in compensation.

*Janis worked as a Finance Officer for a small business for just under two years. Janis became pregnant and made a request to go part time. The employer would not allow her to go part time and terminated her employment citing performance issues that had never been raised before. QWWS assisted Janis with lodging an unfair dismissal application with Fair Work Australia and represented her at the conference. Janis was re-instated to her position and received compensation for the time between her dismissal and when she returned to work.

Discrimination

Pregnancy

* Jasmine worked full time in a factory as an admin officer for 4.5 years. Jasmine went on maternity leave and when she was attempting to return to her full time position the employer told her that it was no longer available as it had been absorbed by other employees. The employer offered her 1 day of work per week as a casual employee. Jasmine made a complaint to the ADCQ alleging pregnancy discrimination and QWWS represented her at the conciliation conference. She received \$4000.00 in compensation.

Disability

* Mary was 60 and worked as a bookkeeper's assistant for a small business for over 13 years. Mary had a degenerative condition that caused pain in her elbows and neck. Mary informed

her boss that her hands were becoming worse and at some point in the future she may have to consider retiring. Mary's employment was terminated shortly afterwards and the employer advised it was because of her failing health. She was paid two weeks notice of termination although she was entitled to five weeks. QWWS assisted Mary with an application to the commission and the matter was settled. She received compensation for lost wages in an amount equivalent to 6 weeks wages

Family responsibility/breastfeeding

* Shelly worked as a professional in an accounting office and was to return from parental leave. Toward the end of her leave, she requested to return to work 3 days per week on the basis of family responsibilities and breastfeeding (under NES). Her employer resisted then offered 4 days per week (on a take it or leave it basis). The employer said they would only consider 3 days after this if medical evidence for breast feeding was provided. After several weeks of negotiations the employer finally agreed to Shelly's request for a trial for 6 months, as there were no reasonable business grounds for refusing her request.

Future directions

The strategic planning day to assist QWWS in determining our future directions beyond funded service delivery was postponed due to concerns around ongoing funding and will now be held in early 2013.

QWWS will continue to deliver services to women in accordance with funding agreements with the Fair Work Ombudsman and the Office For Women for the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2013. We will also host the 5th *Our Work Our Lives Conference on Women and Industrial Relations* in September 2013. For more information about the conference please visit the QWWS website www.qwws.org.au

Young Workers Advisory Service Report

Mission Statement

To assist and support young workers in dealing with any workplace issue.

Objectives of Young Workers Advisory Service (YWAS)

- Increase young workers' knowledge of conditions, legal requirements and government policies and programs relating to the workplace in both state and federal jurisdictions.
- Provide services that are accessible to, and appropriate for, diverse language and cultural groups and that respond to the needs of geographically isolated young people.
- Enhance existing work-related services provided by unions, government and other organisations to young workers while ensuring that there is no duplication of functions.

QWWS has sponsored the Young Workers Advisory Service (YWAS) since April 2002, and YWAS has operated alongside funded industrial relations services for women since that time. QWWS is the legal entity for the YWAS.

YWAS was established to provide information, advice and advocacy to young people on work-related issues including employment entitlements, maternity leave, termination and redundancy, discrimination and sexual harassment, workplace bullying and employment contracts. The service handles client queries and provides a "case-work" service to assist with claims to workplace relations authorities, industrial tribunals and anti-discrimination commissions. In addition, YWAS provides resources, such as brochures and infosheets, and delivers information sessions and workshops on rights and entitlements.

YWAS continued to provide support and assistance to young people in approaching their employers about their employment entitlements or negotiating better outcomes at work.

YWAS also assisted young people to make complaints to Fair Work Australia (FWA), the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO), the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) and the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (ADCQ) as well as in lodging employment claims with the Magistrates Court where applicable.

Young people are generally not members of unions and are unlikely to engage privately paid advocacy or legal advice in respect of employment rights. Further, the experience of YWAS is that members of this group are also not tenacious in exploring or seeking to uphold their rights at work, and without support in a manner that is developmentally appropriate many situations pass without redress to the disadvantage of young people.

The take-up of, and feedback about, services offered by YWAS from young people over the past 10 years is an indication that access to a youth-specific employment service is of significant value in upholding the rights of young employees. However, the QWWS Management Committee and all of the QWWS and YWAS staff were extremely saddened and upset to learn that YWAS funding was to be axed by the Queensland Newman Government as at 1 July 2011. Similar to the QWWS funding there was no notice of this cut and the impact has been the closure of the service. QWWS will continue to maintain the YWAS website and Facebook in the foreseeable future.

YWAS Service Delivery Report

The client services reported on under this section were contracted under a funding agreement with the Queensland Department Justice and Attorney General (JAG).

Service delivery

1. Provision of a telephone advice "advisory-line" for young people on employment matters.

During the reporting period, YWAS provided a telephone advisory service four-and-a-half days per week. The advice line is closed on Thursday afternoons to allow Industrial Officers to

perform casework and attend training, team or casework meetings.

Financial Year	2010/2011	2011/2012
Total clients requesting assistance	1116	1071
Specialised industrial relations information/advice	999	1023
General client assistance (basic information or referral)	117	48
Casework services provided	160	102
Information/educational sessions	42	29
Media and promotional activities	58	28
YWAS website visits	4769	4065

2. Casework assistance

This includes assistance with responding to workplace issues, advice on contracts, negotiating conditions of employment or leave, mediation and dispute resolution as well as individual advocacy and representation in relevant industrial relations commissions where a claim is accepted.

YWAS assisted 102 young people with casework, including representation, during the period, recovering over \$100,000.00 from employers for young people by way of compensation for unfair dismissal, underpayment of wages or discrimination. Statements of Service, and Deeds of Release or Settlement were also finalised for many young people.

Referrals and partnerships for casework

During the period, YWAS developed and maintained a number of referral partnerships to assist clients further. This included clients who wished to progress their complaints to a tribunal hearing, those who needed higher-level legal advice or those dealing with training contract issues.

YWAS has maintained our well-established referral relationships with the Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman, Hall Payne Lawyers and Maurice Blackburn Lawyers. We have also strengthened our referral relationship with Rob Stevenson of Australian Workplace Lawyers. These organisations have provided assistance to YWAS' clients as well as to our Industrial Officers when expert legal/workplace opinions are needed.

3. Community outreach to young people on workplace issues/information/education sessions

YWAS delivered workshops and information sessions to groups of young people aimed at increasing awareness of workplace issues, preparing for and re-entering work and developing negotiating skills in the workplace. During this period, 29 sessions were delivered. Evaluations of the sessions indicated that over 98% of the participants agreed that they increased their knowledge and that the information was easy to understand.

The majority of information sessions were delivered at Queensland high schools, but sessions were also held at Brisbane Youth Service and Get Set for Work agencies.

4. Client statistics

From 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011, QWWS received a total of 1071 client queries. These included 1023 specialised assistance calls, 102 casework clients and 78 general inquiry clients.

Client demographics

- 5% of clients identified as being from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or non-English speaking backgrounds.
- 46% of client queries came from rural and regional areas.

Statistics for young people contacting YWAS

During the past year, the majority of enquiries to YWAS (368) concerned dismissal (unfair, unlawful or invalid). Discrimination (112) and workplace harassment (113) also represented a high proportion of enquiries. 42 young people contacting the service reported sexual harassment. YWAS clients often present with multiple and complex concerns in relation to their employment.

The most common industries represented by YWAS clients during the period were the retail

and wholesale sectors (19%). Since 2002 this has been the most common employer of young people contacting YWAS for assistance.

A majority (35%) of our callers were permanent full-time employees, with 29.5% casual and 8% permanent part-time employees. This compares to 34% full-time, 28% casual and 7% part-time in 2009/2010.

In this period, the majority (45%) of our referrals came from federal government agencies. State government agencies, including Legal Aid, referred 22% of callers. Calls referred by the federal government mostly originated from the Fair Work Ombudsman and Fair Work Australia Info line.

YWAS client feedback

YWAS conducted regular client evaluations of casework clients and education/information sessions. Over 98% of clients are consistently very satisfied or satisfied with the assistance they have received from YWAS. The majority of clients were unaware of any other service that could have helped them at the time. Some comments made were "YWAS staff were really helpful during a very tough time at work". "Without YWAS my son had no one to assist him to stand up for his rights", and, "The support showed to me by you guys was great - thanks".

5. Media/promotional activities

YWAS undertook activities including:

- Redland Youth Festival
- Youth week at the Brisbane Mall
- Ipswich Youth Week Celebration
- YWAS Peer Workers development of YWAS Facebook and updated infosheets
- Attended Youth Network meetings
- Handed out YWAS brochures and flyers at high schools

- Attended Orientation week at major Universities
- Mail out to school Guidance Officers.

YWAS website and Facebook

The website has provided YWAS service users with the options to make e-requests for workplace information or advice from YWAS Industrial Officers and to request school or group talks. The website contains updated information sheets, information about upcoming events and issues facing young workers.

During the past 12 months the YWAS website recorded:

- 4065 visits
- 1125 page views
- 3047 visitors
- 73% were new visitors.

The website is accessed by direct traffic at 24%, referral sites 27% (including Facebook and apps. facebook.com) and search engines 47%.

A Facebook profile for YWAS was established in 2008. During 2011 a working group of young people assisted in the revamp of the Facebook page. This included the link with Twitter. Advertising on Facebook has also assisted in increasing visits to the YWAS website.

Regional tour 2011

The annual Regional Information and Education Outreach project was conducted in Toowoomba in October 2011. The visit included three school talks, networking with youth organisations and the general promotion of the services provided by YWAS. The visit also provided an opportunity to catch up with youth agencies in these areas.

Current issues for young people in employment

While a key concern for young people continues to be termination of their employment, a number of other concerns occur either separate to or alongside dismissals that are unlawful or unfair. These include underpayment of wages, unauthorised deductions from pay, discrimination (age and pregnancy) and workplace health and safety (including workplace bullying). It is particularly common for underpayment of wages claims to be associated with dismissal or less favourable treatment in the workplace after a complaint is made. There were numerous complaints from young people in relation to their apprenticeships or traineeships particularly with underpayment of wages, recognition of training and processes around cancellation of training contracts with many young people coerced into cancelling their training contracts without understanding the implications of the cancellation.

Over the past 4 years YWAS has received over 700 complaints of workplace bullying and sexual harassment from young people and a large proportion related to the inappropriate conduct of their employer or manager. Such situations make it difficult for the young person to seek help within their workplace, and in some instances it leaves the young person with no other option but to leave their employment. When YWAS examines such complaints, it has been surprising to find the number of organisations that do not have policies or procedures in place, and where they do exist complaints are often dismissed without proper investigation. Such unacceptable behaviour compromises the safety of young people at work and risks legal action against employers.

Case studies

*Names and identifying information have been changed.

*Mary, 20 years old, had been working in a community-based organisation on a casual basis for around four years in a number of casual and ongoing roles. Her older sister also worked for the organisation. Her sister lodged a Workcover claim for bullying and harassment, which was subsequently upheld despite being opposed by the employer. The employer then retaliated by firing Mary. The employer tried to argue that Mary lacked the requisite qualifying period of 6 months to lodge an unfair dismissal because they had moved her into a new role. YWAS argued that she clearly had an ongoing expectation of employment. At a Conciliation

Conference the employer settled the matter with Mary for \$2000 compensation and a positive statement of service.

*Sally Anne was working as a trainee childcare worker for just under one year. Her employer terminated her without any explanation. This also led the cancelation of her training contract at the same time. There had been no prior warnings prior to her termination nor was she provided with a fair process leading up to her dismissal. Sally Anne contacted YWAS following her termination and was advised to lodge an unfair dismissal. YWAS represented her and the matter conciliated with Sally Anne being compensated for the time she was unemployed as well as receiving a reference.

*Bill worked as a trades assistant for 3 years. When it was discovered Bill was not being paid correctly and Bill asserted his rights, his employer commenced a process of performance management and dismissed Bill after just 2 weeks without any opportunity for him to address the concerns raised. YWAS assisted Bill through an unfair dismissal conciliation conference where it was agreed that Bill was to be reinstated and his correct wages back paid. Bill moved into a proper apprenticeship shortly afterwards with trade recognition from another employer.

*Kevin worked as a cook for a large industrial company outside of Brisbane for four years and was underpaid. After his underpayment claim was lodged with FWO, Kevin's hours were reduced by from full time to part time. YWAS assisted Kevin prepare for a General Protections Conference, which he ran himself with a conciliated outcome.

*Jack worked as a carer in a large aged care facility in a major regional town was experiencing bullying at work whereby his manager would loudly yell at him and put him down. Jack also felt that his work was being scrutinised much more than anyone else's. Jack had complained informally to another Manager but the behaviour had not stopped. YWAS assisted Jack to follow the formal grievance process in his organisation and make his complaint in writing to the HR Manager and supported him while his complaint was managed. YWAS also provided Jack with information about the relevant union that covered his workplace.

*Clyde worked as a junior manager at a large hotel. Clyde was called into HR and told that he

should resign from his position because of a friendship he had with a former staff member who had been dismissed. Clyde refused to resign and was dismissed immediately. There were also underpayment for overtime wages issues. YWAS represented Clyde at a Conciliation Conference and was successful in settling the matter for \$5000 for all matters relating to the employment.

*Carise was 20 years old and worked for a small family business. Carise was sexually harassed over a period of 18 months by the male owner of the business. The harassment included exposing her to pornographic images in the workplace and repeatedly asking her sexual questions. The harassment continued until Carise felt too embarrassed and intimidated to continue to attend the workplace and left without notice. YWAS assisted Carise to lodge a sexual harassment complaint with the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (ADCQ) and represented her at the conciliation conference. In a settlement agreement Carise received financial compensation.

Martin was in his 2nd year as an apprenticeship with a mechanics workshop when he was told his job was going to become casual because of a slow down in work and his apprenticeship would not continue. YWAS advised him of his rights and represented him at an unfair dismissal conciliation conference. Martin received all of his unpaid wages as well as compensation and was supported with referrals to seek an ongoing apprenticeship with an alternative employer.

After the closure of YWAS in July 2012 due to withdrawal of State Government funding, Young women who contact YWAS for assistance with their workplace issues are now being referred to the Queensland Working Women's Service for advice.

Thank you to all those people who have supported YWAS over its 10 years of operation. We were very sad to see YWAS close.