

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Immigration Advice and Rights Centre



Immigration Advice
and Rights Centre

**EVERYONE
DESERVES
TO BE SAFE
REGARDLESS
OF VISA STATUS.**

“Thank you for all the hard work, patience, and support you gave me throughout my visa journey. This path was full of stress and uncertainty, but having you by my side made a huge difference. I truly feel grateful and happy that you were there to guide me through each step. Your professionalism, kindness, and dedication helped me reach a positive outcome, and I couldn’t have done it without you.”

– **Rana***, IARC client

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work. We acknowledge this land holds structures of law which were practiced for thousands of generations and recognise First Nations peoples’ cultures, wisdom and connection to lands throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge that sovereignty over this land was never ceded.

It always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

*All client names have been changed to protect their identities.

Our Impact



IARC assisted more than
2,100 clients from
127 countries.

2,175+
clients ●

735+
women and children
experiencing
domestic and
family violence ●

580+
migrant workers ●

365+
families reunited ●

400+
refugees and people
seeking asylum ●

120+
exploited workers ●

35+
LGBTQIA+ clients ●

19,000+
services ●

5,000+
legal services ●

2,365+
domestic and
family violence-
related services ●

20+
community
information sessions ●



The above map shows the locations that IARC's team travelled to this year including rural, regional and remote communities across New South Wales. Our team provided free immigration legal advice, delivered community information sessions and attended events in areas where services and information can be difficult for migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum to access.



Left:
Lauri Stewart,
Kathryn Viegas,
Sarah Sinclair,
Kristie Mellor,
Joshua Strutt and
Ann Emmanuel
at the 2025
Immigration Law
Conference in
Canberra.

Contents

- 2__Our Impact
- 6__President's and CEO/Principal Solicitor's Message
- 8__Who We Are and Our Work
- 11__Immigration and Domestic Violence
- 19__Visa Assist
- 28__Refugees and People Seeking Asylum
- 36__Our Reconciliation Action Plan
- 38__Our Team
- 40__Our Management Committee
- 41__Our Pro Bono Partners
- 42__Our Volunteers
- 44__Our Intern Program
- 45__Our Funding
- 46__Our Finances

President's and CEO/Principal Solicitor's Message

This year has been one of growth and impact for IARC. With an expanded team, we've been able to reach a record number of people experiencing vulnerability, providing trusted legal advice and advocacy for more than **2,175 migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum**.

In 2024, we started an important project as part of a national initiative to address the backlog of Protection visa appeals at the Administrative Review Tribunal and Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia. **Through our Protection Appeals Legal Service we assisted more than 400 refugees and people seeking asylum**, travelling to regional, rural and remote areas to ensure free expert legal advice was accessible. More than **1 in 5 people** we supported through this project had previously relied on incorrect or misleading advice from unqualified or unscrupulous migration agents and lawyers – a reminder of how vital it is that people seeking safety can access credible and holistic immigration services.

We celebrated **five years of Visa Assist**, our joint service with Unions NSW. Together, we marked long-awaited reforms – the **Workplace Justice visa, visa cancellation protections, and portability rights** – following years of advocacy. These reforms are already helping migrant workers speak out against exploitation and remain lawfully in Australia while seeking justice. So far, we have advised more than 120 people who enquired about the new protections, and we know this is just the tip of the iceberg.

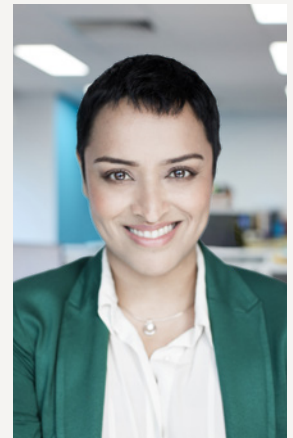
Our **Immigration and Domestic Violence Service** supported more women and children than ever before. The IARC team assisted **more than 735 people on temporary visas experiencing violence** – almost double the number of victim-survivors we assisted in previous years. We also saw important changes with the expansion of the family violence provisions, allowing more victim-survivors to access a secure visa pathway to leave unsafe relationships.

This reform followed years of dedicated advocacy across sectors, including from IARC and the National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence.

This year we also welcomed **new Management Committee members, Alistair Sage and Sophia Kagan**, whose diverse expertise strengthens our governance and vision for the future. **We also extend our sincere thanks to Kittu Randhawa and David Nguyen**, who we farewelled this year after years of dedicated service.

As we look to the year ahead, we are excited about new projects and continuing to drive systemic change – through law reform, advocacy, and community education. **Demand for IARC's services continues to grow, but so does our determination to meet it – to ensure that every person, regardless of visa status, can access safety and justice.**

Whenever we put together our annual report, we are reminded of how proud we are of the work we do. All of IARC's successes are collective achievements – every single member of our team contributes to the vital work we do. We acknowledge and thank everyone who has been part of our team over the past year, as we would not be able to accomplish so much without their continued support.



Kathryn Viegas
President



Joshua Strutt
CEO/Principal Solicitor

Who We Are and Our Work

IARC is a community legal centre and non-profit organisation based in New South Wales (NSW) that assists migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum. We are experts in immigration law and advocate to improve human rights in Australia. As the only free specialist legal service in Australia that advises on all immigration, refugee, and citizenship issues, IARC provides a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable people in the community. Our holistic legal support makes it possible for people to find safety, and rebuild their future. IARC's vision is for Australia's immigration system to be fair, just and accessible. To achieve this, our work is focused on three key areas: delivering **legal advice**, driving **law reform and advocacy**, and sharing knowledge through **education**.

Legal Advice

Our lawyers provide free legal advice to people who are navigating Australia's immigration system. The advice we provide is independent and trauma-informed, covering all areas of immigration and citizenship law. We help people experiencing vulnerability understand their rights and make informed decisions about their visa matters. Through outreach in women's refuges, community support centres, regional communities and partnerships with other organisations, we ensure that legal help is available in safe and accessible places.

Law Reform and Advocacy

Our legal work gives us a unique, practical insight into how immigration and citizenship law affects people's lives. We use our expertise to challenge injustice, advocate for our clients and push for better reforms. By amplifying the voices of the people most affected, we help shape a fairer immigration system and protect human rights in Australia.

Education

Empowering people with knowledge is central to our mission. We equip clients, community organisations and the wider sector with up-to-date, accessible information about immigration law and policy. Through information sessions, resources and community education programs, we build understanding and resilience – especially during times of significant legal or policy change.

Right:
Principal Solicitor
Ann Emmanuel
(far right) at the
Domestic, Family
and Sexual Violence
Commission's
Multicultural
Communities
Roundtable.



DFS COMMISSION



**VISA STATUS
SHOULD NEVER
BE A BARRIER TO
SAFETY FROM
VIOLENCE.**

Right:
Principal Solicitor Ann Emmanuel and
Solicitor Ivana Cugalj running a workshop
with the Macarthur Women's Domestic
Violence Court Advocacy Services.

Immigration and Domestic Violence



Our Work

IARC provides immigration legal advice and assistance to people on temporary visas who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV). Most of the people we support are women, children and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. They are often facing complex visa and citizenship challenges that can significantly impact their safety, stability and future. Our team provides confidential and trauma-informed services to ensure people who come to us experiencing DFSV feel safe and supported.

Temporary visa holders face heightened risks of violence, as their visa status is often

tied to their relationship with a perpetrator, who may use threats and misinformation about their visa as a tool of control. For many of our clients, visa status also restricts access to critical supports such as Centrelink, social housing and Medicare. This leaves many people and families facing an impossible choice: remain in an unsafe relationship or risk homelessness.

Our team empowers clients to understand their visa options, assert their rights and make informed decisions about their and their children's safety.

We also provide education and training to frontline DFSV workers – including refuge staff, specialist DFSV workers and multicultural resource centre staff – to enable them to better support temporary visa holders and facilitate wrap-around services for clients.

A core part of IARC's work is to drive systemic change in partnership with the DFSV and multicultural sectors. We continue to advocate for reforms to ensure the immigration system does not disadvantage victim-survivors of DFSV. Our vision is for an immigration system that cannot be weaponised as a tool of abuse and where visa status is never a barrier to safety.

“Thanks to the family violence provisions and the compassionate understanding of your team, I was able to remain in Australia with my children and rebuild our lives in safety and stability. I have now been granted permanent residency (PR), which marks a significant and hopeful new chapter for me and my family — a possibility that would not have been achievable without your help.

Receiving PR not only provides legal security for me and my children but also opens the door to a future filled with opportunities, healing, and peace. Your kindness, dedication, and professionalism meant the world to us, and I will forever be grateful for the way you supported me throughout this process. I truly appreciate the important work you do for women and families facing hardship.”

– **Malee, IARC client**

Our Impact

After years of sustained advocacy by IARC, in partnership with organisations in the DFSV and multicultural sectors, 2024 brought major reform: the expansion of access to the family violence provisions to include secondary applicants for permanent visas. This change gives more victim-survivors a secure visa pathway to leave unsafe relationships.

Following this change, IARC reached out to former clients who had previously been excluded from the provisions to let them know about the new pathway to safety. We have already represented several clients under the expanded provisions, and within months of the reform, our first client was granted a permanent visa. To ensure the sector and community were informed, IARC delivered a webinar on the changes, attended by almost 150 participants – 90% were professionals working in the DFSV sector.



Below:

Principal Solicitor Ann Emmanuel at the Diverse Women in Law Conference.

Beyond this reform, IARC's team continued to secure life-changing outcomes for clients facing complex immigration challenges, including:

- Successful remittals from the Administrative Review Tribunal for clients whose Partner visa applications had been refused by the Department of Home Affairs.
- Grants of Protection visas for clients who had experienced DFSV and gender-based violence in Australia and overseas.
- Approval of citizenship applications for long-standing IARC clients previously supported to secure permanent residency under the family violence provisions.
- Assisting women who had been exit-trafficked to continue permanent residency applications, including a client whose application had been fraudulently withdrawn by a perpetrator.
- Securing Partner visas under the family violence provisions, including in cases where clients faced onerous requests for further evidence of violence or had been misidentified as primary aggressors.

Legal Outreach and Community Engagement

IARC continued its partnerships with DFSV frontline services to ensure victim-survivors can access legal advice and support in safe and trusted spaces. Our lawyers visited Lou's Place and the Women and Girls Emergency Centre (WAGEC) fortnightly to meet with clients in person. This outreach service has allowed more clients to meet our team in a safe location, where they are already accessing other DFSV support.

Our team continued to play a leading role in strengthening knowledge across the sector and community about immigration and DFSV as well as the impacts of reforms. The webinar we held to brief services just weeks after the expansion of the family violence provisions was one of IARC's most attended community information sessions. Due to demand for information about the intersection of immigration and DFSV, we hosted another successful webinar in early 2025 which was attended by more than 140 people.

Alongside our online sessions, IARC's lawyers provided targeted training to frontline services working directly with victim-survivors. Our team delivered training for social workers at South Western Sydney Local Health District and Western NSW Local Health District. They also delivered tailored sessions to Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services in Artarmon and Macarthur, the Illawarra Multicultural Service, and case workers at Bonnie Support and the Benevolent Society.



Above:
Senior Solicitor
Kate Bookey at
Lou's Place for
IARC's outreach
program – providing
legal advice
in safe spaces.

Advocacy

As a key member of the National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence, IARC has long advocated for expanding the family violence provisions, so more women and children with insecure visa statuses can escape violence and remain safely in Australia. This year, our sustained advocacy contributed to the Federal Government expanding the family violence provisions to include secondary applicants on 18 visa subclasses. This was a major reform and IARC has already helped clients access permanent residency under these changes.

Our collaboration with Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) remained central to this advocacy. We co-convened DVNSW's Community of Practice for temporary visa holders experiencing DFSV and contributed to its Migrant and Refugee Advisory Committee. Principal Solicitor Ann Emmanuel, represented IARC on a panel at the DVNSW 2024 Conference and spoke at the launch of *Breaking Barriers: Critical support for temporary visa holders experiencing domestic and family violence in NSW* – an important report released in March 2025. IARC worked with DVNSW on recommendations for the report, advocating for funding for migrant and refugee women to access free legal support at community legal centres like IARC.

This year, we also worked to amplify lived experience and public understanding. With IARC's support, a former client shared her story with *The Guardian*, shining a national spotlight on the challenges faced by temporary visa holders experiencing DFSV. Ann Emmanuel also contributed her expertise to SBS Examines, appearing in a podcast and video to counter misinformation on deportations and visa cancellations. The podcast was translated into more than 30 languages.

At the policy level, IARC consulted with the Department of Home Affairs on making non-judicial evidence processes more

accessible and trauma-informed, while continuing to advocate for a substantive temporary visa with a clear pathway to permanency for victim-survivors. Our team also contributed to major national consultations, including:

- The Attorney-General's Department consultation on *Enhancing Civil Protections and Remedies for Forced Marriage*.
- The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet consultation on *Commonwealth Systems Abuses*.
- OurWatch's national consultation on preventing violence against women in migrant and refugee communities.

Below:

Principal Solicitors Ali Mojtahedi and Ann Emmanuel at the Nepean Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Service Expo with ACON.



Fiona's Story

Fiona was referred to IARC by the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service more than three years ago. At the time, she was facing criminal charges and an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) against her from her partner, who had sponsored her for a Partner visa.

Over several early appointments with Fiona, she began to disclose a history of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) perpetrated by her partner. They had been in a relationship for over a decade, and she moved to a small town to continue their lives together. She experienced years of ongoing abuse, including social isolation, threats to be deported or have her visa cancelled, as a way to control her behaviour. Fiona's partner would also frequently taunt and provoke her to try to get her to react.

Initially, in conversations with IARC, Fiona was uncertain whether she could leave her partner, because he had repeatedly told her that she was only in Australia because he had sponsored her and her visa would be cancelled if she left him. Over several appointments, IARC spoke to Fiona about the option of relying on the family violence provisions if her relationship ended and explained what the process would look like.

Fiona's visa matter was further complicated by the ongoing criminal matters against her at the time. Due to the criminal charges and the AVO, the Department of Home Affairs required further information from Fiona to assess whether she passed the 'character test' under migration law. English was a second language for Fiona, so she had struggled

to explain her situation to the police when her partner had called them, so the police laid charges against her, instead of him.

IARC worked with Fiona to respond to requests for information over the course of three years and supported her to tell her story to the Department of Home Affairs, demonstrating that she was the primary victim-survivor of DFSV, not the perpetrator. IARC wrote submissions and helped Fiona gather further support letters and evidence to support her case.

After years of working with Fiona through the visa process, the Department of Home Affairs accepted that she passed the character test and had experienced family violence perpetrated by her visa sponsor. Her permanent visa was finally granted in 2025.

IARC and Redfern Legal Centre: working together to support victim-survivors of financial abuse

In January 2025, IARC and Redfern Legal Centre's (RLC) Financial Abuse Service (FAS) began a new collaboration, combining the expertise of FAS in tackling financial abuse with IARC's specialist Immigration and Domestic Violence Service. This partnership ensures that people accessing FAS who hold a visa, have uncertain visa status, or are unlawful can also access free, expert immigration advice and assistance from IARC as part of FAS's holistic multidisciplinary team.

IARC and RLC took part in a joint training session to help staff identify clients who may benefit from immigration advice, and new referral systems were established between our two services.

In its first six months, the partnership has already had a meaningful impact, providing intensive support to victim-survivors of financial abuse, including:

- Collaborating to support 16 victim-survivors of financial abuse.

- Delivering 52 advice appointments on visa and citizenship issues.
- Providing representation for clients in their visa matters.
- Assisting clients to respond to requests for information from the Department of Home Affairs.

Through this collaboration, IARC and RLC are ensuring that victim-survivors of financial abuse who face additional barriers due to their visa status can access critical legal support.



Above:
Staff from IARC and Redfern Legal Centre at a joint training session.

**SAFETY AND
EQUALITY FOR
ALL WORKERS.**

Visa Assist



Above:
Solicitor Gopika
Ayyappan Aryad
and Legal and
Communications
Officer Malina
Grube representing
Visa Assist at the
NSWMA 80th
Annual Conference.



Our Work

Visa Assist is a joint service run by IARC and Unions NSW dedicated to providing migrant workers with free immigration and citizenship advice. Our team assists union members on temporary visas, particularly those whose immigration status impacts their workplace rights or who are experiencing workplace exploitation.

Visa Assist also advocates for positive changes to the immigration system and delivers community education sessions

to ensure migrant workers are aware of their rights, options, and the most recent legislative changes.

We provide migrant workers with clear and confidential advice and realistic expectations about prospects of their applications or success. Many of our clients have previously received incorrect, inaccurate or overly optimistic advice that does not reflect the reality of their visa pathways.

The advice the Visa Assist team provides is impartial –

our goal is to ensure our clients are equipped with accurate and accessible advice so they can make decisions about their future confidently and with full knowledge of their prospects and of any risks involved.

Our solicitors are experienced, knowledgeable and understand how complex the Australian immigration system can be. It is vital a free service such as Visa Assist exists to advise migrant workers how to navigate this system.

Our Impact

Visa Assist broke records again this year, providing more migrant workers with legal advice than ever before. Our team assisted with almost 700 referrals from unions across Australia.

In July 2024, hard-fought reforms to protect migrant workers finally become law. The new Workplace Justice visa and visa cancellation protections now allow more visa holders experiencing workplace exploitation to speak out without jeopardising their visa status. In response, Visa Assist supported exploited workers to apply for the Workplace Justice visa – with every application we submitted approved by the Department of Home Affairs. This gave our clients the chance to pursue

justice while remaining lawfully in Australia. We also advised dozens of clients on the newly introduced portability rights, which enable workers to leave exploitative employers and find new sponsors.

This year, we had a strong focus on assisting clients experiencing exploitation in the aged care sector – particularly migrant workers with limited visa pathways or in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme. Demand for advice in this area was high. Our team empowered clients to understand the risks of employer sponsorship, assert their rights and report exploitation.

Our close collaboration with unions in Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, Tasmania and New South Wales ensured we could reach and assist more clients, including those in regional, rural and remote communities.

Our Visa Assist team proudly represents 7 countries and speaks 10 languages.

Right:
Danniel Pereira,
Sara Virk, Malina
Grube, Gabrielle
Pollard-Garbett and
Gopika Ayyappan
Aryad at the
IARC office.



Celebrating 5 years of Visa Assist

This year marked a major milestone – five years of IARC and Unions NSW working together to deliver Visa Assist. Since the service started, we have provided legal advice to more than 2,000 migrant workers facing underpayment, unsafe working conditions, wage theft, harassment, threats of visa cancellations, and other forms of exploitation.

IARC's advocacy and casework has achieved life-changing outcomes for our clients:

- Securing permanent residency for six women who were forced to work in slavery-like conditions.
- Reuniting a father, seriously injured, working in the PALM scheme, with his family in Australia.
- Contributing to major policy reforms such as the creation of the Workplace Justice visa, protections against visa cancellation for exploited workers and portability rights.

There is still a long road ahead to ensure all migrant workers can live and work in Australia free from exploitation. Together, IARC and Unions NSW will continue to advocate for safety and equality for all workers in Australia.



Above and left: CEO/Principal Solicitor Joshua Strutt and Solicitor Gopika Ayyappan Aryad at Visa Assist's 5-year anniversary.

Legal Outreach and Community Engagement

Community legal education is a vital part of the Visa Assist service. We provide information directly to migrant workers to ensure they understand their rights to fair treatment and safe conditions at work. Over the past year, our team delivered information sessions across NSW to hundreds of visa holders, including tailored workshops covering:

- Skilled visa pathways.
- Challenges in specific industries, such as nursing and aged care.
- Steps to take if experiencing workplace exploitation.

We also worked with union delegates and organisers, building their capacity to identify immigration-related workplace issues early and connect workers with Visa Assist. Importantly, we shared up-to-date advice on reforms such as the new Workplace Justice visa, protections against visa cancellation, and improved rights for exploited workers. Together, these efforts ensured migrant workers and their advocates had the tools they need to stand up for fairness and safety at work.



Left: Legal and Communications Officer Malina Grube and Senior Solicitor Danniell Pereira at NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association presenting an information session.



Advocacy

This year, IARC continued to advocate for stronger protections for migrant workers and to address power imbalances in the immigration system that contribute to workplace exploitation and modern slavery. We met regularly with the Department of Home Affairs to provide advice on improving pilot programs such as the Workplace Justice visa and visa cancellation protections, drawing on our experience assisting exploited workers.

Our advocacy extended internationally, with several of IARC's recommendations included in the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery's country statement on Australia.

We published a report and engaged in stakeholder consultations with our clients and Professor Tomoya Obokata during his visit to Sydney in 2024. This led to an invitation to the consultation on the Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner's strategic plan, which will guide the Commissioner's work in combatting modern slavery.

Recognising the vulnerabilities of workers in regional, rural and remote areas, we made detailed submissions to key inquiries including the Department of Home Affairs' review of regional migration settings and the NSW Parliament's inquiry into modern slavery risks in rural and regional areas.

Following this, our CEO and Principal Solicitor, Joshua Strutt, was invited to give evidence at the NSW parliamentary hearing

on modern slavery. He highlighted widespread exploitation in the PALM scheme, as part of IARC's ongoing advocacy for reform – including for workers to have the right to change employers without government approval.



Left:

IARC's Jake Davies, Kristie Mellor, Lauri Stewart, Joshua Strutt, Danniell Pereira and fellow advocates meeting with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Tomoya Obokata, during his Sydney visit.

Nilar's Story

Nilar arrived in Australia with her children to start a new life working as a chef. She was excited to come to Australia because she had heard that it is a welcoming and multicultural country. Nilar was sponsored on a Temporary Skill Shortage (subclass 482) visa by a restaurant to work in their kitchen. She was promised they would nominate her for permanent residency as soon as she became eligible.

From her first day on the job, Nilar was treated differently than everyone else. While working in the kitchen, she

experienced significant racial discrimination, underpayments, bullying, and harassment. Nilar was also forced to work longer hours and was not paid any leave entitlements. She and her colleagues all experienced abusive treatment, made worse by unsafe working conditions. Nilar endured this treatment for months until one day, she broke down at work and had to take extended leave. While on leave, she continued to receive harassing calls from her workplace. Eventually, Nilar was admitted to hospital due to the significant deterioration in her mental health.

When her visa was about to expire, Nilar received an email from her employer saying that they would not sponsor her again and that she had to leave the country immediately. She then contacted her union who put her in contact with Visa Assist.

Through Visa Assist, IARC took Nilar on as a client and helped her and her children apply for a Workplace Justice visa with the assistance of her union. Nilar and her children now hold Workplace Justice visas, and her union is assisting her to bring a claim against her employer.



Left:
Solicitors Ivana Cugalj,
Kate Forster and
Marica Ratnam at
Visa Assist's
5-year anniversary.

GIYALANG GANYA – WHAT'S ON

APRIL 2025
-286 Loads Place-

Immigration Advice & Rights Centre.

Appointments with Immigration Lawyers available

Saturday 12th April + Sunday 13th April

Community Information Sessions

Monday 14th April

10 am + 6 pm

**EVERYONE
HAS THE RIGHT
TO LIVE FREE
FROM HARM.**

Left:

Solicitor Kate Forster
and Senior Solicitor
Kristie Mellor in Orange

Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

28

2024-2025 Annual Report



Above:
Principal Solicitor
Ali Mojtahedi at
the IARC office.

Our Work

IARC is dedicated to assisting refugees and people seeking asylum navigate Australia's complex immigration system. Through decades of experience, we have built a solid understanding of the unique barriers, vulnerabilities and risks faced by our clients, including the challenges around raising claims for protection, long delays in processing and the impacts of trauma. We also understand the

dire consequences of Protection visa refusals, which can put our clients at risk of being returned to a country where they could face harm.

This year, IARC continued an important project as part of a national initiative to address the backlog of Protection visa appeals. Through our **Protection Appeals Legal Service** we provided free holistic immigration advice to people with Protection

visa refusals both at the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) and the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA). We travelled across Greater Sydney, and rural, regional and remote areas in NSW to provide outreach services and community legal education to clients, community workers and other stakeholders, allowing us to reach hundreds of people.

“Navigating the Australian immigration system can be extremely challenging for refugees and people seeking asylum. Trauma-informed legal representation is essential to ensure people can seek safety in Australia. Our clients have told us that they would not have been able to navigate the reviews process without our unwavering support and expertise.”

– **Kate Bookey, Senior Solicitor**



“I am writing this with immense gratitude and appreciation for all your unwavering support and guidance throughout my journey to obtaining my permanent residency in Australia. This milestone would not have been possible without your expertise, dedication, and commitment to my case. I truly cannot thank you enough!

It still feels surreal that this has finally happened, and I am beyond grateful for everything you have done to make this a reality.”

– **Indira, IARC client**

Our Impact

In the past 12 months, IARC has assisted more than **400 refugees and people seeking asylum**.

We provided a range of services including:

- Assessing prospects for a successful appeal.
- Explaining the review process.
- Providing referrals.
- Advising clients on potential alternative visa pathways.
- Raising new claims.
- Preparing documents to provide to the Tribunal.

Our lawyers spent time with each client in trauma-informed settings, to identify and articulate claims that our clients may have had difficulty raising.

87% of the clients we represented before the Tribunal had successful outcomes, with Tribunal members commenting on the quality of IARC's comprehensive submissions and the positive impact our solicitors' work had on applications.

We represented minors and clients who could not, without legal assistance, advance their claims. We also successfully appealed to the FCFCOA about the revocation of a Refugee visa, contributing to the development of caselaw and achieving a positive outcome for our client.

Reducing the Protection visa appeals backlog

- More than 400 clients assisted
- 34% live in a regional area
- 22% live in a remote or very remote area

Clients IARC represented at ART/FCFCOA hearings:

- 87% had their cases remitted
- 58% were victim-survivors of domestic and family violence
- 42% required an interpreter

Marica Ratnam and Kristie Mellor at the IARC office.





Left:
Sina Afsharmehr,
Ali Mojtahedi and
Ryan McCarthy ready
to attend a hearing.



Left:
Practice Manager Angela Tillott,
Kate Forster and Kristie Mellor in Orange.

Right:
Senior Solicitor Kristie Mellor and
Solicitor Kate Forster in Orange.
Principal Solicitor Ali Mojtahedi
and Senior Solicitor Kate Bookey
in Wagga Wagga.

Legal Outreach and Community Engagement

This year, we engaged with clients, community workers and other stakeholders in rural, regional and remote NSW as we identified several locations with high rates of Protection visa appeal matters and limited access to legal services. Through our outreach program and extensive stakeholder engagement with regional and rural services, we were able to assist people throughout NSW – with 44% of the clients assisted under this project from regional and remote areas.

Our lawyers travelled to the Riverina, Mid North Coast, and Central Tablelands to ensure as many people as possible could access free legal advice and assistance in-person.

We also provided free information sessions and resources to potential clients and the community about the Protections visa appeals process. By doing this we reduced the number of people engaging with unscrupulous and illegitimate migration agents. Almost 20% of the clients we assisted in this project have reported

experiencing migration agent fraud or failure.

We also provided outreach services in Bankstown, including hosting an information session for newly arrived Palestinians from Gaza in collaboration with Metro Assist. After the information session we provided people who needed further advice with follow-up appointments.

Positive and lasting connections were made with the organisations we worked with, as well as the broader communities, during each of these events. IARC continues to receive referrals from community groups, allowing us to assist vulnerable clients from an even wider geographical range.



Advocacy

This year, we advocated to continue national funding to ensure IARC, fellow community legal centres and Legal Aid Commissions across the country can continue making a meaningful impact on the Protection visa appeals backlog and restoring integrity to the visa system. IARC was also a member of the Visa Cancellations Working Group, working alongside other CLCs, not-for-profit organisations, lawyers and experts across Australia on legal and policy development for people facing visa cancellation.



Above:
Kate Bookey and Ali Mojtahedi with
Susan Rowe at Leeton Shire Library.

Indira's Story

Before contacting IARC, Indira had an Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) hearing to appeal a refused Protection visa application. She attended without legal representation, so the hearing was adjourned to allow her to contact IARC for advice or representation. When Indira spoke to an IARC solicitor, she shared that she feared returning to her home country because of her sexuality. In her home country, LGBTQIA+ people face official, social and familial discrimination and persecution. It quickly became clear that Indira had experienced migration fraud, as the migration agent had not included this in her original application.

When Indira first applied for protection, she was in an abusive relationship. Her partner controlled many aspects of her life in Australia, including her visa application. After the relationship ended, Indira was homeless. By the

time she contacted IARC, she found housing with the assistance of people in her community. Indira started a new relationship with someone from her home country but could not contact her as communication had been cut off by her partner's family due to their disapproval of the relationship. If she returned to her home country, Indira feared for her safety, her partner's safety and family violence from her ex-husband who her family had forced her to marry.

IARC advised Indira that her fears were not included in her original application, but she could raise a new claim with the Tribunal. IARC's solicitor worked with Indira to prepare a statement for her hearing that outlined her fears of returning to her home country and the reasons why these fears were not previously raised. The documents were submitted before the hearing to give the Tribunal enough time to review the statement.

At the hearing, the Tribunal member raised concerns that there was not enough evidence of Indira's sexuality and said they were not satisfied she would face persecution in their home country. The Tribunal allowed Indira two weeks to comment on these concerns. IARC's solicitor worked with Indira to gather more evidence and prepare an additional statement about her experiences in her country.

IARC's solicitor addressed the Tribunal's concerns in compelling legal submissions, highlighting key country information, and the harm Indira would face as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. As a result, the Tribunal accepted the evidence and legal submissions and found the client was owed protection in Australia. Indira has since been granted permanent residency.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

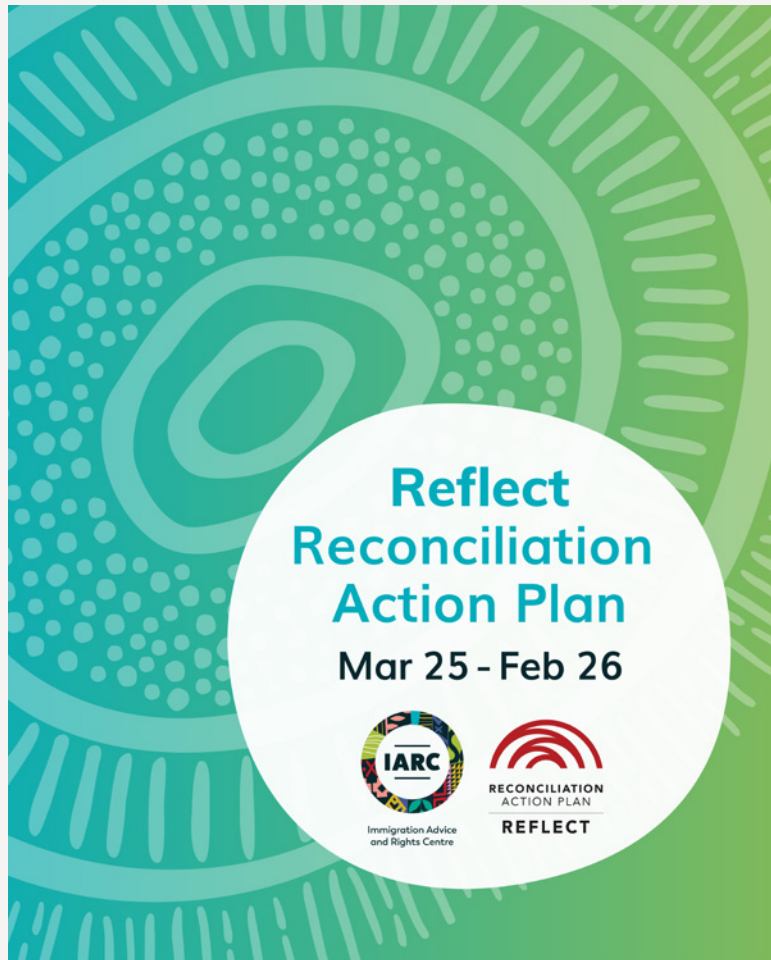
36

2024-2025 Annual Report

This year, IARC launched its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Our Reflect RAP is a crucial step in taking meaningful action to advance reconciliation. For IARC – reconciliation is not just about a single moment or week, it's an ongoing commitment to step up and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and stand together in the fight for truth-telling and justice.

Our vision as an organisation requires a more inclusive and compassionate Australia and that begins with true reconciliation.

We have made a lot of progress implementing our RAP this year and are looking forward to continuing this important work.



The artwork in our RAP was developed by Aboriginal creative agency Mumbulla Creative and symbolises weaving – a cultural practice significant to many Aboriginal peoples and deeply connected to storytelling, kinship and Country. Weaving involves interlacing unique natural fibers to create a whole. The weaving motif in this RAP is symbolic of an inclusive society which is enriched by the diverse stories, traditions and contributions of many peoples.



Left:
Isabelle Thomson at
Barbara McGrady's photo
exhibition 'Pictures are
worth a thousand words'
during Reconciliation Week.

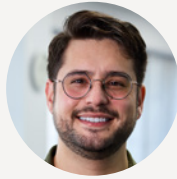


Left:
IARC's Malina Grube,
Sarah Sinclair and
Dr Jake Davies at a
truth-telling talk at
the University of
Technology Sydney during
Reconciliation Week.

Our Team



Joshua Strutt
CEO & Principal
Solicitor



Dannel Pereira
Senior Solicitor



Amelia Jones
Solicitor



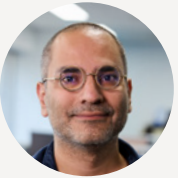
Ann Emmanuel
Principal Solicitor



Gopika
Ayyappan Aryad
Solicitor



Ryan McCarthy
Solicitor



Ali Mojtahedi
Principal Solicitor



Ivana Cugalj
Solicitor



Marica Ratnam
Solicitor



Kate Bookey
Senior Solicitor



Kate Forster
Solicitor



Schirine Yalinejad
Solicitor



Kristie Mellor
Senior Solicitor



Gabrielle
Pollard-Garbett
Solicitor



Sara Virk
Solicitor



Sina Afsharmehr
Paralegal



Dr Jake Davies
Senior Policy
Officer



Lauri Stewart
Knowledge
Lawyer



Sristi Stalin
Paralegal



Nina Keil
Administrator



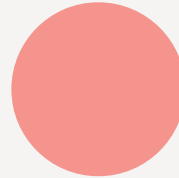
Jane King
Business
Manager



Isabelle Thomson
Intake Coordinator



Jane Turner
Operations
Manager



David Nissen
Finance Officer



Marcella De Torres
Administrator



Sarah Sinclair
Communications
Manager



Malina Grube
Legal and
Communications
Officer



Angela Tillott
Practice
Manager

Our Management Committee



Kathryn Viegas
President



Sophia Kagan
Committee Member
(Joined December 2024)

Alistair Sage
Committee Member
(Joined December 2024)

David Nguyen
Committee Member
(Resigned August 2024)

Kittu Randhawa
Committee Member
(Resigned October 2024)



Giulio Katis
Vice President



Lina Tchung
Treasurer



Rowena Irish
Secretary

Our Pro Bono Partners

This year, IARC's ongoing collaboration with **Gadens** and **Norton Rose Fulbright**, through our DFSV Clinic, delivered vital legal support for victim-survivors of domestic, family, and sexual violence. Pro bono lawyers worked with IARC's clients to prepare draft evidence required under the family violence provisions.

IARC continued providing training for pro bono lawyers on the legislative framework underpinning the family violence provisions and delivering trauma-informed services. In 2024-2025, Gadens and Norton

Rose Fulbright assisted with more than 40 matters – ensuring that more victim-survivors could access pathways to safety and justice.

Secondees from Norton Rose Fulbright also joined the IARC team during the year, further strengthening our capacity to support clients. We are deeply grateful for the expertise, commitment, and generosity of the law firms, pro bono lawyers and secondees who worked with us this year, helping IARC to provide legal services to vulnerable communities.



“During my time at IARC, I have seen countless examples of how IARC’s advice and assistance has radically changed the lives of brave individuals who are fleeing situations of domestic and family violence. When individuals have confidence in their legal rights and standing, it empowers them to take action to improve their circumstances.”

– **Summer Walker, Secondee**

Above:
Eibhlín Murrant (top)
and Summer Walker,
this year's secondees
from Norton Rose
Fulbright.

Our Volunteers

42

2024-2025 Annual Report

This year, more than 25 passionate and committed volunteers played an essential role in helping IARC deliver legal assistance to some of the most vulnerable people in our community. We are incredibly grateful to every person who donated their time to support our work and our clients with skill and empathy.

Our volunteers are often the first point of contact for clients. They provide compassion and practical support at critical times.

Whether they are assisting with client intake, legal research, administration, or other essential tasks, every hour our volunteers contribute allows us to help more people and manage the thousands of enquiries we receive every year. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers. Your generosity and dedication make a lasting difference, and we simply could not do this work without you!

25 volunteers
3,500+ hours donated
1,550+ calls

“I volunteer at IARC because the people here are genuinely kind and always ready to help — it’s a place full of warmth and purpose. I truly feel that I’m making a difference by supporting those in our community who are most in need, especially people from multicultural backgrounds who may not know where to turn for help. What I enjoy most is the people — such a vibrant, diverse, and joyful team. Every day I spend at IARC brings meaning and a real sense of fulfillment.”

– **Mingyi Yan,**
IARC Volunteer



Below:

Our incredible volunteers, from the top:
Areebah Khan, Leo Lin, Edward Sacks,
Yonna Obaid, Tessa Sims, Evan Jones
and Mingyi Yan (left) at the IARC office.



Our Intern Program

44

2024-2025 Annual Report

This year, IARC continued its partnerships with leading universities including the University of Wollongong, Western Sydney University, Macquarie University, UNSW Sydney, and the University of Sydney through our internship program. These partnerships provide students with the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in community legal work, while contributing meaningfully to our mission.

Our interns join IARC for placements ranging from four to twelve weeks, during which they assist with legal research, case work, and the client intake process.

Their contribution is vital, allowing us to support more clients and manage growing demand for our services. We are proud that many interns choose to return to IARC as volunteers.

We are deeply appreciative of the ongoing support from our partner universities which help us connect with dedicated and talented students. Interns remain an essential part of IARC, and we are grateful for the energy, empathy, and commitment they bring to our clients and our team.

“Being closely involved in client matters — supported by the generous mentorship of IARC’s solicitors — transformed my understanding into practical expertise. IARC didn’t just introduce me to immigration law — it shaped my professional purpose. I’m proud to be continuing that journey as I pursue my career as a solicitor aspiring to help clients in their migration milestones.”

– **Astha Pandey, IARC Intern**



Above:
One of IARC’s wonderful interns, Astha Pandey, at IARC

Our Funding

IARC receives funding from the Australian Government, NSW Government and the Public Purpose Fund through the Community Legal Centre's Program administered by Legal Aid NSW. We also receive funding from Unions NSW to provide legal services through our Visa Assist service.

In the 2024-2025 financial year, IARC received additional funding from:

- The Australian Government to assist people who have had their Protection visa refused or cancelled as part of a national initiative to address the backlog of Protection visa appeals at the Administrative Review Tribunal and Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia
- Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) to work collaboratively to ensure clients accessing RLC's Financial Abuse Service can access free, expert immigration advice and assistance from IARC.



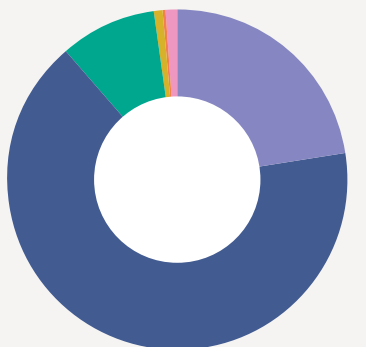
Left: Principal Solicitor Ann Emmanuel (centre left) and Senior Solicitor Kristie Mellor (centre right) at the 2025 Immigration Law Conference

Our Finances

46

2024-2025 Annual Report

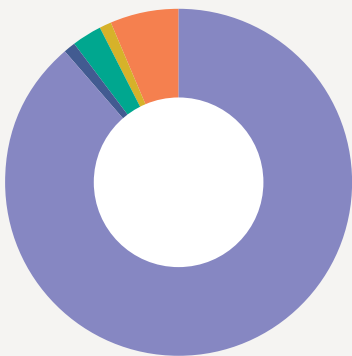
IARC remains in a strong financial position that allows us to work effectively across projects and respond to emerging challenges. The audited financial result for the 2024-2025 financial year was a deficit of \$138,532. At 30 June 2025, we maintained healthy net assets of \$519,085. Our total income was \$3,321,808 reflecting the generous support of a diverse range of funding bodies and partners. We continue to receive generous in-kind support from our pro bono partners, including secondment of staff, volunteer engagement and donation of facilities.



- Community Legal Centre Program
- Commonwealth Grants
- Unions NSW
- Redfern Legal Centre
- Donations
- Other

Income Resources

Community Legal Centre Program:	\$749,768
Includes grants from the joint Commonwealth and NSW CLC Funding Program and the NSW Public Purpose Fund.	
Commonwealth Grants:	\$2,197,348
Includes Commonwealth Grants for the provision of immigration assistance and advice.	
Unions NSW:	\$303,416
Includes funds to support the Visa Assist service.	
Redfern Legal Centre:	\$26,407
Funds to support Redfern Legal Centre's Financial Abuse Service.	
Donations:	\$10,486
Includes income from donations and fundraising.	
Other income:	\$34,383
Includes interest income, royalties, and fee for service activities.	
Total:	\$3,321,808



- Employee costs
- Computer and IT costs
- Depreciation and amortisation expenses
- Client disbursements
- Operating expenses

Service Costs

Employee expenses: Includes staff salaries and related employment costs.	\$3,068,753
Computer and IT expenses: Includes the cost of experts assisting with program delivery.	\$38,822
Depreciation and amortisation expenses: Includes depreciation of capital items and occupancy costs.	\$99,419
Client disbursements: Operating expenses associated with administration including finance, IT, office costs and telecommunications.	\$37,781
Operating expenses: Business operating costs.	\$215,564
Total:	\$3,460,340

IARC's full financial statements are available on request and at the Australian Charities Register on the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission website: www.acnc.gov.au.

DONATE TO IARC TODAY AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

We need your help to keep doing the important work we do for our clients. To support our work and join us in making Australia's immigration system better, make a donation at iarc.org.au. You can also contact us at info@iarc.org.au or (02) 8234 0700. IARC is a registered Australian charity. All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.



Immigration Advice
and Rights Centre