



# 2025

## ANNUAL REPORT



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**129**

**COMPLAINTS**  
+ 58% INCREASE

**18**

**FACT SHEETS  
PUBLISHED**

**5**

**EDUCATIONAL  
VIDEOS**

**~1,500**

**VOLUNTEER HOURS**  
+50%

**\$200,000+**

**PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING**





# Message from the President

The 2024–2025 year has been one of remarkable growth and deepening impact for Aged Care Justice (ACJ).

As President, I am deeply proud of the progress our organisation has made. This year we strengthened our foundation through new funding, an expanded volunteer network, the release of numerous fact sheets that the aged care industry now relies on, and the formalisation of our registration as a Community Legal Service. Each of these steps brings us closer to our vision of ensuring that every older person — whether in residential aged care or receiving home support — can understand and enforce their legal rights with dignity.

Behind every statistic in this report is a story of someone who reached out for help — a family seeking clarity, an older person striving to be treated with dignity. The 58% increase in complaints is not simply a number; it is a reflection of growing trust in ACJ and of the ongoing need for systemic reform across the aged care sector.

Our volunteers, legal panel, and partners continue to inspire me with their commitment and compassion. Their expertise and generosity are the driving forces behind our achievements.

Looking ahead, ACJ will continue to advocate for accountability, transparency, and respect within aged care — and to expand our capacity to provide direct, practical legal assistance to those who need it most.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank our CEO, Anna Willis, and our Legal Education Lead, Katrina Ryan, for their leadership, passion, and resilience.

Together, we are building a fairer, safer future for older Australians.

**Sue Williamson**  
**President, Aged Care Justice**

# Summary

Aged Care Justice (ACJ) is dedicated to ensuring that older people living in residential aged care or receiving home care understand and can enforce their legal rights.

2025 has been another major year of growth for ACJ.

## Key Metrics (2024 → 2025):

### *Complaints received:*

82 → 129 (+58%)

### *Fact sheets published:*

8 → 18

### *Educational videos:*

0 → 5

### *Volunteer hours (est.):*

~1,000 → ~1,500 (+50%)

### *Philanthropic funding:*

\$120,000 → \$200,000+ (+67%)



Complaint numbers increased steadily across 2025, reflecting both growing awareness of ACJ's services and ongoing systemic problems in aged care. Our Restrictive Practices Project — funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board — became a flagship initiative, driving engagement across the public, government, legal, and advocacy sectors. During the year we secured major funding, delivered multiple legal education campaigns on restrictive practices, registered in Victoria as a Community Legal Service (CLS), and formed strategic partnerships across the aged care and legal sectors.

These milestones were achieved primarily because of the unwavering commitment of our volunteers. We extend our deepest thanks to our volunteer network — your contributions are invaluable. Special thanks go to our CEO, Anna Willis, for her strategic leadership and tireless work, and to our dedicated Research Officer, Katrina Ryan, for her dedication and commitment to driving ACJ's mission forward.

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

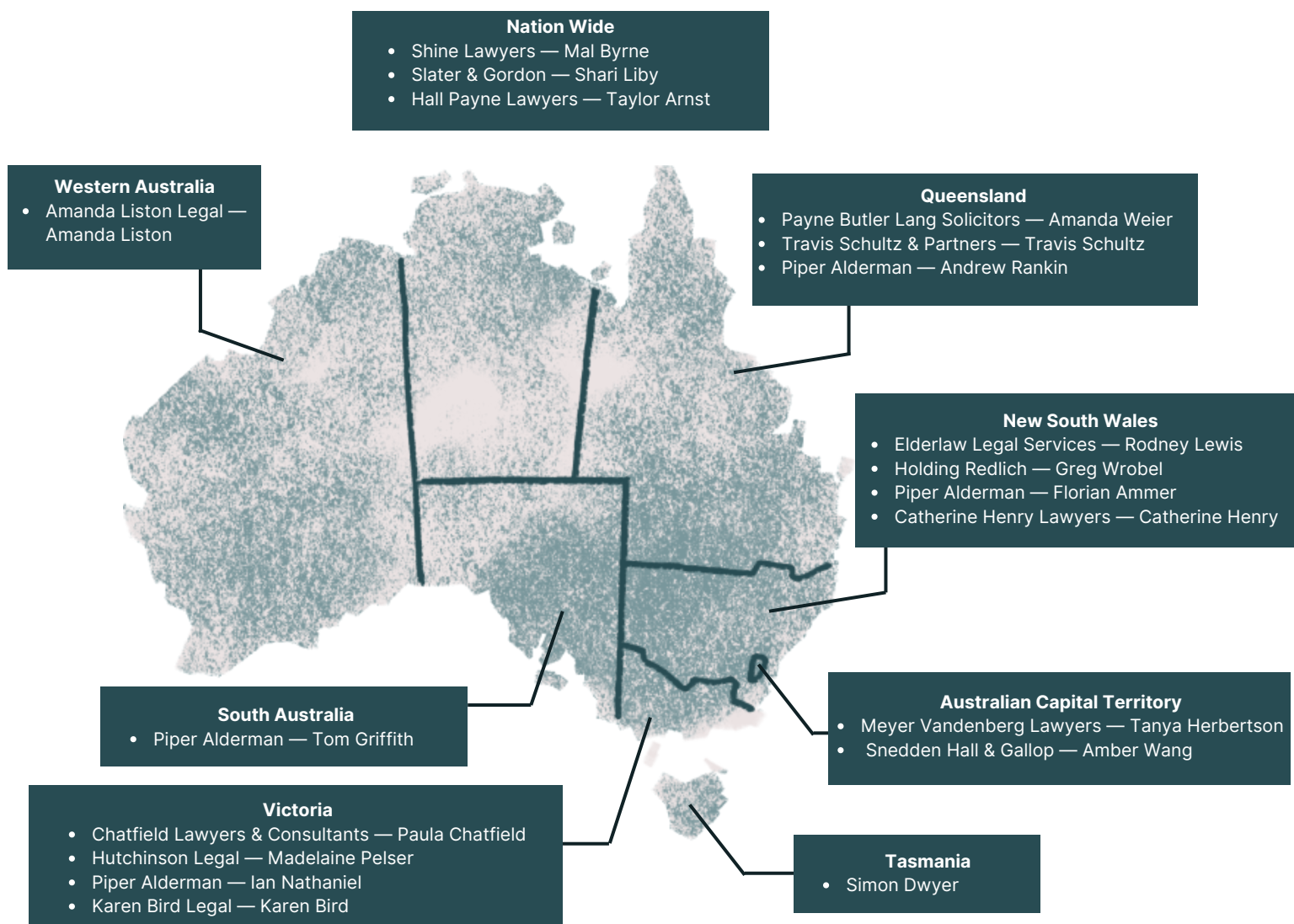
Complaints to ACJ increased by 58% in FY25 to nearly 130. We relied heavily on our panel law firms to support complainants and connect them with appropriate legal assistance.

## **Common Issues Reported:**

- Neglect and inadequate clinical response leading to injury or, in some cases, death.
- Chemical, physical, and environmental restraints used without valid consent.
- Misuse of Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPOA) resulting in visitor bans at facilities.
- Financial and contract disputes relating to home care.

A follow-up survey of complainants showed broad appreciation for ACJ's legal referral services, although some expressed frustration about the high cost and risk of litigation. Achieving integrated CLS status will allow us to reduce these barriers and provide more direct assistance.





# Legal Panel



This year we thanked a number of long-serving panel members who retired; their contributions were greatly appreciated. At the same time, we expanded our geographic coverage by welcoming Simon Dwyer from Tasmania to the panel.

There are times when we reach out to the same firm multiple times in a month; their responsiveness and generosity are invaluable. We are extremely grateful for their ongoing support.



# Legal Education — Restrictive Practices Project

Our major education initiative this year was the Victorian Legal Services Board-funded project titled Reducing Serious Incidences of Restrictive Practices in Aged Care Settings through Legal Education and Access to Professional Legal Services. The project runs through to 31 October 2025.

## Activities delivered in 2025 included:

- Comprehensive legal research and sector consultations.
- Development and staged dissemination of legal education materials.
- Production of 18 fact sheets covering topics such as physical, mechanical, and environmental restraints, seclusion, and substitute decision-making.
- Creation of 5 scenario-based educational videos to help the public and providers identify lawful and unlawful restrictive practices.
- Webinars, print resources, and targeted outreach to consumers and providers.

Early indicators — increased media attention, inquiries, and complaints about restrictive practices — show that the project is meeting its objective of educating the public and the aged care sector. With a strengthened information-sharing strategy, reach is expected to grow further over the next 12 months.

Special thanks to new Committee member Professor Ann O'Connell for her research and input into the Project. And to the volunteer students from Victoria, South Australia and NSW who also supported the Project.

### FACT SHEET:

#### Who can make decisions on the use of restrictive practices in residential aged care in Victoria



This Fact Sheet outlines the requirements on who can consent to the use of a restrictive practice in Victoria, in accordance with the *Aged Care Restrictive Practices Substitute Decision-maker Act 2024* (Vic) (SDM Act), effective from 1 July 2025.

#### What is a restrictive practice?

A restrictive practice is a practice or intervention that restricts a person's rights or freedom of movement, which include chemical, physical, mechanical, environmental restraints, and seclusion. An aged care provider delivering services in an aged care facility (**Residential Provider**) can only use a restrictive practice in Victoria if they meet all the criteria contained within Commonwealth and State legislation.

#### What is a restrictive practices substitute decision maker? (RPSDM)

A Residential Provider is required to obtain informed consent to a restrictive practice from the aged care resident (**Resident**). If it has been determined that the Resident does not have decision-making capacity, consent must be obtained by an alternative decision maker, referred to in the SDM Act as a 'Restrictive Practices Substitute Decision Maker' (**RPSDM**).

The Resident or RPSDM may consent or refuse to consent to the use of a restrictive practice. A Resident's next of kin or Enduring Power of Attorney cannot make decisions on restrictive practices on behalf of an aged care resident in Victoria, unless they have been nominated or appointed as a RPSDM in accordance with the SDM Act. For more information on restrictive practices, [please see our other Fact Sheets](#).

#### What is decision-making capacity?

# Future Outlook

In a perfect world, ACJ would be redundant — Our Community would not need our services. That world is not yet here.

Our priorities for the coming year are:

- Establish ACJ formally as a Community Legal Service (CLS) to access additional funding and offer more direct legal assistance.
- Reduce reliance on panel firms by expanding and diversifying the legal panel.
- Continue inclusive outreach and scaled legal education programs.
- Advocate for systemic reform to improve safety, consent, and accountability across aged care.

## Acknowledgements

We thank our volunteers, panel lawyers, funders, allied firms and supporters for another year of extraordinary commitment. Your expertise, time, and generosity make ACJ's work possible.

We would also like to thank the people who have trusted us with their experiences, issues and stories so that we can help them access justice.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which our work is conducted on and pay respect to elders past and present.



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