



Mainstream Service Challenges to Improving Access to Legal Aid





Legal Aid Queensland

Integrated Indigenous Strategy Unit





Where did we come from?

- The Indigenous Strategy Unit was established as part of the recommendations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report





What is the Indigenous Strategy Unit?

- LAQ recognised a gap in Service Delivery to disadvantaged groups and in doing so put in place strategies to help increase **ACCESS** for these groups to LAQ.





What are our aims?

- Raise the awareness of LAQ Services
- Improve and increase access to legal services for Indigenous Women and their families in remote communities
- Address issues that effectively promote LAQ services to the Indigenous community in a culturally sensitive way.





How does the Indigenous Strategy Unit achieve its Aims?

- By providing a Cape & Gulf Outreach Service to Indigenous women and their families, including:
 - Advice clinics in remote communities run by solicitors
 - Employment of Community Liaison Officers
 - Facilitation of the representation of these clients in legal matters
- Establishment of an Indigenous Information Line





What has been achieved?





2005-2006 Financial Year

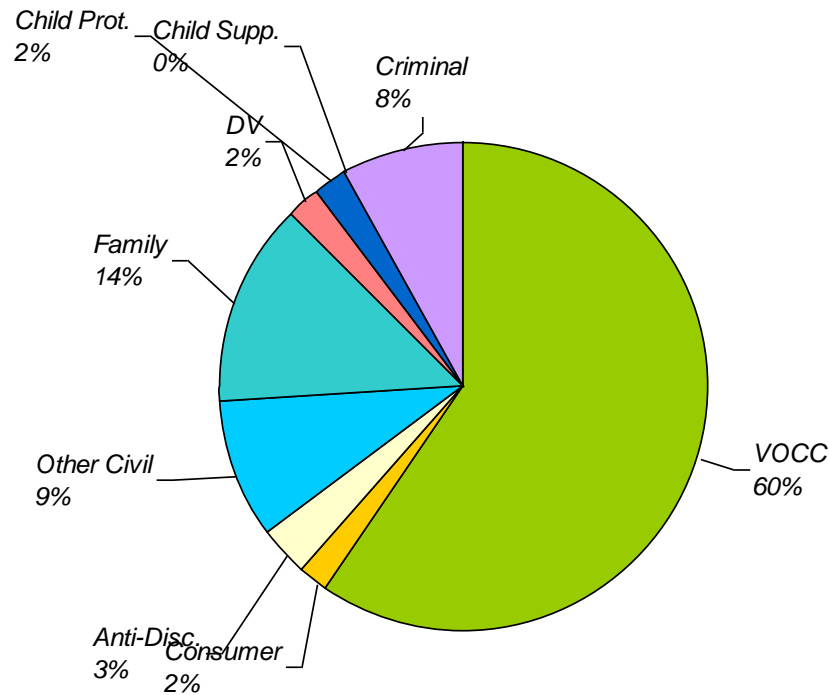
Cape and Gulf Outreach – 433 advices
and 144 current files.

LAQ generally – 2060 advices and 3198
applications for aid.





Community Liaison Officers work mix 2005 - 2006

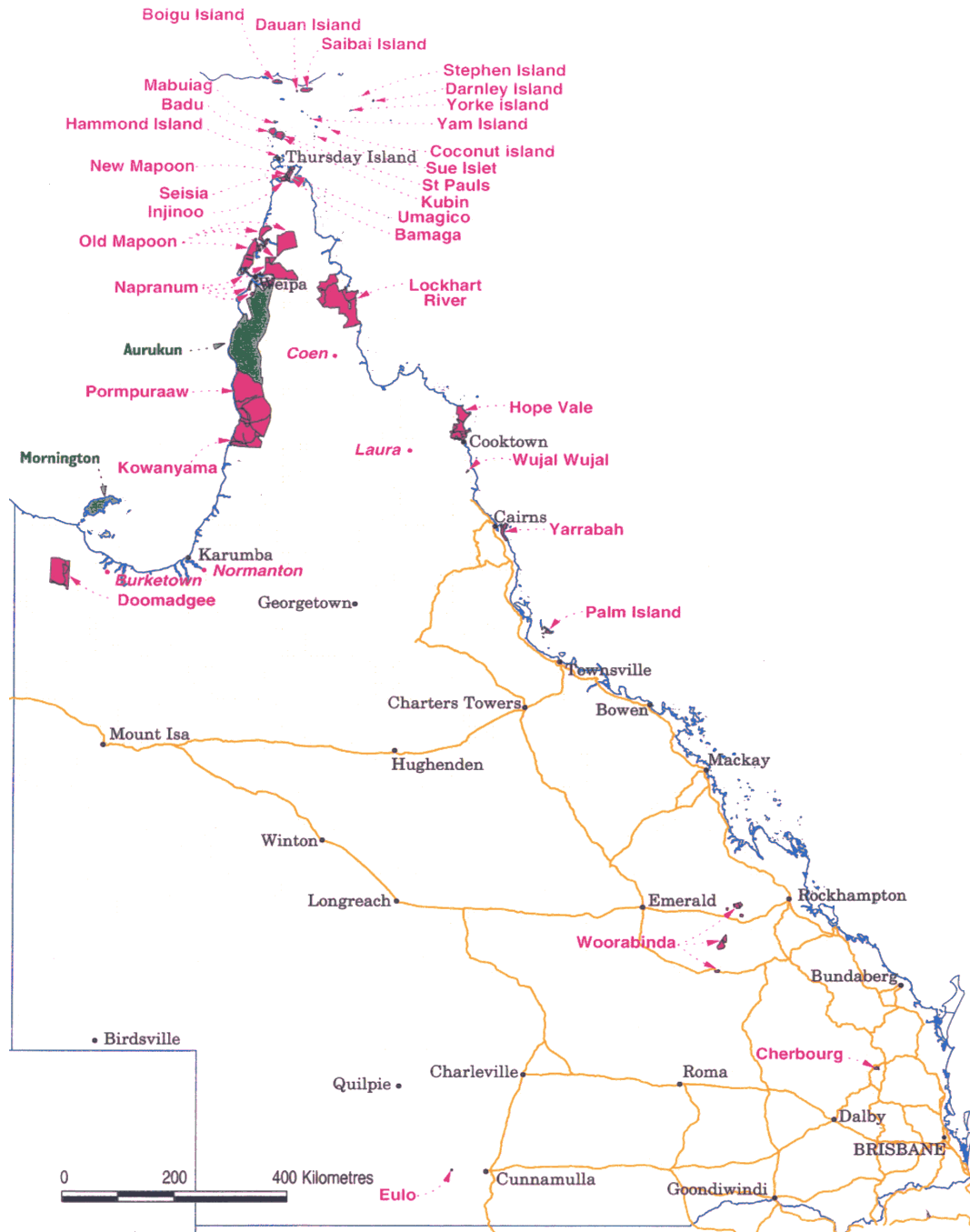




What are the challenges we face?

- The vastness of the geographical area to be covered;
- Issues of contact and communication with clients; and
- The integration of the realities of life in a remote community with the obligations of a modern legal practice.







Communication

- The benefits of the taking of instructions and giving of advice face-to-face vs via remote technology, such as telephone or video-link
- Encouragement of clients to maintain regular contact
- Language barriers





Practice Issues

- Time constraints – preparation and travel.
- Client/ solicitor relationship – how to explain and maintain.
- Historical claims for criminal injuries compensation and how to explain the application of legislation to clients.
- Interface between LAQ and ATSILS





Case Example

- Child Protection client's story





Community Example

- Yarrabah





Conclusion

The real success of our work is not measured simply by the legal outcome, but rather, by how we are able to overcome the obstacles to build strong, working relationships with our clients in our communities.

