



# 10 Years of Impact



# Acknowledgement of country

In the spirit of reconciliation, Wotton + Kearney acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate and conduct our business throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We recognise that this land always was and always will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to Elders, past, present and emerging. Wotton + Kearney believes in celebrating the rich heritage of the oldest continuing cultures in the world and recognising their strength and resilience.





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# Community Footprint

Celebrating 10 years of impact: 2012-2022

**At Wotton + Kearney (W+K) we are committed to making a difference in people's lives through our pro bono and responsible business program – Community Footprint.**

In this report, we reflect on 10 years of Community Footprint and celebrate the positive impacts we have made.

Our decision to align our Community Footprint program with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has brought greater focus to our work and our thinking about how we, as a firm, can contribute to a more sustainable future. We have structured this report around the key SDGs that form the foundation of Community Footprint: Gender Equality, Reduced Inequalities, Climate Action, and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



### Making a difference

Ten years ago, we established *Community Footprint*, our pro bono and responsible business program. Over that period, we have raised in excess of half a million dollars for our deserving charity partners and invested over 19,500 hours of pro bono time in more than 240 pro bono matters, helping thousands of people through challenging circumstances.

In 2022, Wotton + Kearney celebrated our 20th anniversary and as much as we celebrated this important milestone, we also reflected on the contributions we have made to our communities through our Community Footprint program. Personally, I have enjoyed immensely the

opportunity to visit school projects in Kenya, to speak with lawyers and investigators in Cambodia tackling modern slavery and, yes even the opportunity to leap from a plane in support of mental health(!). Of course, my contribution is only a very small part of the collective contributions made by our W+K team and I want to congratulate each and every W+K team member – and particularly Heidi Nash-Smith and team – for the wonderful contributions made over the 10 years that we have been operating this program.

Our 20-year celebrations also provided an opportune time for all team members to reflect on the ongoing contributions we want to make to our communities and I was very excited at our various office celebrations to announce our '20 Actions for 20 Years' Project that will make Wotton + Kearney an even better and more responsible business moving forward. The 20 Actions for 20 Years Project promises to create a lasting legacy in the areas that our people think are most important today – reduced inequality, climate action, mental health and wellness, and social justice.

To identify these areas of focus, we undertook a consultative process using the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Once we agreed our priorities, we deliberately chose to start work on just a few short-term actions as the project is designed to evolve over a 20-year period.

Understanding where we are now and 'going public' with our intentions are important because we want to be held accountable for our role in fostering equality, reducing climate impact, and improving wellbeing and social justice over time. That means we need to be able to factually report on our progress – to you, to our people, to industry bodies and to the communities we operate within.

Contribution to community is a way of life at Wotton + Kearney. Over the coming years, I look forward to our team continuing to build the impact of our Community Footprint program.




**David Kearney**  
Chief Executive Partner

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## Creating opportunities

Reducing inequalities and ensuring no-one is left behind are integral to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. For the last 10 years, we have used our expertise at Wotton + Kearney to create a fairer and more inclusive society through our pro bono legal work and our community partnerships.

Creating opportunities that provide everyone in the firm the chance to participate has played a large part in the program's success. Our community efforts stand alongside and support our pro bono work, enabling us to provide holistic support to our clients as well as our program partners.

I am incredibly proud of the program we have built over this time, and the positive contribution that we have been able to make through Community Footprint. Not only do we see the impacts on our pro bono clients and community partners, but we see how transformative involvement in our program can be for our people. We share some of their stories in this report.

For me, the last 10 years have seen me move away from my busy insurance practice to become a dedicated Pro Bono Partner, leading a stellar team of three pro bono lawyers and a community coordinator. It is a privilege to lead the program here at Wotton + Kearney. I have very much enjoyed reflecting on the last 10 years of Community Footprint and I hope you enjoy reading about some of the highlights.




**Heidi Nash-Smith**  
Partner, Head of Pro Bono & Responsible Business

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# Meet the Community Footprint team



**A commitment to social justice was ingrained in me from a young age by my family.**

The day I started working as a lawyer in London, my Mum moved to Azerbaijan to pursue charitable work and set up a school for children excluded from mainstream schooling. Following that example, I quickly became involved in pro bono work alongside my commercial law practice and relished the opportunity to use my legal expertise to help others. The turning point in my career was spending a six-month secondment staffing a legal advice clinic at a women's refuge. That's when I knew I wanted to pursue a career in social justice. When the opportunity arose to establish the Community Footprint at W+K, I leapt towards it and I haven't looked back. I feel grateful every day to work with such incredible people at W+K and to have the privilege of leading their pro bono and responsible business program.

**Heidi Nash-Smith**

Partner, Head of Pro Bono & Responsible Business

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**My Mum made me fully aware of gender inequity and inequalities across the world.**

Having lived in Sweden where I both studied and worked, I witnessed and experienced the benefits of gender equality across society and the economy. Moving to London, my horizons opened-up beyond gender to include social mobility and status, ethnicity, LGBTQI+, disability, age, carers, physical characteristics, religion, mental health and wellbeing. Our world is facing a challenge beyond comprehension, and achieving gender equality in a world ravaged by the impacts of climate change is not enough. These challenges must go hand in hand. Joining a team where all of these challenges are addressed in a holistic way was an opportunity not to be missed.

**Hamid Senni**

Head of Diversity & Inclusion

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**After 20 years' of practice as an insurance lawyer doing pro bono and volunteering on the side, it was time to make the leap into a dedicated pro bono role and I have found a happy home at W+K.**

My first experience with pro bono legal work was coordinating a women's community centre legal service when I was a law student. I knocked on the door asking if there was anything I could do to help and the next thing I knew I ran the evening service for two years! It opened my eyes to the many significant issues being faced in the community and the value lawyers have outside their usual offices. As the child of a migrant, I have seen the challenges facing those who have come to Australia in search of a better life, so it is no surprise that I have a passion for assisting refugees and people seeking asylum. Our team is incredibly supportive and are all truly driven to improve the world and our communities. I love the fact I continue to learn and help people every day.

**Angela Tan**

Pro Bono Special Counsel

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**I was passionate about social justice from as far back as I can remember, organising my friends at school to all donate \$1 each so we could sponsor a child together.**

But it was watching the movie *Cry Freedom* at high school, about apartheid in South Africa, which really cemented this path for me and led me to human rights lawyering in community legal centres in Australia and with the United Nations in international peacekeeping missions. I jumped at the opportunity to help build the practice at W+K after loving my collaborations with Heidi in my pro bono role at a previous law firm. I am blessed to work in a passionate team, supporting great organisations and am grateful for the opportunity to fight injustice through important law reform and access to justice initiatives across so many areas of need.

**Leanne Ho**  
Pro Bono Special Counsel  
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**I pursued law for a reason and that was to help others. I'm a big believer that as lawyers we ought to use our platform to try and make something of a difference for those hard-done by.**

While social justice has always been something I have been interested in, the opportunity to make it a career has been second to none. Aligning your work with what you value is a such a privilege and joy. Despite the sheer scale of injustices in our society and often providing very few wins, it is a really energising space to practice in. The opportunity to learn from like-minded colleagues across casework, advocacy and law reform that can improve things for the better, even just a smidgeon more, is tremendously rewarding. It is hard not to be infected by the work we do. It's a vibe – get amongst it.

**Renee Magee**  
Pro Bono Associate  
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**I come from a family who have always given back to the community even when time and resources were sparse.**

There was a time when language was the biggest barrier before money. This life lesson is more than an example, it has become my norm and I've made it my mission to be that bridge for others who want that helping hand when things look helpless. At my most significant work and life crossroad (so far!), my journey unexpectedly led me to W+K and opened more doors than I thought possible. I can't express what it means to work with likeminded people who also dedicate their life in the fight to provide fair and safe opportunities for all.

**Sara Villanueva**  
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# Ten years of community partnerships

10 years

## Seven Partnerships



Over the past 10 years, we have established strategic partnerships with seven charities through which we have focused our advocacy, fundraising and volunteering efforts.

2012–13

## Building homes in Cambodia



### Tabitha Foundation

We travelled to Cambodia to build homes for impoverished Cambodian families, in partnership with the Tabitha Foundation. We raised \$21.5k+, enabling our team to supply and build 13 houses in a Cambodian village.

2015–16

## Maasai Mara Marathon in Kenya



### So They Can

We travelled to Kenya to visit So They Can's projects that empower and educate women and children in East Africa. Our team undertook the grueling Maasai Mara Marathon to raise funds to support So They Can. We raised \$100k, providing 33 children at the Aberdare Ranges Primary School with ongoing sponsorship for their education.

2016–17

## Raising awareness about food waste



### OzHarvest

Across our Australian offices we volunteered with OzHarvest to help raise awareness at food shows, noodle markets and other events. We created a W+K cookbook that focused on reducing food waste and featured favorite recipes from across our offices.



2013–14

## Regional NSW cycle challenge



### Royal Far West for Country Kids

We completed a 495km cycle ride in regional New South Wales, supporting Royal Far West for Country Kids. The ride raised \$125k+ towards refurbishment works at Drummond House, the Royal Far West accommodation facility in Manly, where children stay when coming from the country for treatment.

2014–15

## Improving our mental health



### Black Dog Institute

We partnered with Black Dog Institute to build awareness about mental health and wellbeing. Given the prevalence of mental health issues in the legal profession, this partnership deeply resonated with our staff. We raised \$25k+ through efforts including the Zoo2Zoo cycle ride, an ironman event and the London Marathon.

2018–19

## Cambodia cycle challenge



### International Justice Mission

We cycled 250km across Cambodia, raising awareness to combat cross-border trafficking and slavery in southeast Asia. We raised \$100k+ and provided IJM Australia with pro bono legal advice and support, including a legal secondment.

2019–22

## Walking tall for mental health



### Black Dog Institute and Life Squared Trust

In 2022 we hiked the Larapinta Trail in the Northern Territory, raising \$118k+ to support Black Dog Institute in creating a mentally healthier world.

We have also supported the New Zealand Law Society's study of wellbeing and mental health of lawyers within New Zealand.



# SDG 10: Reducing Inequalities

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## THE GOAL

Reduce inequality within and among countries

W+K's Community Footprint will address reduced inequalities for vulnerable cohorts, including refugees and First Nations people. We will use our expertise to:

- + Identify and remove systemic barriers to improving justice outcomes
- + Improve access to justice
- + Promote human rights

Our commitment to creating a fairer and more inclusive society is at the core of Community Footprint. Using our expertise through our pro bono work, our community partnerships and our responsible business practices, we can reduce inequality and uphold the rights of people in vulnerable circumstances.



# Helping refugees and people seeking asylum

**Upholding the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum has been a central part of W+K's Community Footprint program and is at the heart of our focus on reducing inequality. We engage in pro bono legal representation at hearings, advocacy, policy work, law reform and community support through our partnerships with organisations such as Refugee Advice & Casework Service, Refugee Legal, Human Rights Law Centre, Refugee Council of Australia and Settlement Services International.**

## Hakim's story

Hakim\* was 26 years old when he fled his home in fear of political persecution. He arrived in Australia by boat and spent the next five years in detention on Nauru. During that time he was assaulted and sustained serious injuries. He was airlifted to Australia for urgent medical attention.

When Hakim became our client, he was still suffering the effects of the assault, as well as mental health issues caused by prolonged detention. We filed an application in the High Court seeking orders that Hakim remain in Australia while he required ongoing medical treatment as he would continue to be at risk of harm if returned to offshore detention.

During the pandemic, Hakim received notice that he was being placed on a temporary bridging visa with no access to community housing and no financial support. Without family or other connections in Australia he faced the seemingly impossible task of immediately finding work and accommodation to support himself.

We connected Hakim with amazing volunteers in the community who support refugees and people seeking asylum. One helped Hakim find work, while another volunteer generously provided him with a free room in her home until he was able to save funds for a bond and rental room of his own. While Hakim's future remains uncertain, the smiling photos we have received of his social outings with community volunteers are in stark contrast to when he first arrived in Australia. It is a wonderful reminder of the incredible difference pro bono and community support can make.

\*Not his real name

## A spotlight on judicial review

For 10 years, W+K lawyers have been assisting people seeking asylum with the judicial review process. They help people who have been refused a protection visa to navigate the legal processes of an appeal to the Federal Circuit Court, where the court reviews whether the decision was made following correct legal process. Decisions about an individual's claim for protection have a huge impact on that person's life, so it is vital that these decisions are made fairly and lawfully.

We have seen the legal need for assistance with judicial review applications increase significantly, because of 'fast-track' legislation that was introduced in December 2014, affecting about 25,000 people who arrived in Australia by boat. People who have had their refugee claims refused by this process are at risk of being sent back to danger. Their only avenue for appeal is judicial review.

## Armin's journey

In recent years we have assisted Armin\* with his judicial review application before the Federal Circuit Court of Australia. Armin was referred to us by the Refugee Advice & Casework Service. He had fled his home country in 2013, arriving in Australia by boat, due to fear of persecution resulting from his political activism.

The resolution of Armin's immigration position was a long and difficult journey spanning eight years. It involved applying for a temporary protection visa, which was refused, and a review by the Immigration Assessment Authority upholding the visa refusal. This led to our involvement in assisting with an application for judicial review.

The lengthy process and the uncertainty Armin faced took a toll on his physical and mental health, resulting in him spending extended periods of time in hospital. Due to the sudden decline in Armin's mental health, we obtained an expedited final hearing and judgment was received in his favour.


\*Not his real name

“I thank you again for letting me know these dear beautiful people of Australia and thanks a lot to you and your team for the support which made me breathe again.”

– Hakim







“We would like to express our deep gratitude for the pro bono assistance W+K has provided Refugee Legal in response to the legal needs of Afghan nationals, both onshore and offshore, and to assist people at imminent risk in Afghanistan for their urgent evacuation. W+K’s contribution to Refugee Legal and the clients we serve is critical to assisting some of the most vulnerable people in our society.”

– David Manne, Executive Director & Principal Solicitor, Refugee Legal





### **Afghanistan evacuation work**

In August 2021, a team of senior lawyers from W+K responded to an urgent call from Refugee Legal to assist people at imminent risk in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Taliban takeover. Our lawyers prepared as many humanitarian visa applications as possible for their urgent evacuation. Many of the visa applicants had worked with Australian aid agencies and NGOs across the past 20 years in Afghanistan and were at immediate risk.

One client we assisted ran a not-for-profit in Kabul. She was a vocal advocate for women's rights in Afghanistan, who had previously spoken out publicly against the Taliban in the international media before the Taliban rose to power. Another client we assisted was a health care worker involved in community health education programs funded by an Australian NGO that supported young people in Kabul, a role not approved by the Taliban and she had been prevented from work since the Taliban takeover.

**"Assisting with humanitarian visa applications was a stark reminder of just how quickly life can change. Many thousands of people with meaningful lives and careers are now living in fear of persecution. I was very proud to play a small part in helping Refugee Legal's incredible work submitting hundreds, if not thousands, of humanitarian visa applications for Afghani people with a connection to Australia in the face of an overwhelming crisis."**

– **Chris Spain**, Melbourne Partner, W+K

# Protecting the legal rights of older people

**For the past six years, we have partnered with Seniors Rights NSW to protect and advance the legal rights of older people, particularly those who are vulnerable or otherwise experiencing disadvantage.**

Our involvement with Seniors Rights NSW started with our lawyers advising older people through a telephone advice clinic – one we continue to be involved in today. Each month W+K lawyers assist with a range of legal issues, including wills, power of attorney, guardianship and elder abuse.

Our partnership with Seniors Rights NSW has deepened over the years, to include taking on referrals of more complex pro bono matters involving financial abuse and exploitation, as well as advising Seniors Rights NSW on its own operations. We have also provided paralegals on secondment and recently begun working with Seniors Rights NSW to support its First Nations clients. Since 2018, we have facilitated a specialist pro bono internship program students undertake as part of their university studies, with their time shared between Seniors Rights Service NSW and W+K's pro bono team.

**"The support Wotton Kearney provides to Seniors Rights Service is invaluable in supporting our mission as the leading community legal centre assisting older vulnerable persons throughout New South Wales. As a busy service with limited resources, having partners like W+K dedicate their time and expertise to assist our clients is critical in ensuring we can continue to deliver high volumes of quality advice and assistance."**

– **Mitchell S Harvey**, Acting Principal Solicitor, Seniors Rights Service, NSW

**"As an intern I was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to work with Seniors Rights NSW. It was an eye-opening experience into an area of pro-bono work that at times I feel is overlooked. A major highlight for me was listening to calls to clients, understanding their situation and taking notes while lawyers gave advice. I found the chats with clients were as much about providing emotional support and creating an environment where the client could share their troubles as it was about providing legal advice."**

**W+K's internship program with Seniors Rights NSW has positive short and long-term benefits. In the short-term, students provide critical support to lawyers within Seniors Rights NSW. In the long-term, students are exposed to pro-bono work in the aged care space, creating a network of young people interested in aged care and advocating for seniors' rights."**


– **Nabil Feki**, Pro Bono Intern at W+K









A photograph of a modern courtroom. The walls are covered in vertical wood paneling. In the foreground, there are rows of blue upholstered chairs with wooden armrests, arranged in a tiered fashion. A white rectangular box with a speech bubble tail is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing a quote. The lighting is warm and even.

“I’m a big fan of justice for all. No matter how big or how small, everyone has a side to a story and everyone deserves to have that story heard. By the same token, I can’t stand to see a person get duped by someone who thinks they can get away with it. Pro bono gets me in someone’s corner who may not have anyone else and gives them a fighting chance. This is defending the livelihoods of real people who are often in these situations because of someone else’s greed.”

– **Nick Darwen**, Associate and Self-Representation Service volunteer, W+K

# Assisting unrepresented litigants

**Ten years ago, Justice Connect's Federal Court Self Representation Service in Sydney became the first clinic our Community Footprint program was involved in. During the early days of Community Footprint, Justice Connect provided much-needed support and training and helped lay foundations on which we were able to grow our pro bono practice.**

The purpose of the Self Representation Service is to assist unrepresented litigants in the Federal Court and Federal Circuit Court who are unable to afford private legal assistance and are ineligible for legal aid.

At the heart of the service is a weekly legal advice clinic supported by volunteer lawyers from the private legal profession. Our lawyers help unrepresented litigants understand the law and their legal rights and remedies. They help alleviate clients' stress (and distress) by providing them with simple and practical advice about their case and the tools to present their case in the best possible manner.

We have now been involved in the Self Representation Clinic for ten years, with lawyers in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane regularly volunteering their time and expertise through our partnerships with Justice Connect and LawRight.

## John's story

John\* was previously employed as a truck driver. When he was injured at work, his employer dismissed him. John took his dismissal to the Federal Circuit Court and after his employer failed to appear, was granted a default judgment for unpaid entitlements owed to him.

John was referred to W+K by the Self Representation Service for help with enforcing the judgment debt. Enforcement of judgments is often far from straightforward and that was the case in John's matter.

W+K Special Counsel, Samantha Butt, took on John's matter and worked with him to determine the most appropriate method to recover the judgment debt. Samantha helped John to issue a statutory demand against the employer company and commence winding up proceedings, whilst he received treatment for his workplace injuries.

Ultimately, John was able to recover the full amount (plus interest and costs) owed to him by his former employer.

\*Not his real name

**"My experience with Wotton + Kearney was exceptional. Samantha Butt listened and fought for my matter with the upmost belief and respect. She guided me through every step and finally got justice for my injuries and suffering."**

– John \*

**"I really enjoy being involved in this type of work as it allows you to assist clients that have different needs and experiences that you would ordinarily not come across in your day-to-day matters. It provides someone with the support and hope of obtaining justice in circumstances where legal services may not be perceived as within their reach."**

– Samantha Butt, Special Counsel, W+K



# Investing in education – Porirua College

**Our relationship with Porirua College spans eight years. It grew from a one-off volunteering day, organised through Volunteer Wellington, into a long-lasting and meaningful partnership that holds a special place in the heart of W+K's Wellington office.**

Porirua College is a restorative, multicultural school that works through a learning coach system to develop positive relationships and solve problems. Since 2014, the Wellington office has focussed its volunteering initiatives to work with Porirua College students.

Andrew McIntyre, a founding partner of W+K's Wellington office, drove the involvement with Porirua College and initiated a scholarship as he enjoyed being around the kids and supporting their education. After Andrew passed away in 2016, the name of the scholarship was changed to the Andrew McIntyre Memorial Scholarship. The

scholarship provides a \$1,000 payment for three years towards one student's university fees. Each year the scholarship is awarded to a student who has excelled at school and has been accepted to a tertiary institution.

One of the highlights of the partnership is being invited to attend the College's senior prizegiving at the end of the year. Porirua College has a strong connection with the local Pasifika community so being involved in their prizegiving and being immersed in a completely different culture from our office and the law profession generally always brings new perspectives.





“Seeing how meaningful the scholarships and awards are to the Porirua students and their families really makes us appreciate what a privileged position we are in. We can take that for granted sometimes. Seeing all the achievements of the students also makes us want to equally strive for excellence in our own work – such inspiring students doing amazing work.”

– Caitlin Barclay, Associate. W+K





# SDG 5: Gender Equality

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## THE GOAL

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

W+K's Community Footprint will address gender inequality through a focus on:

- + Women's economic security and empowerment
- + Freedom from discrimination, harassment and violence
- + Diversity in leadership

At W+K, we value all people as equal and together we are breaking down barriers to create more access to rights and opportunities for women and girls. We are addressing gender inequality through a focus on women's economic security and empowerment, freedom from discrimination, harassment and violence, and through diversity in leadership.



# Supporting women at risk – Lou's Place

We have partnered with Lou's Place since the start of our Community Footprint program in 2012. Lou's Place is Sydney's only daytime women's refuge, supporting women at risk or experiencing crisis including facing issues of homelessness, domestic violence, mental health or addiction.

Through our partnership with Lou's Place, we have built our awareness of homelessness and played a part in supporting the women needing support and encouragement who come through their door.

Having worked with Lou's Place for 10 years, we have seen the benefits of having a long-term partnership. These include engaging our people with the cause and building on the impact of the partnership year-on-year.

Here's some of the ways we have partnered with Lou's Place:

**Fundraising, including through our inaugural W+K Charity Tennis Day**

**Cooking a warm breakfast once a month on-site**

**Collecting and donating clothing, shoes, accessories, toiletries, makeup and more all year-round**


**Donating Christmas goodie bags**

**Participating in 'craftivist' projects for homelessness week**

**Writing and providing letters of support on Valentine's Day**

**Providing support through pro bono legal work**



A photograph of a person sleeping on a dark grey couch. They are covered with a vibrant, multi-colored striped blanket. A patterned pillow is visible on the left. A white text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

The people you see  
sleeping rough make up  
only 6% of Australia's  
homeless population.

## A spotlight on homelessness

The people you see sleeping rough make up only 6% of Australia's homeless population. The other 94% include those who find themselves couch surfing, individuals and families packed into crowded rooming houses, and women and children escaping an abusive home and moving into short-term safe housing.

Homelessness doesn't discriminate. It can happen to anyone from any background. The reasons for homelessness are complex and they are known. Here are some examples.

### Domestic and family violence

Family, sexual and domestic violence are the leading causes of homelessness across Australia.

### Housing crisis

The number of Australians experiencing homelessness is growing every year because of the shortage of affordable housing and skyrocketing rents.

### Financial difficulties

Experiencing financial difficulty can set the wheels in motion for a person to suddenly find themselves no longer able to afford living costs.

### Mental health

Poor mental health can contribute in the lead-up to homelessness but the very experience of being homeless can leave a devastating impact on one's mental health.





“Lou's Place is so very thankful to W+K for its ongoing support over so many years. It means so much to have long-term partners who understand the issues and are keen to make a real difference in the community. The women in our service look forward to the community breakfasts and the care and kindness that results is so special to see. The donations of toiletries and financial support is truly meaningful on the ground and proves that partnerships can make a difference to the lives of women in our community.”

– Nicole Yade, General Manager, Lou's Place





## My involvement with Lou's Place

**Heidi Nash-Smith**, Partner, Head of Pro Bono & Responsible Business, W+K

Lou's Place holds a very special place in my heart. About 12 years ago, I spent six months volunteering at Lou's Place, running a pro bono legal clinic for the women there. This experience gave me an insight into the incredible work undertaken by Lou's Place and the need for a safe and secure place for women at risk to go to during the day. My experience with Lou's Place was also a turning point in my career. It showed me the impact of pro bono legal support on people's lives, and it ignited a passion for giving back to the community that a few years later led to me setting up the Community Footprint program at W+K.

**Sara Villanueva**, Community Footprint Coordinator, W+K

My first experience with Lou's Place was volunteering there with some colleagues from W+K to cook breakfast for Lou's Place clients. This was the first time I crossed paths with Sydney women experiencing hard times in their lives. Without knowing what type of experiences they were currently going through, it was undeniable the small gift of a warm breakfast on a Friday morning meant a lot to them – but little did they know they had planted a seed in me. I attended other breakfasts that year and each visit brought different meaning. The women who work at Lou's Place have created a warm safe space for all women who walk through the doors. I have also coordinated appeals and donation drives for Lou's Place. The one that stuck with me the most was writing Valentine's Day cards for Lou's Place clients. We've all felt lonely and lost at some point in our lives and at that time support is needed even if it's indirect. We all need to hear some encouraging words to lift our soul.



# Keeping Girls in School – So They Can

**So They Can is a charity that works with vulnerable communities and their governments in Kenya and Tanzania to educate and empower children, so they can break the poverty cycle, realise their own potential and meet their own needs.**

Globally, we have all seen the devastating effects of the pandemic. One of the long-term consequences is the impact of a disrupted education, particularly on girls. In Kenya there was a nationwide closure of schools between March 2020 and January 2021. This disrupted the education of about 18 million learners, with a total of about 15 million children in primary and secondary schools. In Africa, there's a particular risk when girls are at home for long periods of time that they won't be able to return to school.

So They Can is addressing declining school attendance rates and increasing drop-out rates of girls in Kenya through its Keeping Girls in School program. The program engages the whole community to realise the importance of girls' education, prevent child marriage and female genital cutting, and ensure girls' human rights, health and wellbeing.

We recently supported So They Can's Keeping Girls in School program by linking a survey gauging our people's views on a return to the office with donations to So They Can. We were able to donate \$15k+, funding Keeping Girls in School in three schools.

This initiative was a continuation of our partnership with So They Can which began in 2016 with sponsoring the education of a little girl called Joyce. There was a natural alignment to W+K partnering with So They Can. Working in a law firm, many of us have had the benefit of a good education and appreciate the opportunities that education has given us. We wanted to be able to provide those same opportunities to the children So They Can works with.

Our partnership saw a team from W+K travel to Kenya to visit So They Can's projects and to run the Maasai Mara Marathon as part of our fundraising efforts. In a year we raised \$100k+ for So They Can, providing 33 children with ongoing sponsorship for their education.



## My involvement with So They Can

**Hope Saloustros**, Melbourne Partner, W+K

At the time I signed up to travel to Kenya with my W+K colleagues, my daughter was six years old and starting in grade 1. I couldn't imagine her not having the opportunity to go to school. It's just what kids do here in Australia. They go to school, they learn, they participate in their sports and activities. They do not have to quit school to support their household or because there isn't enough money. So They Can's mission to break the cycle of poverty through education resonated with me and so next thing I knew I signed up for the Maasai Mara half marathon to raise awareness and money for this very purpose. I personally raised about \$7,500 contributing to our total fundraising efforts of \$100k+! I was humbled by the generosity of my family, friends and colleagues.

Whilst in Kenya, I saw first-hand where the money goes. We met the committed teachers and the bright and talented kids. We saw where the kids study, where they play and where they live. We saw how micro-loans helped women start a business in their community and

thrive. What I initially thought was just empowering kids through education, turned out to be a whole lot more.

And so it was in this background, on a hot Kenyan morning we commenced the half marathon in the middle of the savannah after the helicopters cleared the trail of animals – yes, lions and the like. I have never been a natural runner, so the elevation, combined with the heat and uneven terrain, made the run quite arduous. Despite this, it was by far the most thrilling experience I have had running – one shared with Kenyans and people from all over the world. Oh... and there were warthogs, giraffes and hyenas that were not scared off by the helicopter!

I am privileged to be part of a firm that is committed to inclusion for all – even if that means helping in another part of the world. This experience helped me be more connected to my firm's values – a firm that stands up for what it believes in.

**“Partnerships are extremely important to us for a number of reasons. The funding is of course critical, but the connections we make with our funding partners and our children and their communities on the ground is so satisfying as the enrichment both parties get is eminently evident. Our partnership with W+K demonstrates this perfectly. Its donation of nearly \$120k has made a life-changing impact on our children in Africa. While watching the W+K team, who traveled to Africa meeting our children and their families and run in the mad Maasai Mara half, I thought about the beautiful concept of African philosophy of Ubuntu. It means 'I am because of you'. I couldn't be more grateful for the way in which W+K people have thrown themselves into our partnership, embracing all Africa has to offer and making a tremendous difference to the lives of some of the materially poorest children in the world in doing so. Thank you.”**

– **Cassandra Treadwell**, CEO/Co Founder, So They Can





# Promoting gender equality – Australian Human Rights Commission

W+K has provided support to the Australian Human Rights Commission with various projects to promote gender equality in Australia.

## National Guidelines on Special Measures under the Sex Discrimination Act

In 2018, we assisted with the development, drafting and finalisation of the Commission's National Guidelines on Special Measures under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth), which are available on the Commission's website. The guidelines provide clear and practical guidance to organisations and individuals to encourage the implementation of special measures to address gender inequality. They provide a means by which employers, educational institutions, those who provide goods, services, facilities and accommodation, and administrators of Commonwealth law and programs, can assess their own equity initiatives for consistency with the Act.

## Summary of federal discrimination cases

We regularly prepare summaries of decisions of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia, the Federal Court of Australia and other relevant jurisdictions to assist the staff of the Commission's Investigation and Conciliation Service and National Information Service. It is crucial to the delivery of these services that decisions are made with reference to relevant legislation, policies and procedures, and precedents that speak to the courts' interpretation of federal human rights and anti-discrimination law.

## National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces

In 2019, to support the Commission's ground-breaking National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces, W+K helped address a specific term of reference examining the current legal framework for sexual harassment.

W+K provided an overview of the legal landscape in Australia relating to workplace sexual harassment and an overview of current trends and themes in the case law on workplace sexual harassment.

**“I think this is an important field for W+K to work in given the prevalence of sexual harassment and sex discrimination, and its impact on women, particularly in the workplace. By assisting the Commission's conciliators to learn about the decisions made in the Federal Court, these case summaries hopefully will assist applicants to understand the nature of the jurisdiction and what matters should form the basis of complaints.”**

– Caitilin Watson, Special Counsel, W+K



“The comparative legal research and review of applicable laws that W+K has prepared will be incredibly valuable in informing the development of the Inquiry’s report on the adequacy of the current legal framework with respect to sexual harassment, and recommendations for change.”

– Kate Jenkins, Sex Discrimination Commissioner







# SDG 13: Climate Action

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## THE GOAL

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

W+K's Community Footprint will address climate action through a focus on climate justice. We will use our expertise to:

- + Promote awareness of the climate crisis, its impacts on people experiencing disadvantage and Australia's obligations under international law
- + Support strategic advocacy and law reform efforts of our partner climate justice organisations
- + Support and participate in measures to mitigate the impacts of climate crisis

Recognising we all have a part to play in avoiding catastrophic climate change impacts, W+K's Community Footprint program has identified climate justice as the focus of its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goal of Climate Action. Given that the negative impacts of climate change disproportionately affect people experiencing discrimination and disadvantage, this is also a human rights issue.



# Supporting Community Legal Centres Australia

**Community Legal Centres Australia (CLCs Australia) is the peak organisation for community legal centres across Australia. CLCs Australia is leading the community legal sector to take a proactive approach to building resilience in the sector's operations and in the communities they serve in the face of disasters and climate impacts. W+K lawyers work with CLCs Australia to support their national policy, advocacy and law reform work, with a focus on climate justice and disaster resilience.**

We have assisted CLCs Australia to identify emerging trends and relevant language in domestic and international climate change advocacy, and we have researched Australia's performance against its obligations in the international human rights and climate action landscape.

W+K lawyer, Renee Magee, also completed a secondment with CLCs Australia, undertaking a mapping exercise of the community legal sector's work in climate justice. Through consultation with centres across the country on their climate policy, test case litigation, disaster recovery and community projects, we were able to identify areas of consensus on policy and legislative reform, as well as develop national advocacy resources. As climate change worsens the frequency and intensity of extreme events, it's timely for the legal sector to reflect on its work to support impacted people and communities, and think about how we can improve our support to track impacts, anticipate emerging legal needs, and develop the community legal sector's unique value add to climate justice.

**"We want our people to become agents of positive change by having a greater awareness of the climate crisis and its impacts on people experiencing discrimination and disadvantage. Ultimately, by supporting the work of our pro bono partner organisations to engage in advocacy, we are making sure that people most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are better protected with policies to mitigate against those impacts."**

– Heidi Nash-Smith, Partner, Head of Pro Bono & Responsible Business, W+K

**"Community Legal Centres Australia has a big brief but is resource-poor. We rely heavily on pro bono supports and are extremely grateful for the generous support we've received from Wotton + Kearney. Renee's work enabled us to undertake a scan of the work that community legal centres are doing in climate justice nationally, including our work as first responders with communities impacted by climate-induced natural disasters. Not only does this enable us to describe the incredible work being done by individual centres, it enables us to articulate a national climate justice movement to which our centre is making a very significant contribution. There can be no argument that now is a pivotal moment in Australia's response to climate change, and we have a responsibility to contribute by making the case that climate change is a justice issue and by advocating focus on the impacts of climate change on people's human rights. These impacts are often more extreme for communities that have done the least to cause climate change and which have the fewest resources with which to respond. Renee's work has been critically important in shaping our ongoing advocacy."**

– Tim Leach, Chief Executive Officer of Community Legal Centres Australia







# Amplifying the advocacy of Climate Justice Programme

**W+K seconded a graduate lawyer to Climate Justice Programme for three months to assist with the development of materials for short course training and awareness raising for lawyers relating to climate law topics.**

The Climate Justice Programme has been fighting for climate justice since 2003.

Climate Justice Programme is the world's first nonprofit organisation entirely dedicated to using the law to combat climate change and pursue climate justice.

W+K lawyers regularly contribute articles to the blog of Climate Justice Programme, boosting its capacity to raise awareness of human rights issues relating to climate change. Recent issues covered by W+K lawyers include:

- + an examination of the gendered impacts of climate change from the perspective of the [IPCC's reports](#)
- + the Law Council of Australia's [Climate Change Policy](#) setting out what actions lawyers can take as individuals and businesses

## My involvement with Climate Justice Programme

**Julia Lawford**, Graduate, W+K

Climate change and the risks associated with it have the potential to impact almost every facet of our lives and so it also poses challenges for many different areas of law (such as human rights law, corporate law, consumer law, and criminal law). The intersection between insurance and climate law for example is potentially huge and growing each day that we move closer to a point of no return in the climate crisis.





**“W+K has amplified our voice by providing us with insightful and informative analysis of cases of significance to climate justice.**

**Julia’s research and writing focused on a number of key topics, including: the Philippines human rights investigation into the role of the Carbon Majors in climate change; greenwashing and climate justice; and the role of insurance in relation to climate change. As part of this research, Julia considered the role of women and the importance of a gender equality and climate justice perspective, particularly in relation to the topic of insurance. Her secondment has tremendously benefitted the Climate Justice Programme for which we are very grateful.”**

– **Keely Boom**, Executive Officer of Climate Justice Programme

## **Gender equality key to tackling climate risk – International Women’s Day 2022**

In March 2022, W+K hosted a panel event for International Women’s Day 2022, following the United Nations theme Changing climates: Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow.

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change. The Royal Commission into National Disaster Arrangements found that natural disasters are often linked with increased rates of family violence. After the 2009 Victorian bushfires, women residing in highly affected communities were 7x more likely to experience violence compared to low impact communities. Similar statistics have emerged from the 2019/2020 bushfires.

The keynote speaker, Dr Keely Boom, Executive Officer of Climate Justice Programme said “We need to see projects that address both gender and climate justice together to create solutions that are implemented by those most impacted. Research shows that women’s leadership and equal participation result in better outcomes for climate policy, reducing emissions, and protection of land”.



**International  
Women’s Day**



**community  
footprint**





# SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

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## THE GOAL

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

W+K's Community Footprint will promote peace, justice and strong institutions by contributing our legal expertise to support advocacy by human rights organisations, focusing on:

- + Barriers to accessing justice for vulnerable cohorts, including people subject to discrimination, people negatively impacted by climate change and First Nations people
- + Systemic issues that undermine the rule of law and present barriers to accessing justice

We are working to address systemic issues so that people in our community, particularly those most vulnerable, experience a more just and fair society.

We focus on reducing discrimination and barriers to accessing justice for the disadvantaged cohorts for which our pro bono partner organisations advocate by changing unfair laws and policies.



# Human rights and rule of law

## Raise the Age

We conducted research to support Change the Record's campaign to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years of age. Our research addressed one of the major obstacles to raising the age of criminal responsibility, with Attorneys General expressing concern about the prospect of children aged 10 to 14 being left without any consequences or interventions if they commit crimes. The research has demonstrated the alternatives that exist between incarceration and doing nothing at all, and how the cost of preventative services is a fraction of the cost of imprisoning a child (between \$750k to \$1m a year). Change the Record said it also satisfied a desire of the Attorneys General in each jurisdiction to see the alternative services in their own state or territory.

In addition to being used in state and territory advocacy, the research will be used by Change the Record in three specific pieces of funded work:

1. a [website resource](#) for children's advocates so they can quickly find out about each alternative service
2. an animation showing a map of Australia and where all the services are located, and
3. advocacy and educational videos with stories of children who have been diverted from the criminal justice system and had their lives transformed through participation in some of the services.

**"I felt this project was important for raising awareness and it will hopefully result in changes to the age of criminal responsibility. Australia is out of step with international standards and I hope this project helps to redress the imbalance. It doesn't make economic sense to me to be directing significant resources to incarceration rather than to measures that are both remedial (promoting the availability of career and other opportunities), and preventative (being more likely to avoid the recurrent costs of recidivism)."**

– India Mason-Cox, Associate, W+K

## Justice reinvestment

We developed a comprehensive briefing document for Change the Record that makes the case for justice reinvestment and, specifically, for establishing a national justice reinvestment body.

Justice reinvestment projects fund front-end, community-driven strategies to help divert children, young people and their families from the criminal justice system. Instead of punitive measures, money is invested in preventative, diversionary and community development initiatives. To support Change the Record's advocacy, our research identified existing international and state-based examples of justice reinvestment bodies which, when combined with existing research, makes the economic and social case for justice reinvestment.

**"First Nations people in Australia are particularly exposed to, and overrepresented in all stages of the criminal justice system. This situation is profoundly unjust. The premise of Change the Record and justice reinvestment more broadly is to reconsider 'business as usual' and deploy evidence-based interventions to allow individuals and communities to escape the orbit of the criminal justice system. I've always had a strong interest in the functioning of the criminal justice system, and I think that more effective answers are usually found in extra-legal solutions that address the factors that underly criminality. That is why a more holistic justice reinvestment model has such promise."**

– Samuel Hartridge, Senior Associate, W+K



“Ripping very young children out of their families, communities and school can cause children life-long harm. Australia is one of the few countries in the world that still locks away children as young as 10 years old.”

– Change the Record



# Addressing modern slavery – International Justice Mission Australia

**Slavery still exists and it is vast and brutal. There are more than 50 million people trapped in modern slavery across the world today, including in Australia and New Zealand.**

Through our 2018/19 charity partnership with International Justice Mission Australia (IJM Australia), a global anti-slavery organisation with the rule of law at its core, we were introduced to the realities of modern slavery and the role that W+K could play to address it.

Because of our partnership with IJM Australia, W+K is now voluntarily reporting on the modern slavery risk of our operations and supply chains under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (Cth). We do this because we understand the impact supply chain transparency can have on addressing modern slavery.

**“It is humbling that by partnering with IJM and supporting their work in Cambodia, W+K contributed to the rescue of 16 victims from slavery. It shows that our advocacy and fundraising make a tangible difference to the lives of others.”**

– **Heidi Nash-Smith**, Partner, Head of Pro Bono & Responsible Business, W+K

**“In IJM Australia’s years of operation, the corporate partnership with W+K has been one of the most wide-reaching due to its commitment to critical pro bono legal advice as well as:**

- + a senior lawyer pro bono secondment to assist IJM Australia in securing full accreditation under the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)
- + advocacy and awareness raising with all W+K staff on modern slavery issues and the new federal Modern Slavery Act
- + fundraising through many community-based activities, including a 180-person gala dinner, and
- + facilitating a fundraising bike ride across Cambodia for W+K staff, that included a visit to IJM’s office in Phnom Penh to learn more about the work of ending impunity for forced labour trafficking.”

– **Jacob Sarkodee**, Chief Impact Officer, IJM Australia





## My involvement with IJM

**Belinda Henningham**, Sydney Partner, W+K

I was shocked to learn that slavery and labour trafficking are so pervasive in the 21st century. The victims' stories that IJM shared with us made those issues real and tangible. I wanted to play my own small part in supporting IJM to tackle those issues and take on a challenge that was well and truly outside my comfort zone.

There is one word for my experience cycling 250km through Cambodia with IJM – "amazing". That sounds trite, but the experience was truly eye-opening.

Our bike ride was long, hot, sweaty, dusty and incredible! We rode from beautiful Siem Reap to bustling Phnom Penh, weaving through rural villages (where many of the children didn't have the luxury of attending school), ancient temples and floating fishing villages in between. We were welcomed into locals' homes for meals, rode the bamboo railway and ate fried insects at street fairs.

We also had the sobering experience of visiting Cambodia's Killing Fields and Genocide Museum. I'd heard about the Pol Pot regime before visiting Cambodia but I didn't truly understand that history until we spent time in these terrible and confronting places. The human stories that are tied to those places reinforce the critical importance of organisations like IJM in protecting vulnerable people.

The highlight was spending time with IJM at its Cambodian headquarters where we heard how IJM goes about its work of tackling modern slavery by using existing justice system avenues, how it has changed so many victims' lives already and how there is so much more to do. It was a privilege to play a part in supporting IJM through our fundraising efforts and to personally meet the IJM team who carry out its work on the ground.

My fundraising journey with IJM and trip to Cambodia immersed me in cultural, physical and emotional experiences that were far, far removed from my day-to-day life as a lawyer living and working in a stable country like Australia. The W+K team that took that journey shared in experiences and built bonds that will have a lifelong impact on all of us.

The experience truly opened my eyes to how each of us can do our own small bit to help others. What I learned was that every small contribution makes a difference towards tackling overwhelmingly big social problems. It is literally one of the best things I have ever done. My tip to everyone is that if an opportunity like this comes your way, grab it and get involved.



# Responsible leadership

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At Wotton + Kearney we take seriously our role as a responsible global citizen. We are committed to ethical and environmentally sustainable business practices. We embrace diversity and are committed to cultivating an inclusive workplace where our people thrive.



# Modern Slavery

Modern slavery breaches the most fundamental freedoms and human rights of individuals. W+K rejects all forms of modern slavery and recognises that modern slavery is never acceptable in any of its forms. Recognising the need for a business response, W+K is voluntarily reporting under the

Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth) and taking action to address modern slavery risks in our supply chains and operations.

Our efforts in the financial year ending 30 June 2022 focussed on understanding risks and developing a clear due diligence framework for identifying and addressing modern slavery. This involved:



## Understanding the impact and risk of causing, contributing to or being directly linked to modern slavery

- + Mapping our supply chain and analysing it for modern slavery risk
- + Developing and rolling-out a modern slavery questionnaire for our suppliers
- + Performing risk assessments of new suppliers
- + Building a modern slavery risk register



## Reviewing our policies and procedures

- + Developing and implementing a Modern Slavery Policy
- + Developing a Modern Slavery Grievance Policy
- + Incorporating modern slavery provisions into new procurement contracts
- + Developing a Modern Slavery Supplier Code of Conduct, which details the expectations of all suppliers to minimise and mitigate risks of modern slavery



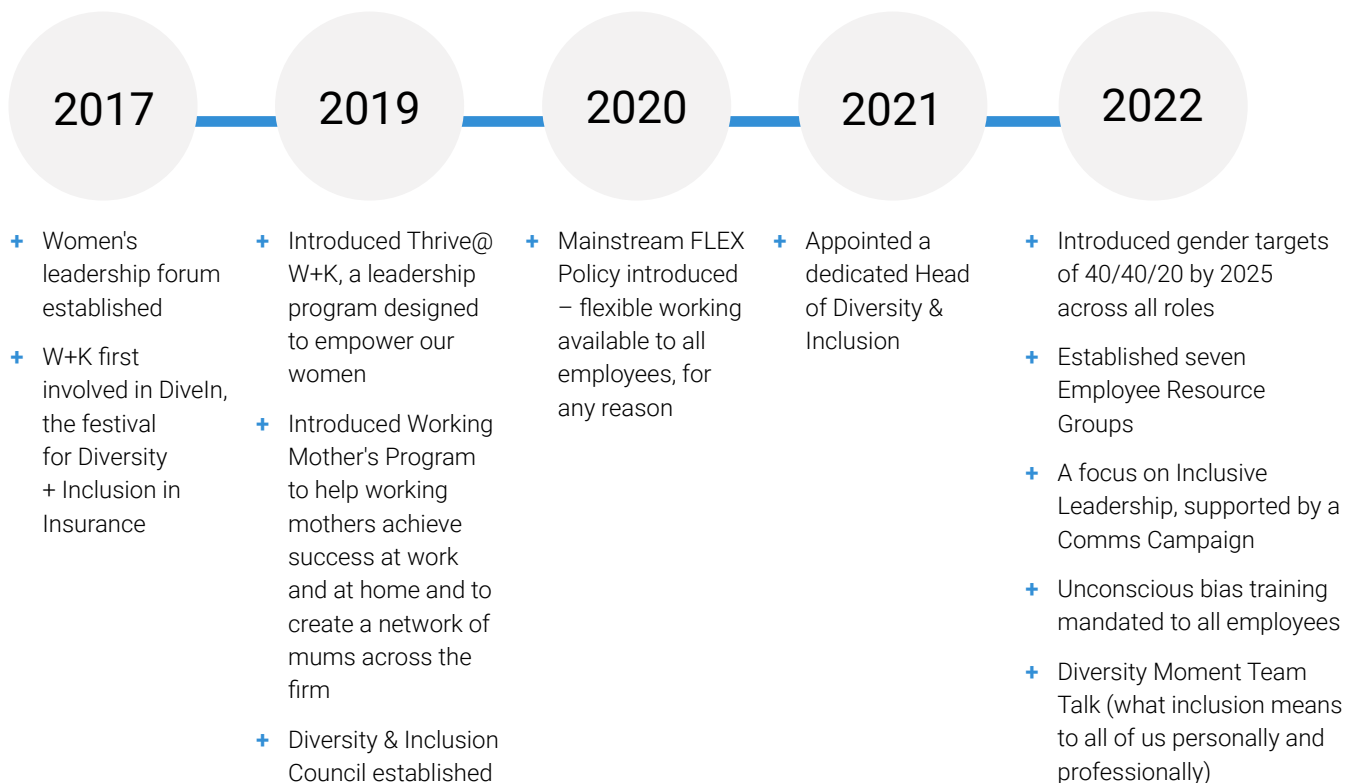
## Building staff awareness and capacity

- + Launching an anti-slavery training module for all staff
- + Delivering tailored training to the Board
- + Delivering tailored training to key personnel involved in procurement and / or supplier contracts
- + Creating a modern slavery information page on the staff intranet with links to training, policies, and other resources

# Our D+I road to success

W+K values diversity and it is one of our core values. Our people and culture are reflective of the vibrant communities in which we work and live. W+K is committed to cultivating an inclusive workplace where our people thrive, irrespective of gender or gender identity, ethnicity,

age, physical abilities, sexual preference, family or carer status, beliefs and perspectives. A more inclusive workplace enables greater employee engagement, which drives diversity of thought, more informed decision-making and ultimately a more engaging client experience.





# Sustainability

**At W+K, we take our role as a responsible global citizen seriously.**

We are a reporting member of the Australian Legal Sector Alliance (AusLSA), an industry-led association working collaboratively to promote best practice sustainability commitments and performance across the legal sector. You can access our latest AusLSA report [here](#).

We have recently introduced an externally certified Environmental Management System to drive sustainability from within the firm. We have identified our key environmental impacts and developed a detailed plan to address them.

In 2021, W+K was awarded a bronze medal in recognition of sustainability achievement by EcoVadis, the world's largest and most trusted provider of business sustainability ratings.

We also have an active Environment & Sustainability Committee, which helps drive our environmental initiatives and raise awareness of environmental issues.

**"W+K is incredibly proud of the significant progress it has made in its environmental and sustainability journey. We are now proudly 'Paperlite', have an externally certified Environmental Management System and a growing climate justice pro bono practice. We are excited about the next stage as W+K continues its climate-related pro bono work, focuses on sustainable procurement and moves towards becoming carbon neutral."**

– **Angela Tan**, Pro Bono Special Counsel and Chair of Environment and Sustainability Committee, W+K



## Identifying our environmental impacts



Energy  
consumption



Paper  
use



Business  
travel

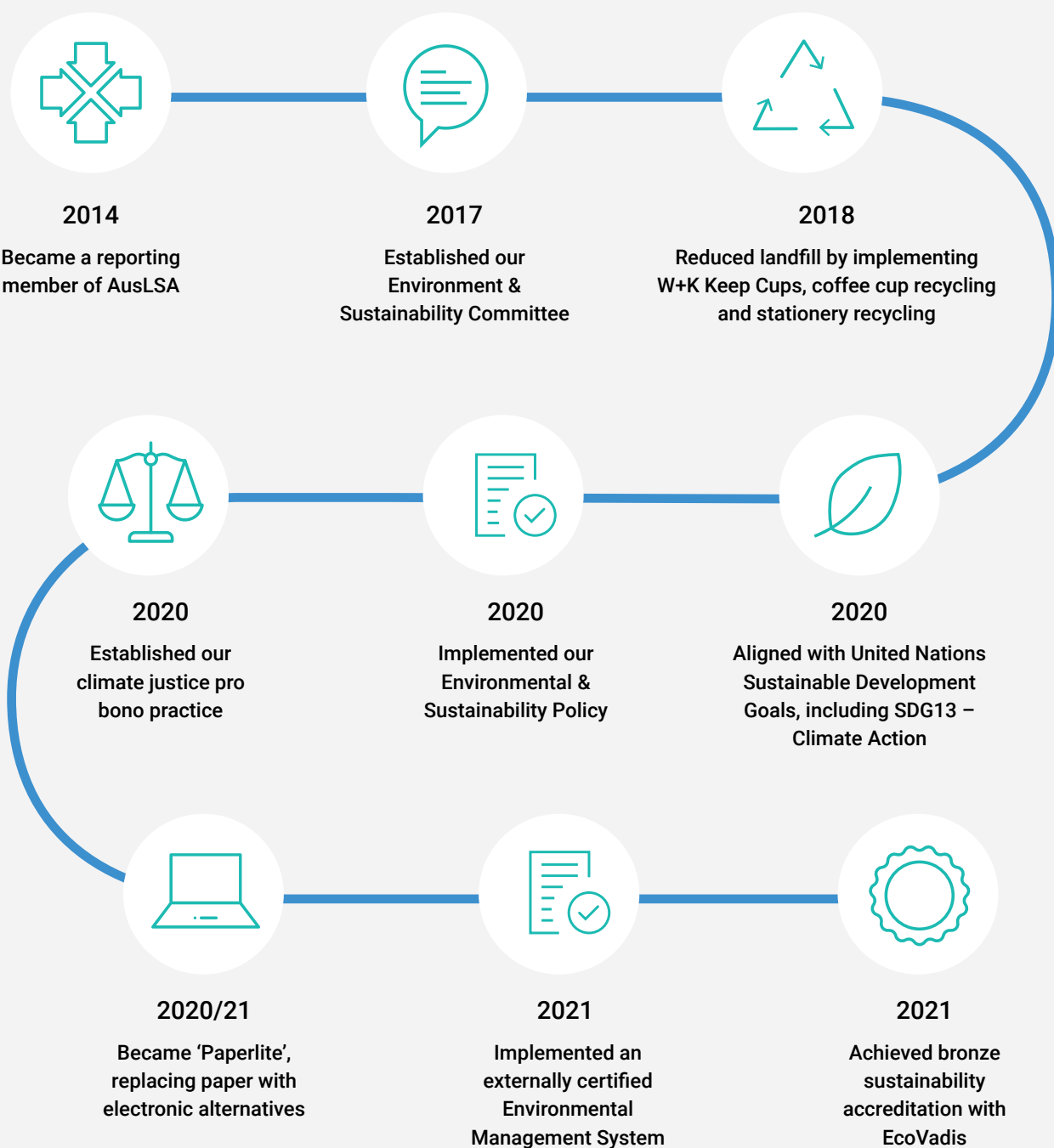


Waste to  
landfill



Sustainable  
products

## The journey so far





# W+K's journey to mental health and wellbeing

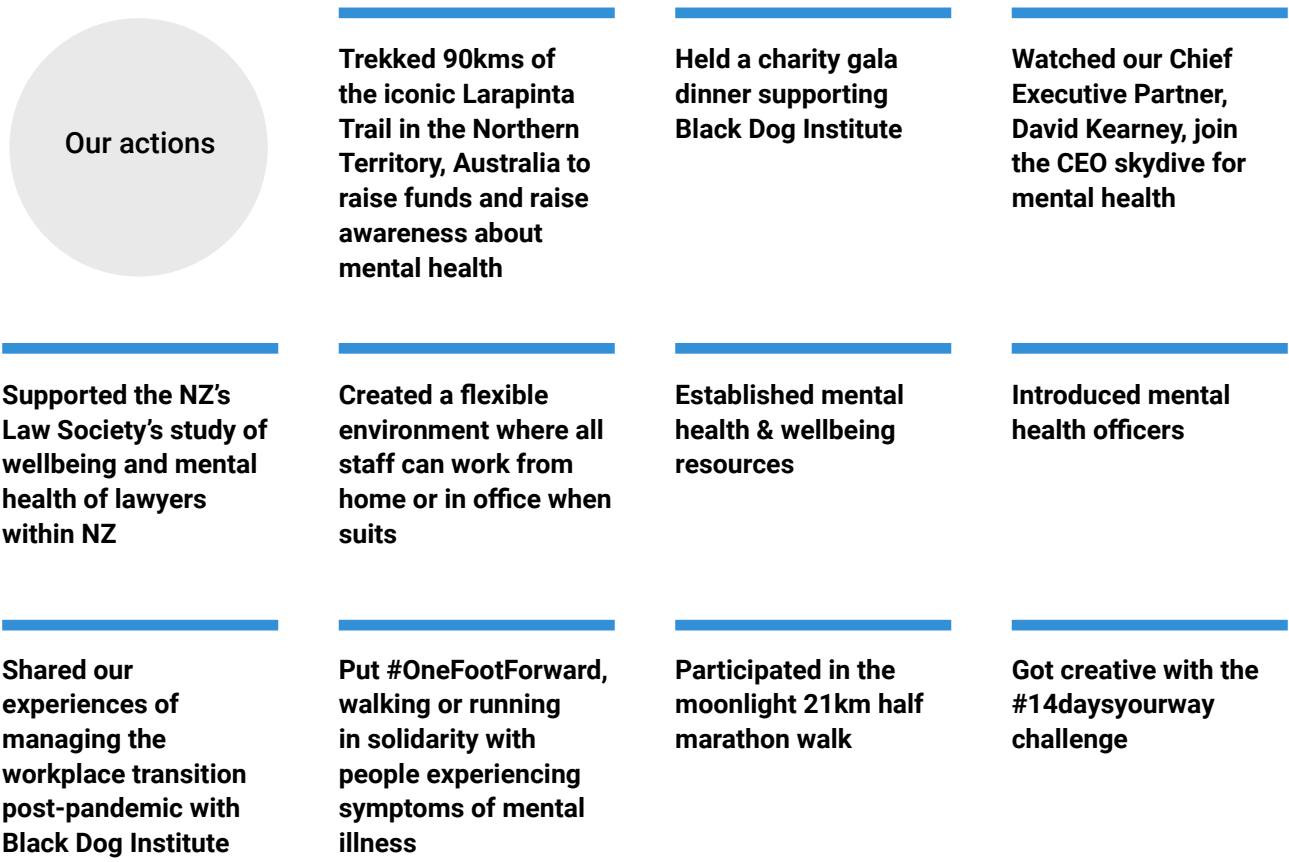
At W+K, we are tackling stigma head on and encouraging our people to have open conversations about their mental wellbeing.

We first partnered with the Black Dog Institute, a world leader in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of mood disorders such as depression and bipolar, in 2014. This strong partnership resonated with many of our people across our offices and helped us to raise awareness about the importance of mental wellbeing.

In 2019, our Australian offices once again partnered with Black Dog Institute, while our New Zealand offices supported mental health awareness through Life Squared

Trust, a charity set up in memory of Wellington partner, Andrew McIntyre. These partnerships provide us with a real opportunity to address mental health issues in the workplace in a lasting and positive way.

Our partnerships have been even more important and impactful during the pandemic where mental health and wellbeing have been brought to the forefront, with timely dialogue around mental health.





## A giant leap for mental health

David Kearney, Chief Executive Partner of W+K

As Chief Executive Partner of W+K, I am incredibly proud of the way our team assists communities in need as part of our Community Footprint program. Every day I see examples of this with the beneficiaries of our program usually being easy to identify, including refugees, the homeless and the elderly. What they have in common is that they experience a level of vulnerability through circumstances beyond their control.

Mental health is different. It affects me, it affects you, it affects all of us. It can strike without warning. The COVID period has taught us many lessons, including the very important one of not taking mental health for granted.

At W+K we are tackling stigma and encouraging our people to have open conversations about their mental wellbeing. But talking about our mental health, particularly in the workplace, can take real courage. It can mean pushing ourselves out of our comfort zone...which leads me to the obvious! Jumping out of a plane was not within my comfort zone. But it was worth it because it gave me and the other CEOs the platform to raise awareness about mental health issues and raise funds for Black Dog Institute.





## Walking tall for mental health

### Hiking the Larapinta Trail

"I signed up to Larapinta shortly after I joined W+K. This was during the first lockdown, when finally mental health and wellbeing were at the forefront of conversations everywhere. Larapinta was a great way for the firm to join in the broader conversation and keep it going.

It's easy to get caught up in the daily grind and when sacrifices need to be made, it's often our mental health we let slide. Training forced me to step away from the screen and just take a beat. This is now a permanent feature of my daily routine.

More importantly the funds we raised contributed to genuinely innovative, impactful and inspiring work. I'm still telling people about the incredible research BDI is doing in the mental health space.

Beyond this, the main highlight for me was getting to know colleagues I wouldn't run into in my day to day. Sleep deprived, without reception and only a couple kilometres into a hefty trek meant there was little else to do but band together. It was a brilliant team building exercise (without trying to be) and I'm grateful for the honest and open conversations along the dusty track."

– **Dena Paterson**, Senior Associate & Larapinta Trekker, W+K



“For me, the Larapinta trek was a great example of me being able to build and show resilience. The training leading up to the trip helped not just with my physical fitness for the walk ahead but also helped with my mental wellbeing on a daily basis – just from every day stresses. But the big thing for me was being able to persevere and complete the trek even though it seemed overwhelming at the beginning (and I anticipated physical pain). The sense of achievement was very rewarding!”

– **Meisha Tjong**, Partner & Larapinta Trekker, W+K





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