

MIDLAS

Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Service

Annual Report 2014

Message from the Chair

It gives me great pleasure to submit my third report as Chairman of the MIDLAS Board of Management. It has been a watershed year for MIDLAS and one of transition, with the appointment of Elizabeth Barnes as the new Chief Executive Officer.

On behalf of the MIDLAS Board, I take this opportunity to formally acknowledge the MIDLAS staff for their hard work, dedication and commitment in providing support services to our community and particularly acknowledge Justine Clarke who ably filled the role of Acting CEO for so much of the year.

The 2013-2014 governance agenda continued to be assisted by the Board's Policy Committee chaired by Maxinne Sclanders and the Audit, Risk and Remuneration Committee chaired by Bettina Gibney. This year we welcomed Simon Kimber and Cerys Corrins as new members to the Board and farewellled member Katie McIntyre.

Danielle Bejr (Secretary), Freda Bender, Sue Codd (Vice Chairman), Cerys Corrins, Bettina Gibney, Simon Kimber, Katie McIntyre, Maxinne Sclanders and Adrian Tomizzi (Treasurer) have brought to the table significant experience and expertise in a wide variety of fields.

It has been my privilege to work with the Board and the staff of the MIDLAS over the last 12 months and I thank my fellow board members for their support. I believe that the Board is well placed to deliver outstanding corporate governance and guidance to MIDLAS in the coming year.

Carol Mirco
Chair



“Your help has been indispensable and John is sincerely grateful that he has been able to finally get some help with claiming superannuation and insurance.

I have recommended MIDLAS to all and sundry so hopefully you will be busy until this time next year.”

Barbara Church Coordinator BGSR Pty Ltd
Supported Accommodation Services

“We desperately needed help. We were coerced into purchasing a park home and did not understand the contract or our rights. We’ve made a lot of progress with MIDLAS’ support, things are looking much brighter now. Thank you.”

Janice and Tony

Message from the CEO

I would like to start by thanking the staff and Board of MIDLAS for such a warm welcome to this innovative and altruistic organisation. I am very proud to have joined an Association that improves the lives of so many people on a daily basis. It is particularly striking that this has continued and grown in a year in which MIDLAS has faced some significant internal challenges, clearly demonstrating the commitment and dedication of the staff, and the supportive mentoring provided by the Board.

In addition to the all-important successes with the two thousand clients that have sought assistance from MIDLAS, organisational achievements in the past year include:

- accreditation from the National Association of Community Legal Centres;
- selection by the Commonwealth to provide external merits support for clients of the new National Disability Insurance Scheme trial site;
- representing the needs of our clients in the design and construction of the new Midland Health Campus; and
- Supporting the success of a plethora of community events such as NAIDOC day, Moneysmart week, and White Ribbon Day.

I take this opportunity to thank our funders for facilitating the support of vulnerable people in our community: Department of Social Services; Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Department of Commerce; Public Purposes Trust; and Lotterywest. With your continued support in the coming year MIDLAS will enable and empower the disadvantaged and vulnerable; foster a positive environment of hope for those in need; build social capital; and sustainably improve quality of life for our community.

Elizabeth Barnes

Chief Executive Officer



MIDLAS empowers vulnerable and disadvantaged people by providing them with free information, advice, education, advocacy, counselling, referral and support so they can achieve a better way of life.



Cliff Adams

***"MIDLAS has been very helpful with advice and expertise. Thank you...
I wouldn't have been able to cope and get through without you."***

Financial Counselling

MIDLAS financial counsellors have assisted and supported over 1000 clients experiencing financial stress this year.

We have created and maintained healthy working partnerships with Centrelink, Wooroloo Prison Service and Karnany Aboriginal Service to increase engagement with clients that are often the most vulnerable in our community. These relationships have meant that we have assisted and supported 50 clients on voluntary and compulsory income management through Centrelink; 60 clients in prison; and a significantly increased number of Aboriginal clients.

MIDLAS Financial Counsellors have attended professional development activities regularly throughout the year to ensure that they have the most up-to-date expertise on emerging issues that influence the financial difficulties experienced by our clients. This year specialised training has included: the Bridges out of Poverty workshop; the annual Financial Counsellors Association of WA conference; Mental Health First Aid for financial counsellors by Brain Ambulance; and training on consumer credit legislation by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

Emergency Relief

Clients often come to MIDLAS when they are in complete crisis. Individuals and families will seek assistance from MIDLAS when they have mounting and overwhelming debts, or are experiencing poverty and even homelessness. Some individuals have not had a stable meal in days and others must choose between feeding their children and paying the rent. MIDLAS sees people where it seems their situation can be no worse.

The temptation in this scenario can be to use tools such as food vouchers as a short term 'band-aid' for deeper rooted problems, distributing emergency relief as a quick fix rather than seeking long term sustainable solutions. MIDLAS uses emergency relief to help empower individuals and break the vicious cycle of social exclusion and disadvantage in which many can find themselves in.

Clients are provided with food vouchers in order to meet their primary needs, and then assisted to prioritise their expenditure with the disposable income created through the handout. MIDLAS staff provide options, information, education and support for individuals seeking emergency relief in an attempt to ensure that a long term sustainable solution is established and the crisis is prevented from occurring again.



“I couldn’t sleep because my housing debt was causing me a lot of stress and now, because of MIDLAS, I feel like I am back on track.”

Rebecca

Tenancy Advocacy

Since the crackdown on anti-social behaviour and the commencement of the three strikes policy in 2011, MIDLAS Tenancy Advocates have managed to save dozens of public housing tenants from becoming another homeless statistic. These clients have represented a significant proportion of the 550 people that we have assisted this year.

The majority of the clients that we see that are under threat of the three strikes policy are people experiencing mental health issues, often living in multi dwelling complexes with other people who have similar health problems.

MIDLAS has worked hard to build a good relationship with the Department of Housing by working together with them to identify the issues and improving the situation for all parties involved. MIDLAS has played an important role in the development of Department of Housing employees' understanding of the social and mental health issues faced by many public housing tenants.

Disability Advocacy

MIDLAS Disability Advocates increased their reach this year, working in partnership with an ever-growing number of community organisations who referred a record number of people with disability to our service.

This year's National Disability Advocacy Programme quality audit once again gave MIDLAS very positive feedback and congratulated us on our holistic approach.

Our Disability Advocates have had great success in locating superannuation insurances for eligible clients who are unable to work. MIDLAS has also assisted vulnerable clients with their Centrelink Disability Support Pension, particularly in navigating the new points system.

MIDLAS has been carefully monitoring the set up of the National Disability Insurance Scheme trial site in the Hills, developing close ties with the new staff in order to support the scheme's success over the next two years and ensure the best outcome for our clients.



“ I was forced to retire as a result of an assault. I have very little money so my criminal injuries compensation payout will make life a lot easier. I am extremely happy with the outcome. The service from MIDLAS was extremely helpful and careful.”

Brian Clowes

Legal Service

MIDLAS has provided a free legal service focused on assisting victims of family and domestic violence, and those seeking criminal injuries compensation, to a greater number and broader range of people this year. We have established and developed strong working relationships with other domestic violence services in our region and beyond, and referrals have increased accordingly.

A significant proportion of the work of the Legal team has been to ensure the safety of victims of domestic violence by successfully securing violence restraining orders.

Over the year MIDLAS has developed an innovative Domestic Violence Community Legal Education programme, and plans are in place to disseminate this to a wide audience in the coming year.

MIDLAS Media

MIDLAS Media has been privileged to work alongside numerous not-for-profit organisations, local councils and business owners delivering first class social media services and products. As a social enterprise of MIDLAS, MIDLAS Media has provided affordable and professional services to the not-for-profit sector, empowering many organisations to utilise online communications to effectively engage with clients and their communities.

Sadly, due to funding constraints, MIDLAS Media ceased operations on 15 May 2014.

Although MIDLAS Media has concluded, MIDLAS still strives to deliver superb and effective online communications to residents living in the north east of Perth. MIDLAS will continue to lead the way in this space through the dedication of our staff to keep our online platforms up to date, relevant and free.

The Board of Management



Chair - Carol Mirco Carol has extensive experience within the health care and not-for-profit sectors. Carol has a strong understanding of governance principles, gained through extensive experience with not-for-profit and regulatory boards. Her leadership skills and achievements were recognised when she was awarded the NT TMP/ Hudson Telstra Business Women of the Year Award in 2003 for work in the Government Sector. Carol's educational achievements include a Bachelor of Health Science (Nsg), a Graduate Diploma in Arts (Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies), a Master of Applied Anthropology and a recently completed Masters of Business Administration (MBA). Carol has been Chair of the MIDLAS Board of Management since 2012.



Vice Chair - Suzanne Codd Sue is a Social Worker with 20 years experience in the human services field. Sue commenced working in Community Legal Centres in the early 1990's as a Welfare Rights Advocate at Brewer Street and Sussex Street Community Legal Centres. Following a brief period working as a lecturer in Human Services at Midland TAFE, Sue returned to work as a hospital based Social worker. With a strong interest in social justice and equity issues, Sue was pleased to join the MIDLAS Board in 2012.



Treasurer - Adrian Tomizzi Adrian is a qualified Chartered Accountant and holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Marketing Double Major) from Curtin University of Technology. Adrian has grown up and attended school within the Swan Region. This is his first Board position, and he hopes to bring some financial knowledge and fresh perspectives to help MIDLAS achieve its strategic vision and aspirations in the community.



Secretary - Danielle Bejr Danielle is currently a student at Curtin University, studying a double degree in Psychology, Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations. She enjoys volunteering in her community groups, and has experience in the role of Secretary at the Psychology Student Council at Curtin, as well as in the role of HR Director and a Project Manager at Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) Curtin. Through SIFE Curtin, she has helped to create The Halo Yarns, Perth's first Aboriginal youth magazine.



Bettina Gibney Bettina is a business advisor with 13 years experience as a director and executive director in the small/medium enterprise sector. Bettina is a non-executive director and member of various Committees within the not-for-profit sector. Bettina's focus is governance, strategic planning and business development. Bettina has an MBA, a Masters of Commerce in International Business, a Graduate Certificate in Business Law, is a Graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management.



Freda Bender As a founding member of MIDLAS, Freda has been on the Board of Management since the very beginning. MIDLAS spent some time operating out of Helena Street Lotteries House Building in Midland where Freda fought to secure low cost rental accommodation for community organisations. Freda was also a founding member of Swan Emergency Accommodation and volunteers her time at the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Midland Nursing Home and is also on the board of the Red Cross and the Ascension Anglican Church Council.



Maxinne Sclanders Maxinne has been a senior manager in the public service for over ten years, an educational administrator and a teacher. She left the public service in 1997 to become an independent consultant specialising in evaluation and review, policy development, human resource management and organisational development. As well as broad experience across the public sector, she has established extensive networks and working relationships throughout the health industry (government and non-government), and the agricultural sector.



Katie McIntyre After completing a Bachelor of Business (double major in finance and accounting) at Edith Cowan University, Katie began her accounting career in a graduate role with BHP Billiton. This is Katie's first position on a board, to which she hopes to bring some new ideas and initiatives to the organisation as well as contribute to the ongoing success of MIDLAS.



Simon Kimber Simon has over 20 years management experience in business operations, marketing and general management in the private sector. This is Simon's first position in the NFP sector and he brings to the team an approach based on service flexibility and exceeding customer requirements. Simon's interests are diverse and include international political economy, geopolitical risk, resources and energy sustainability, business innovation, policy and governance. Simon has an MBA and is currently completing a Masters in International Politics.



Cerys Corrins Cerys joined the MIDLAS Board in June 2014. She has worked with people with disability for thirty years in both State and Local Government settings, predominantly in management positions. Cerys is passionate about all social justice issues and the inclusion of people with disability into their local communities. She has lived in the Midland /Hills area for over twenty years and continues to work in Midland. Cerys' local knowledge regarding people with disability will "value add" to the MIDLAS board.

Message from the Treasurer

In the year ended 30 June 2014 MIDLAS has reported a deficit of \$36,553 from continuing operations, an increase from a deficit of \$18,076 the previous financial year. This mainly reflects the challenges faced as a result of a reduced level of funding income whilst the total funds expended in the financial year have reduced. The Board is supportive in the focus to secure additional funding to ensure that MIDLAS prospers in future years.

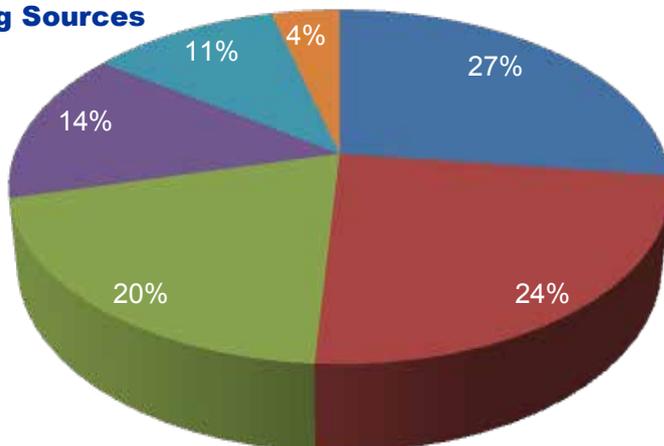
Reflecting on the financial year, MIDLAS has experienced notable changes including a new leadership through the appointment of Elizabeth Barnes (Chief Executive Officer). Elizabeth has brought a wealth of experience and has implemented productive action to MIDLAS.

A change in direction for the organisation was taken through the discontinuation of the MIDLAS Media enterprise due to challenges in securing consistent and sustainable revenue streams with the limited resources available, representing the Board's current appetite for risk in a challenging environment and for a more concentrated focus on the organisation's core capabilities.

It has been very interesting to see the growth in Board membership during the course of the year and I have been inspired by collaborating with such a dedicated and diverse Board of Management. The diversity in composition brings many points of view to critically question the range of matters encountered. I am confident that the year ahead will bring much accomplishment for MIDLAS under the stewardship of Elizabeth Barnes and the continued commitment of the MIDLAS staff.

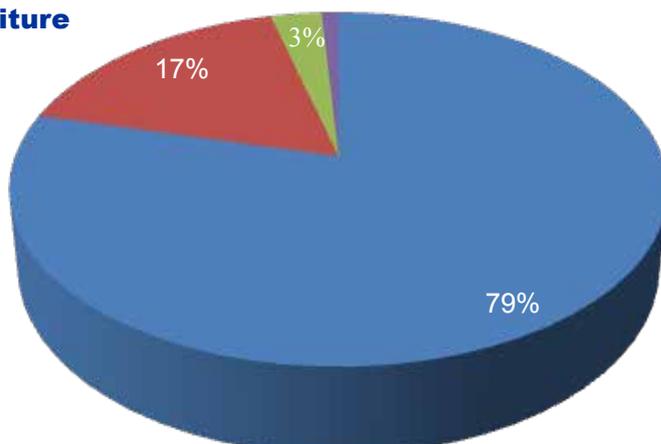
Adrian Tomizzi
Treasurer

Funding Sources

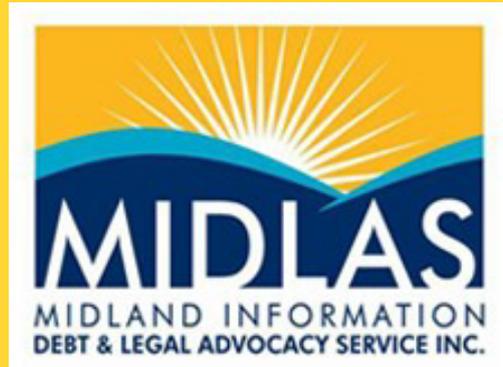


- Department for Child Protection (WA) Financial Counselling
- Department of Commerce (WA) Tenancy Advocacy
- Department of Social Services (Commonwealth) Financial Counselling
- Department of Social Services (Commonwealth) Disability Advocacy
- Public Purpose Trust (WA) Legal Service
- Lotterywest Emergency Relief

Expenditure



- Staff expenses
- Other expenses
- Occupancy
- Depreciation <1%



MIDLAS

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www.midlas.org.au

admin@midlas.org.au

8-12 Stafford Street Midland

Phone: 9250 2123

