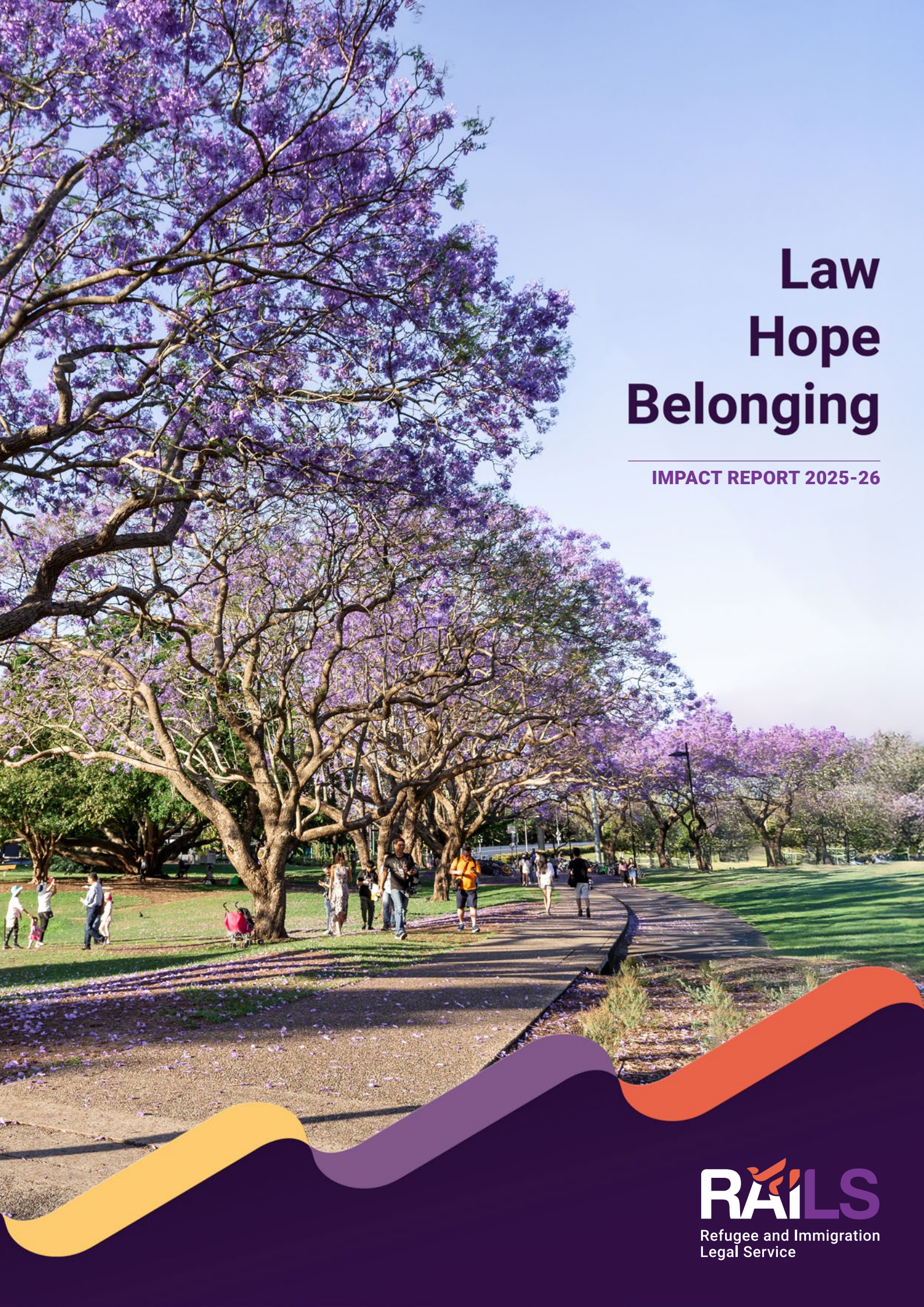




Law Hope Belonging

IMPACT REPORT 2025-26

Acknowledgement of Country

RAILS acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters, and communities across which we live and work.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our offices and services operate and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We recognise the enduring connection of First Nations peoples to Country, culture, family, and community, and acknowledge that these connections have continued for tens of thousands of years.

As an organisation committed to access to justice, inclusion and human rights, RAILS recognises that meaningful justice requires listening, respect and the recognition of the experiences, knowledge, and voices of First Nations peoples.

We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

RAILS is committed to working in ways that are respectful, culturally safe and grounded in the dignity and rights of all people.

Funded by



Contents

1.0 RAILS in 60 seconds 4

2.0 Message from the President and CEO 6

3.0 Who We Are Here For 8

4.0 The RAILS Impact 9

5.0 Finding Safety 11

6.0 Finding Certainty 12

7.0 Keeping Families Together 13

8.0 Safety for Women and Families 14

 8.1 Client Story 14

9.0 Citizenship and Belonging 15

 9.1 Client Story 15

10.0 Addressing Statelessness 17

11.0 Justice Beyond the Individual 18

12.0 One Organisation. A much Bigger Reach 19

13.0 Our Reach and Partnership 20

14.0 What We Heard from Our Clients 21

15.0 Understanding Unmet Need 22

16.0 The People Behind the Impact 23

 16.1 The Mickey Awards 24

17.0 Investing in Impact 25

18.0 Donors and Supporters 26

19.0 Building RAILS for the Next Chapter 27

20.0 Strong Governance. Shared Purpose 29

21.0 Thank You 30

in 60 Seconds

 **7135**
Legal services delivered

2123
People who received
legal help



 **551**
People receiving ongoing legal
assistance/representation

603
People assisted with
protection matters



 **205**
Participants
in education
sessions

1791
Languages represented/
spoken by clients



202
Nationalities
represented



2.0 Message from the President and CEO

Message from the CEO

“When I joined RAILS as CEO in November 2025, I stepped into an organisation with an extraordinary history, a committed team and a clear purpose: ensuring refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants can access justice, understand their rights and build safer and more secure lives in Australia.”

This has also been a year of significant change. RAILS has navigated a challenging funding environment while demand for our services remains strong. This required difficult decisions about our operating model, workforce and priorities. Throughout this period, our focus has been on protecting the long-term sustainability of RAILS while continuing to provide high-quality and accessible services to our communities. But FY 2026 has not simply been a year of challenge. It has also been a year of renewal and opportunity.

We have strengthened our governance, financial management and organisational systems, while investing in the infrastructure needed for RAILS’ future. We commenced the renewal of our brand and website, strengthened relationships with government, community and philanthropic partners, and continued to explore new opportunities to diversify our income. We have also invested in education and innovation. The development of EduX, our new education platform, will enable RAILS to share its specialist knowledge more broadly with lawyers, community organisations and other professionals working alongside refugee and migrant communities. Throughout all of these changes, our purpose has remained constant.

Behind every statistic in this Impact Report is a person or family navigating complex circumstances. Their courage and trust in RAILS remind us why this organisation exists and why access to independent legal assistance, education and advocacy matters. I want to acknowledge our staff and volunteers for their professionalism and commitment during a period of considerable change. I also thank our Management Committee for its stewardship and a special mention to our previous President Abdul Jarrah who completed his tenure with RAILS, and a very warm welcome to our current President Gayan Mendis. A sincere thank you to our funders,

donors, partners and supporters for continuing to believe in our work.

As we look ahead, our challenge is not simply to do more. It is to ensure that RAILS is sustainable, innovative and positioned for the future, while never losing sight of the communities we exist to serve. I am proud of what we achieved together in FY 2026 and optimistic about the next chapter of RAILS.

Our purpose remains clear: to use law, education and advocacy to help create a fairer and more just Australia for refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants.



Malathi Kanagasabapathy
CEO

Message from the President

“It is my great privilege to present this Impact Report for the financial year 2025-2026 and convey a message on behalf of the RAILS Management Committee.”

As President, I am acutely conscious that we as elected members who serve on the RAILS Management Committee are custodians of an indelible legacy this organisation has forged through its longstanding heritage, founded from over four decades of enduring commitment and unwavering support in providing legal assistance, education and

advocacy. Generations of staff, volunteers, supporters and community advocates have shaped RAILS into a trusted source of justice, hope and opportunity for thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The achievements celebrated in this report represent the continuation of that remarkable story.

On reflection of RAILS’ journey over financial year 2025-2026, it has been one that has been underpinned by meaningful impact, growth and resilience across the organisation. It has also been one of both opportunities and challenges. Against a backdrop of ongoing changes in migration and protection policy, increasing demand for specialist legal assistance, and a complex funding environment, RAILS has remained steadfast in its commitment to ensuring that refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in vulnerable situations can access justice, protection and fair outcomes.

Throughout the financial year 2025-2026, RAILS continued to advance its mission of empowering refugees, asylum seekers and migrants through legal assistance, education and advocacy. During this period, we have witnessed the exceptional dedication of our people, the resilience of our clients and the power of partnerships to create meaningful and lasting change. Our dedicated staff, volunteers, students and pro bono partners have worked tirelessly to ensure that these individuals receive expert legal assistance, compassionate support and a voice in systems that can often be difficult to navigate.

This year also demonstrated the strength of our partnerships across the community legal sector, academia, government and the broader refugee and migrant support network. By working collaboratively, RAILS has been able to extend its reach, strengthen community capability and contribute to broader advocacy efforts aimed at improving outcomes for those seeking protection and migration assistance. The inaugural launch of the Flavours of Hope (FoH) 2026 event stands out as a defining moment that exemplifies strength and value in our partnerships. Through the sharing of food, culture and personal stories, the event celebrated and brought to life the rich contribution of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to our society while strengthening the connections between those we serve, and those who support our mission. In many ways, FoH symbolised the broader story of RAILS. It was a reminder that

behind every matter, every service and every statistic is a human story, and that when communities come together with purpose and compassion, extraordinary outcomes are possible.

As a Management Committee, we have continued to focus on the pursuit of our strategic priorities. We have made good progress in strengthening organisational governance, enhancing financial resilience, supporting our people, improving systems and processes, and ensuring RAILS remains well-positioned for long-term sustainability. Strong governance is not an end in itself; it is the foundation that enables RAILS to continue delivering meaningful impact for the clients and communities we serve.

On behalf of the RAILS Management Committee, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to CEO (Malathi Kanagasabapathy) and the RAILS leadership team, staff, volunteers, students, pro bono partners, funders, donors and supporters. Your commitment, expertise and compassion continue to make delivering this impact possible. We also acknowledge the resilience and courage of our clients, who remain at the heart of everything we do. Finally, I would like to extend deep appreciation to my fellow Management Committee members who have generously contributed their expertise, time and stewardship throughout financial year 2025-2026.

The story of RAILS has always been a story of people: people who have sought refuge, people who have offered support, and people who have dedicated themselves to the pursuit of justice. It is a story written by the staff, volunteers, community partners, supporters and clients who have helped create an organisation whose impact will endure generations. May we continue to honour that legacy by standing firmly for justice, opening doors for those seeking opportunity, and ensuring that every person who comes to RAILS is met with dignity, compassion and hope.



Gayan Mendis
President

3.0 Who We Are Here For

Behind every number is a person seeking a pathway forward.

From July 2025 to June 2026, RAILS provided specialist refugee and immigration legal assistance to **2,123** people who were eligible for our services.

They came to RAILS at different stages of their lives and with different legal circumstances. Many were navigating vulnerability alongside complex immigration matters, family violence, disability, mental illness, age, language barriers, displacement and uncertainty about their future.

Together, these clients received **7,135** legal service types, reflecting both the scale and complexity of the assistance required. They represented 202 countries.

Of the people RAILS assisted:

1,791	Were from culturally and linguistically diverse communities
523	Had experienced or were at risk of domestic, family and sexual violence
336	Were people living with disability, impairment or mental illness
60	Were older people
5	Identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

These characteristics can intersect. A person seeking protection may also be experiencing family violence, living with disability, facing language barriers or supporting children and family members.

These numbers do not tell the whole story

The **2,123** people represented on this page are the people RAILS was able to assist.

They do not represent everyone who sought our help, or everyone in Queensland who needed specialist refugee and immigration legal assistance. Demand exceeded our available capacity during the year. Some people who approached RAILS could not be assisted because our services were at capacity. Others did not meet our service eligibility criteria and needed to be referred elsewhere where possible.

Understanding this unmet and ineligible demand is important. It helps us identify where gaps exist, where communities are struggling to access appropriate legal support and where additional resources could enable RAILS to reach more people.

2,123 people received our help. But the need extends further.

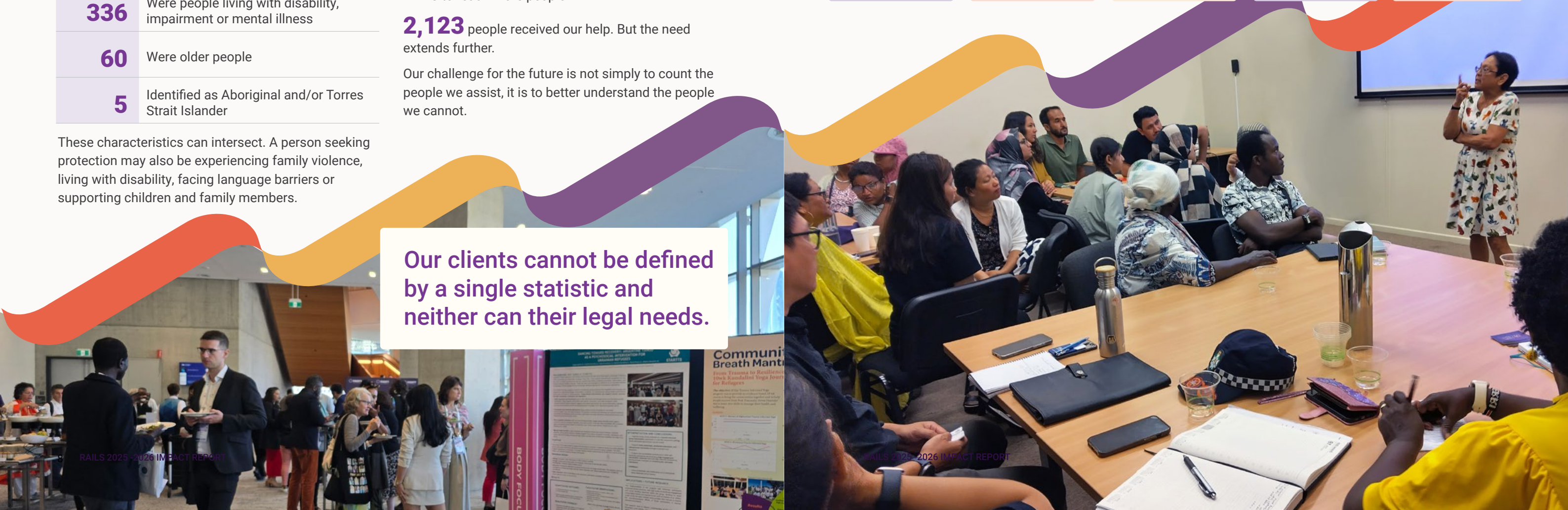
Our challenge for the future is not simply to count the people we assist, it is to better understand the people we cannot.

Our clients cannot be defined by a single statistic and neither can their legal needs.

4.0 The RAILS Impact

From legal help to lasting impact.

4.1 How change happens



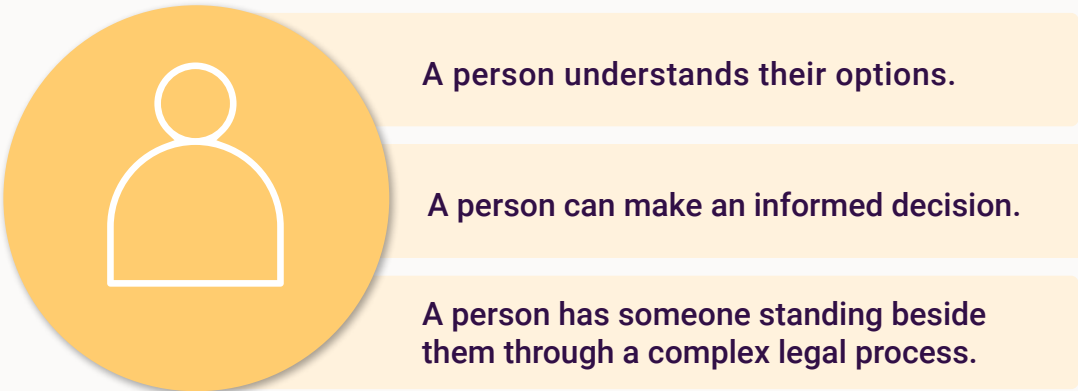
4.0 The RAILS Impact (Continued)

4.2 What impact means to RAILS

Our work contributes to five interconnected areas of impact:

Safety	Supporting people seeking protection and those experiencing vulnerability, violence or risk to navigate legal pathways towards greater safety.
Security	Helping people understand and progress their immigration matters, reducing uncertainty and creating greater stability for individuals and families.
Belonging	Supporting pathways that enable people and families to establish their lives, participate in their communities and experience a stronger sense of belonging in Australia.
Access to Justice	Providing specialist legal assistance to people who may otherwise face significant financial, language, cultural or systemic barriers to obtaining help.
Systemic Change	Using the evidence and experience generated through our casework to strengthen community and sector knowledge and contribute to discussions about law, policy and practice.

4.3 Our impact starts with a person



From there, the impact can travel much further, to families, communities, the legal sector and the systems in which we all operate.

Because access to justice is not simply about resolving a legal matter. It is about giving people the opportunity to move forward.

5.0 Finding Safety

Protection and refugee legal work.
A pathway to safety.

Mary grew up in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and was assigned male at birth. Ever since she was a young child, she knew she was different. She saw herself inwardly as a girl and when she reached puberty found herself attracted to boys. However, in PNG there is virtually no recognition of gender diversity, sexual orientation is poorly understood, and homosexuality is illegal.

Growing up, other children also sensed Mary was different and she experienced bullying from other children and from adult men in her extended family. The older she became, the more serious the mistreatment, culminating in several serious physical and sexual assaults which landed her in hospital as a young adult. Some of these assaults occurred at the hands of Police who saw her as a gay man.

When Mary learned that Australian law protects LGBTQ people, she travelled here on a temporary visa and applied for a protection visa. However, she lacked the language to accurately describe herself and so used the term that her abusers in PNG had used, saying that she needed protection because she was a gay man.

While Mary waited for her visa application to be assessed by Home Affairs, she was exposed to the LGBTQ community in Australia and realised that she was in fact a trans woman. She socially transitioned and came to RAILS, seeking to correct her visa application to record her trans identity. Unfortunately, it is almost always detrimental to a protection visa application to provide different or inconsistent information about the reasons protection is needed.

There was a real risk that if Mary had corrected her application herself, she would have been refused protection.

Understanding this, RAILS provided Mary with representation to the Department of Home Affairs. We assisted her to write a detailed statutory declaration explaining her progressive realisation of her identity and what had happened to her in PNG. We also made detailed written submissions to help the decision-maker understand that although the way she described her identity had changed, the reason she would be harmed in PNG had not. Using country information sources, RAILS helped the decision-maker understand Mary's identity and her risk in the context of PNG culture. We then successfully advocated for her to be given an in-person interview/hearing, rather than having the standard 'decision on the papers' so that the decision-maker could more effectively assess the genuineness of Mary's claims. As a result of RAILS' advocacy, Mary was granted a permanent protection visa. She now has safety, security and the freedom to be herself.

6.0 Finding Certainty

Immigration status, pathways and legal clarity.

Priya and Indra grew up in a refugee camp in India. They came to Australia in 2013 and sought asylum. However, because they had travelled by boat, they were subjected to a different system of asylum processing from people who arrive by air. As a result, by 2017, without having received any legal assistance, their application for asylum was refused.

Priya and Indra grew up in a refugee camp in India. They came to Australia in 2013 and sought asylum. However, because they had travelled by boat, they were subjected to a different system of asylum processing from people who arrive by air. As a result, by 2017, without having received any legal assistance, their application for asylum was refused.

The couple then entered into a prolonged state of limbo. They were only eligible for short term bridging visas, which had to be renewed every few months. They weren't permitted to study and found it difficult to maintain employment with such an insecure immigration status.

Amidst this uncertainty, the couple had two children in Australia. Indra worked as a contractor until he had saved enough to open his own business, assisted by Priya when the children were at school.

As the years wore on, the ongoing uncertainty of their immigration status began to take a toll on the couple's health. Every 2 or 3 months, when they had to reapply for their visas, they worried they would not be granted. Each time their visas expired, their Medicare coverage

lapsed and had to also be renewed. If they got sick while they had no coverage, they couldn't see a doctor. They worried what would happen when their children were older and what kind of future they could have.

Throughout all of this over many years, RAILS walked alongside Priya and Indra, helping them renew their visas, explaining correspondence from Home Affairs and, importantly, continuing to advocate for a change in the law to give them security of status. Often over the last decade, at times this advocacy seemed pointless as the years passed and nothing changed.

Finally, this year the Minister invited the family to apply for permanent visas, opening up a legal pathway for them. RAILS helped them make those applications, and just 2 months later, the family were granted visas. After 13 years of insecurity, Priya, Indra and their children are now permanent residents and looking forward to the day when they can become Australian citizens.

7.0 Keeping Families Together

Impact of family-related migration work.

RAILS' family-related migration work helps families move from uncertainty towards stability.

The impact of prolonged separation can reach across every part of family life. Parents living in Australia may be trying to establish employment, housing and community connections while continuing to worry about children or family members overseas. Children may spend important years separated from parents, siblings or extended family networks.

RAILS helps families navigate these complex migration pathways through specialist legal advice, representation and practical assistance. Our lawyers help clients understand their options, prepare applications, respond to requests from the Department of Home Affairs and address barriers such as documentation, biometrics, medical requirements and critical visa deadlines.

During 2025–26, RAILS provided **1304** legal advices relating to family migration and family reunion, completed **292** pieces of discrete legal work, and represented **39** services.

Behind these numbers are families seeking something fundamental: **the opportunity to build a life together.**

For children, successful family migration outcomes can mean greater stability and the security of having parents and family around them. For parents, they can mean relief from years of worry and the ability to focus on work, education, housing and supporting their children. For whole families, greater certainty about migration status can make it possible to make decisions that many people take for granted, where to live, where children will attend school, whether to pursue employment or further education, and how to plan financially for the years ahead.

In 2025–26, families/family members were successfully reunited or achieved a positive family migration outcome through RAILS assistance. RAILS also continued to make specialist family reunion assistance accessible across Queensland through outreach and partnerships with settlement and community organisations. **7** outreach locations / **98** services helped ensure that geography, language and financial disadvantage did not prevent families from accessing specialist legal assistance. We are grateful for the support of volunteers from Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer throughout the year.

A visa outcome can therefore represent much more than the completion of a legal matter. It can mean a child reunited with a parent. A family no longer waits for the next decision. A household able to establish roots in its community. Most importantly, it can provide something that prolonged migration uncertainty often takes away: the ability to plan for the future.

8.0 Safety for Women and Families

Family violence and migration law intersection.

For migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence, leaving an unsafe relationship can be complicated by another uncertainty: what will happen to their visa?

A person's immigration status can affect their options, access to services and sense of security. For some women, fear about losing their visa or having to leave Australia can become another barrier to finding safety. RAILS brings specialist migration law expertise to this intersection.

We provide trauma-informed legal assistance to people who have experienced family violence and need to understand how separation or violence may affect their immigration status. Where family violence provisions apply, RAILS can assist a person to pursue their visa pathway after leaving their relationship.

Our response recognises that migration issues rarely exist in isolation.

991 legal services provided to **523** people who had experienced or were at risk of experiencing family violence in 2025-2026.

242 were homeless or at risk of homelessness and **100** had dependent children.

8.1 Client story

A safer way forward.

A woman and her daughter had experienced family violence while living in regional Queensland, where access to specialist support was limited. Her migration circumstances were complex. RAILS provided specialist legal assistance to navigate the immigration issues arising from the relationship and the violence she had experienced. The matter ultimately resulted in the grant of a permanent visa.

For the client and her daughter, permanent status meant more than resolving an immigration matter. It brought greater security, improved access to services and the ability to begin rebuilding their lives with greater certainty.

Sometimes the impact of legal help is not simply a visa. It is the possibility of moving forward safely.

Behind every number is a person making decisions about safety, family and their future.

9.0 Citizenship and Belonging

For people from refugee backgrounds, citizenship can provide security, belonging, the certainty of calling Australia home and a voice in Australia's future.

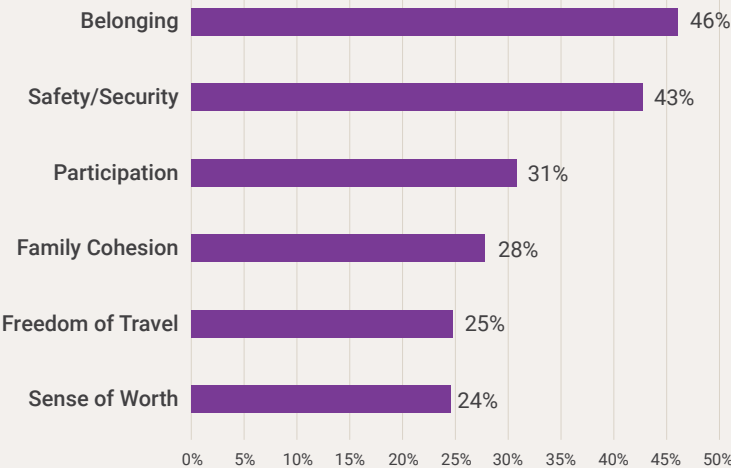
The lasting effects of displacement and trauma, compounded by barriers in English, literacy and digital skills, can place citizenship - and the security and belonging it represents - beyond reach for many.

Figure 1: Reported Motivations for Citizenship: June 2026

On enrolment, participants in Citizenship in Practice programs across all sites were asked to identify one or more motivations for citizenship from a predefined list and were also provided with the option to identify other motivators. The desire to belong and to feel like a part of Australian society was nominated by 46% of applicants as their reason for pursuing Australian citizenship, closely followed by participant perception that citizenship provides a guarantee of safety/ security.

Student-identified motivations included:

- **Desire for Belonging:** "I wish to belong to Australia, to understand Australian society, and to feel included within it."
- **Sense of Worth:** "I seek improved financial security and greater access to employment and study opportunities."
- **Desire for Participation:** "I wish to have full rights, equality, freedoms, and civic responsibilities as Australians."
- **Freedom of International Travel:** "I wish to have a passport and freedom of international travel"



- **Desire for Family Cohesion:** "I wish to attain Australian citizenship like my other family members who are already citizens."
- **Guarantee of Safety & Security:** "I wish to guarantee my and my family's safety and security by becoming an Australian citizen"
- **Other:** Students were provided with the option to identify other motivations.

Note: Based on data collected 1 October 2025-11 June 2026

Through Citizenship Doors, generously funded by Multicultural Affairs Queensland in 2025/26, RAILS supported people from refugee and migrant backgrounds through small-group seminars and workshops, targeted resources and tailored support. The program strengthened participants' knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate the citizenship process independently, while addressing legal, language, literacy, and practical barriers. Delivered across South Brisbane & Logan, partnerships with community organisations and school hubs further extended the program's reach to Toowoomba, Acacia Ridge, Moorooka and Redbank Plains.

"Without this program, I do not know how I could become a citizen".

9.1 Client story

After fleeing unsafe conditions in Papua New Guinea, Sharon arrived in Australia in 2015 seeking safety for herself and her daughter. Over the following decade, RAILS supported her to secure protection and permanent residency. In 2025, Sharon joined Citizenship Doors and received

tailored support to apply for citizenship and prepare for the test. She passed in March 2026 and soon received an invitation to citizenship.

For Sharon, citizenship means safety, belonging and a secure future. Her story shows how the right support can help people confidently navigate the path to citizenship and full participate in Australian life.

9.0 Citizenship and Belonging (Continued)

Figure 2: Program Reach: June 2026



2 Core Sites

RAILS Delivered: South Brisbane • Logan

7 Partner Sites

RAILS Supported:

• Acacia Ridge

• 2x Redbank Plains

• 3x Toowoomba

• Moorooka

Delivery supported by RAILS developed, scalable resources: Information seminar pack, application toolkit, 4 new teaching/ learning apps & 3 learning books.

9 Offsite training seminars for Citizenship in Practice Partner Sites

9 training sessions with 78 hub/centre leaders, teachers and tutors extended the Citizenship in Practice component beyond planned reach.

Context:

In 2023 refugees on humanitarian visas accounted for 48.6% of all test-based citizenship refusals, despite representing just 0.08% of permanent visa holders.

(Source: Data obtained by RAILS from the Dept of Home Affairs in 2023)

By June 2026, **180** participants had attended information seminars, **193** received preliminary application assistance, **67** applications were supported, and **224** attended practice groups to prepare for the citizenship test. By September 2026, **49** participants had reported passing the test, with **20** reporting an invitation to a citizenship ceremony or attaining citizenship, meaningful progress towards the security and belonging of citizenship, while reflecting the time it can take to reach this milestone.



Citizenship doors program

10.0 Addressing Statelessness

Research. Understanding. Real-world impact.

Statelessness is a hidden issue in Australia, but it has profound human consequences.

RAILS contributed our frontline experience supporting people at risk of or experiencing statelessness, including case insights, service access barriers, and practical challenges within the legal and administrative systems.

A collaborative model for change (Three partners. Three strengths. One shared purpose)

The Statelessness project brought together three different forms of expertise around a shared purpose, demonstrating what can be achieved when frontline practice, academic research and private legal expertise work together.



 RAILS Refugee and Immigration Legal Service	Practice and lived experience	Bringing frontline legal experience, client insight and an understanding of the practical barriers experienced by people who are stateless or at risk of statelessness.
 THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE	Research and evidence	Bringing academic expertise through the Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness, supporting the evidence required for supporting the clients RAILS represent.
LANDER & ROGERS	Pro bono legal expertise	Bringing the resources and expertise of the private legal profession to support the work and strengthen the capacity and reach.

Together, the partners were able to turn individual experience into evidence, and evidence into a platform for broader change.



Official Queensland Launch of 'Understanding Statelessness in Australia

11.0 Justice Beyond the Individual

Systemic advocacy, strategic casework and influence.

Every client matter can also teach us something about the system.

RAILS uses that knowledge responsibly to contribute to better policy, practice and legal understanding. Patterns identified through casework can reveal barriers, policy problems and areas where legal and administrative systems could operate more fairly.

9	Law reform submissions or consultations
18	Government and stakeholder roundtables
1	Strategic litigation to address a systemic issue
3	Policy advocacy through Queensland Law Society and Law Council of Australia Migration Law Committees
3	Research collaborations
25	Collaborations with other community legal centres

In August, RAILS provided feedback to the Attorney-General’s consultation, Expanding the Administrative Review Tribunal’s ability to determine matters ‘on the papers’ and in January we made a submission to the Administrative Review Council’s Migration Inquiry.

Both submissions highlighted how the law and Tribunal procedures impact on disadvantaged applicants, particularly those who are illiterate,



Emma Fell named the 2026 Young Australian Migration Lawyer of the Year

unrepresented, experiencing the effects of trauma and unable to communicate electronically due to language, literacy or socio-economic barriers. Providing real life examples of how Tribunal processes are experienced by our clients ensures that the Tribunal remains as open and accessible as possible, ensuring access to justice for the most vulnerable in our community.



Meeting with Attorney General Deb Frecklington



Meeting with Member of Parliament Corrine McMillan



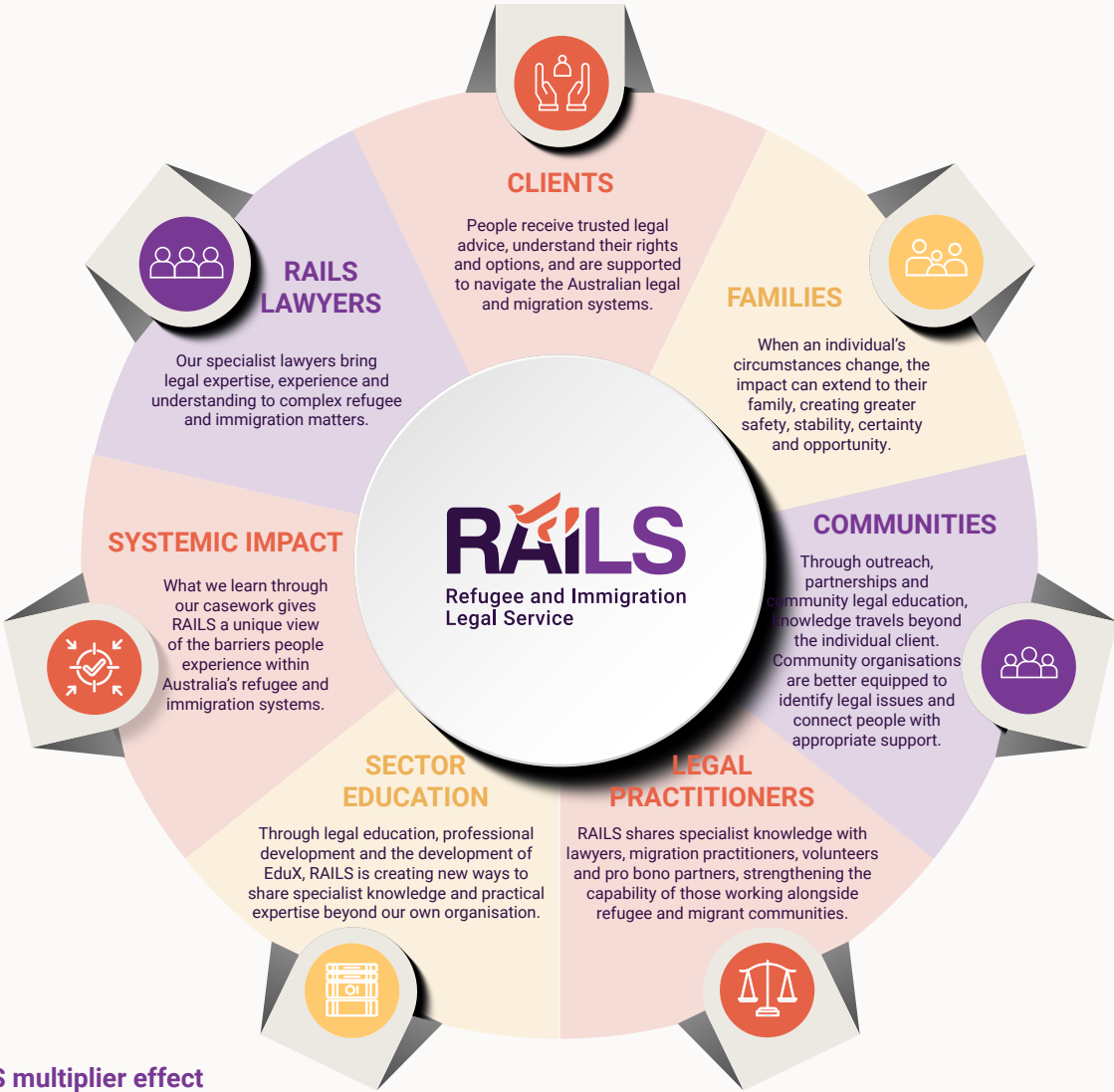
Meeting with Honorable Matt Thistlethwaite (Assistant Minister for Immigration and the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.)

12.0 One Organisation. A Much Bigger Reach

Our impact begins with legal help, but it doesn’t end there.

Every day, RAILS provides specialist refugee and immigration legal assistance to people navigating complex legal systems and significant moments in their lives.

But the impact of that work reaches much further.



The RAILS multiplier effect

- One lawyer can help one person.
- That person is part of a family.
- That family is part of a community.
- That community strengthens our understanding.
- That knowledge can strengthen the sector.

And a stronger sector can improve access to justice for many more people.

Our impact is not measured only by how many people walk through our doors. It is also measured by how far our knowledge, partnerships and influence can travel.

13.0 Our Reach and Partnerships

Our impact is shared.

RAILS’ impact is made possible by the strength of the relationship that surrounds our work.

Across Queensland and beyond, we work alongside community organisations, settlement services, specialist family violence services, legal assistance providers, universities, pro-bono partners, government agencies and other organisations that share our commitment to access to justice. These partnerships are fundamental to how to reach and support people.

Our community partners provide trusted pathways into communities, helping people identify legal issues and connect with specialist assistance. Settlement and support services help us respond to the broader circumstances affecting our clients’ lives. Our legal and pro bono partners help transform frontline experience

into evidence, learning and opportunities for systemic change. Importantly, these relationships work in both ways. RAILS brings expertise into the broader service system, helping partners understand how migration status can intersect with family violence, homelessness, employment, family separation, settlement and other areas of vulnerability.

Together, we can see more, understand more and reach further than any one organisation could alone.

Our impact does not belong to RAILS alone, it is shared, created through partnership, strengthened through collaboration and ultimately measured by the difference we make together.



14.0 What We Heard from Our Clients

Hearing it from the client.

RAILS conducted a client survey as part of our contractual obligation and the following results we captured.

The survey was conducted by telephone, and this method was chosen to accommodate the specific needs of our client base, which include:

- Very low literacy level;
- Limited digital access; and
- Language barriers.

It is essential to interpret the survey results within the context of our client base, which includes individuals with complex, overlapping cultural and personal needs, many of whom have experienced past and ongoing trauma. In previous years, RAILS attempted to send survey links to clients and had an extremely low return rate. Conducting the survey by telephone allowed for the provision of interpreters and overcame English- and tech-literacy barriers but some obstacles continued to remain, such as the inability to secure the right interpreter at the right time to conduct the survey with the client.

**The data shared below only represents the clients funded under the NAJP program and received assistance between 1 – 31 May 2026. Total number of respondents 59. From a client sample of 102, these respondents represented 57.84% of this sample. Remaining clients were unreachable or unable to engage despite multiple callbacks.*

74%	Felt respected and listened to
72%	Better understood their legal options
77%	Would recommend or felt satisfied with the service
64%	Were satisfied with their legal resolution
57%	Felt RAILS’ was able to meet their specific cultural or personal needs

“It is such a multicultural and tolerant place, they understand other people with different backgrounds.”
Client

“RAILS helps me and the children at the time when I had no money. I didn’t have the means to help myself; it gives me dignity.”
Client

“Just to know that someone cares, someone following up, pointing you to the right direction, having those conversations someone to talk to.”
Client

15.0 Understanding Unmet Need

Not everyone who seeks help from RAILS can be assisted.

At times, demand for specialist refugee and immigration legal assistance exceeds our available capacity.

Some people who contact us may also fall outside our eligibility criteria or require assistance that sits beyond the scope of our services. Historically, our systems have been better at capturing information about the people we assist than those we are unable to assist. RAILS is working to change this.

We are strengthening our data collection processes so we can build a clearer picture of unmet legal need, who is seeking help, what assistance they require, where they are located and why we may not have been able to assist them. Better data will enable us to identify patterns in demand and develop a stronger geographic understanding of where refugee and migrant communities are experiencing gaps in access to specialist legal assistance.

This evidence will also strengthen our ability to plan services, develop partnerships, advocate for communities and demonstrate where additional investment is needed. RAILS continues to seek funding to improve our client and data systems so that, over time, we can better measure both the people we reach and the need that remains unmet.

Because understanding who we cannot help is an important part of understanding where help is needed most.



We continue to seek funding to improve our systems.

Our new CRM (AIIM) will enable more accurate reporting on unmet need and support better planning, service delivery and advocacy for the communities we serve. RAILS continues to build strong partnership across Queensland to assist address this need.

16.0 The People Behind the Impact

Expertise. Commitment. Humanity.

Behind every piece of advice, every legal matter and every outcome in this report are people committed to ensuring refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants can access specialist legal help. 2026 was also a year of significant transition for RAILS.

We acknowledge Dr Angus Francis, our former Executive Director and Principal Solicitor, whose leadership and specialist expertise made an important contribution to RAILS and its development (from November 2024 to November 2025). From November 2025, RAILS moved from the combined Executive Director/Principal Solicitor model to a new structure with a Chief Executive Officer providing organisational leadership and a Principal Solicitor providing independent leadership of legal practice.

Late June 2026, funding pressures required RAILS to reshape its workforce, reducing from approximately 42.4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to 25.6 FTE.

What did not reduce was the need for our services.

Our team continues to work hard to respond to significant demand while maintaining the quality, care

and specialist expertise for which RAILS is known. Our people bring much more than legal expertise. Across the RAILS team, 10 languages are spoken, strengthening our ability to understand and connect with the diverse communities we serve.

We are also supported by an extraordinary community of 33 volunteers, including student volunteers who contribute their time, skills and enthusiasm to our work. Our pro-bono partners provide additional legal expertise and capacity, helping RAILS extend its reach and respond to complex matters.

Together, our staff, volunteers, students and pro-bono partners form a much larger team around the people who seek our help. Our impact is created by people. Our staff. Our volunteers. Our students. Our pro bono partners. Our community.

Testimonial from a volunteer

"I wanted to volunteer at RAILS because I believe everyone deserves access to justice. Starting somewhere new is always a little daunting, but everyone at RAILS has been incredibly welcoming. Seeing the passion and commitment of the team has been inspiring. RAILS helps people navigate complex legal issues with dignity and confidence, particularly those who may otherwise face barriers to accessing justice."

Day Volunteer.

32	Professionals work at RAILS
33	Volunteers contributed 269 hours per week to carry out our work
6	Pro bono firms
10	Some of our staff are multilingual and cut across 10 language groups.



16.0 The People Behind the Impact (Continued)

16.1 The Mickey Award

Recognising and supporting our people.

Working in a trauma-informed legal practice requires compassion, resilience and a strong sense of teamwork. At RAILS, we recognise that supporting staff wellbeing and building morale are essential to sustaining the quality of care we provide for our clients.

The Mickey Award, our monthly peer recognition initiative, provides an opportunity for colleagues to acknowledge one another’s kindness, collaboration, dedication and contributions to a supportive workplace.

During a year of significant organisational change and increasing service pressures, this recognition has been particularly meaningful. By celebrating the people who support each other, we strengthen the team that supports our clients.

Recipients of the Mickey Award



Jan 2026
Mei Wang



Feb 2026
Sadia Azizi



Mar 2026
Emily Doyle



Apr 2026
Therese Henderson





May & Jun 2026
Kell Andersen



Jul & Aug 2026
Homa Kosh



Sep 2026
Elle Ko

17.0 Investing in Impact

Every dollar entrusted to RAILS helps us provide specialist legal assistance, strengthen communities and improve access to justice.

\$5,566,744 Total Resources Invested In Our Mission

The financial picture at a glance

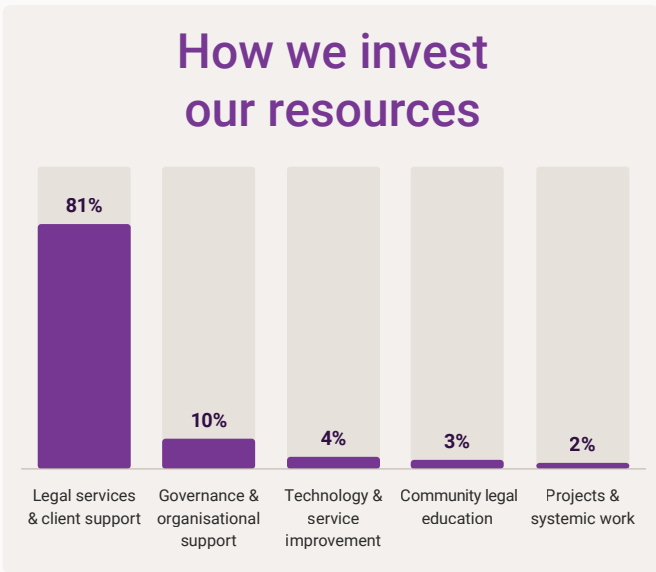
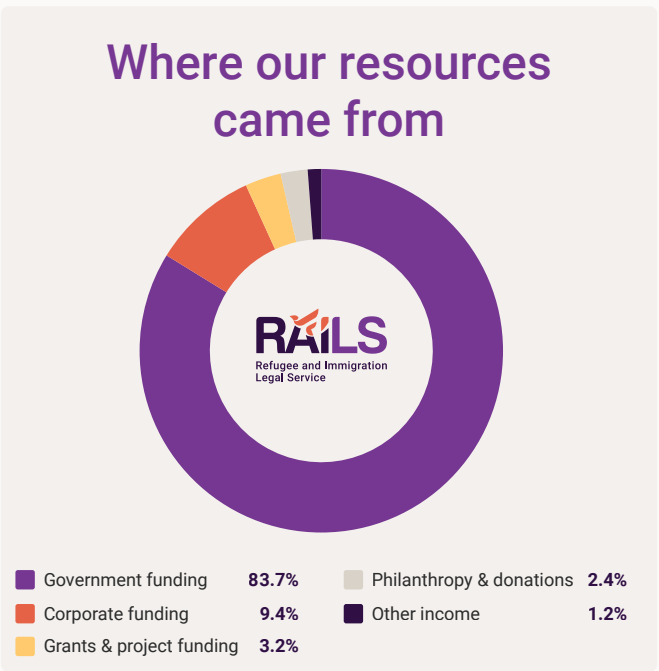
The 2026 Financial Year saw RAILS deliver an operating surplus of \$330,774 on total recorded income of \$5,897,518. The primary driver of the surplus was higher interest income, donations and sponsorships than originally budgeted, much of which occurred toward the end of the year, and favourable accounting treatment on a new long-term lease. This outcome has been achieved against a challenging funding backdrop, and the surplus in 2026 is a testament to Management’s discipline and focus on ensuring RAILS is well positioned to service our clients for many years to come.

As noted in the message from the President and CEO, RAILS has made a number of investments in future success throughout the year. The enhanced branding and website, and development of a new education platform are key enablers for the future diversification of

our sources of funding. Although Government funding remained our principal revenue source at 83.7% of total resources, 2026 saw strong growth in our philanthropy and donations (up 15% year on year), and with the support of the Management Committee, RAILS has a renewed strategic focus on initiatives to grow our funding and enhance organisational resilience.

A huge thankyou to Mal and all the staff at RAILS for their inspiring passion, purpose and drive, but a special thank you to RAILS Operations Director, Cristina Prieto and Finance Officer, Mei Wang for their guidance and support on all things financial throughout the year.

Elliott Wood, Treasurer



\$5,897,518
Total Income

\$5,566,744
Total Expenditure

18.0 Donors and Supporters

Growing a community of support.

Every donation to RAILS represents something more than financial support. It represents a person, family, organisation or community choosing to stand alongside refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants who need access to specialist legal help.

This year, the introduction of a dedicated Philanthropic Coordinator has strengthened the way RAILS connects with our supporters. With dedicated capacity, we have been able to increase our social media presence, coordinate fundraising appeals, strengthen donor relationships and turn new fundraising ideas into action. One of the highlights has been Flavours of Hope, an initiative bringing people together through food, culture and shared purpose while raising funds and awareness for RAILS. Its success has demonstrated the potential for fundraising to do more than generate income: it can introduce new people to our work and create a community around our mission. We are now building this foundation as we look towards Flavours of Hope 2027.

Throughout the year, individual donors, philanthropic organisations and long-standing supporters have continued to think about RAILS and, importantly, about the people we serve. Their generosity has helped us respond to emerging needs and explore initiatives that may not otherwise have been possible. As demand for our services continues, growing diverse and sustainable sources of support remain important to RAILS' future.

Our Facebook community grew by **147** followers.

Our LinkedIn community grew by **2009** followers.

Our new RAILS Newsletters reached just over **500** people.

Every gift strengthens our capacity to help.

To everyone who donated, attended and shared an appeal, supported an initiative or championed RAILS this year – thank you.



19.0 Building RAILS for the Next Chapter

Stronger foundations. Greater reach. More impact.

In 2026, RAILS continued to deliver specialist legal assistance while also investing in the foundations needed for the future.

Our focus has been simple: make it easier for people to find us, easier for our team to help them, and easier for RAILS' specialist knowledge to reach beyond the people we can assist directly. These changes are not simply about new technology, systems or branding. They are about building a stronger, more accessible and sustainable RAILS.

A stronger RAILS identity

Making our purpose clearer

Our refreshed identity reflects who RAILS is today, a specialist legal service with a long history, a clear purpose and a strong commitment to access to justice. A stronger and more consistent identity helps clients, communities, partners, funders and supporters understand who we are, what we do and why our work matters.

IMPACT
Greater visibility, recognition and trust.

A better digital front door

Making trusted legal information easier to find

Our new website is being designed around the needs of the people who use it. Clearer pathways to legal support, more accessible information and a simpler user experience will make it easier for people and referring organisations to understand RAILS' services and find the right help.

IMPACT
Easier access to RAILS and trusted legal information.

EduX

Taking RAILS' knowledge further

RAILS has decades of specialist refugee and immigration law knowledge. EduX creates a new way to share that expertise. Through online learning, professional development and specialist legal education, RAILS can strengthen the capability of lawyers, community workers and other professionals, reaching well beyond those we can support directly.

IMPACT
RAILS knowledge can reach practitioners and communities across Australia.

Better information. Better decisions.

Strengthening our data and client systems

Improving our CRM and data capability will help us better understand who is seeking assistance, where demand is growing and what our services are achieving. Better information also helps us identify emerging issues and build stronger evidence for service planning, funding and systemic advocacy.

IMPACT
Better evidence leads to better services and stronger advocacy.

19.0 Building RAILS for the Next Chapter (Continued)



Systems that support our people

Giving time back to work that matters

Our transition to a new HRIS and improvements to organisational systems are helping simplify HR, payroll and workforce administration. Reducing unnecessary administrative processes means our people can spend more time focused on clients, communities and delivering our mission.

IMPACT
Better systems help direct more organisational capacity towards impact.



Stronger governance. Sustainable impact.

Protecting the organisation our communities rely on

We have continued to strengthen governance, financial oversight, risk management and organisational accountability. Strong governance may happen behind the scenes, but its impact is fundamental: it protects RAILS’ sustainability, strengthens decision-making and ensures the resources entrusted to us are managed responsibly.

IMPACT
A Resilient RAILS can continue to be there for the people who need us.



Partnerships that multiply our reach

We achieve more when we work together

RAILS continues to strengthen relationships across the legal profession, community sector, government, universities, pro bono partners and organisations supporting refugee and migrant communities. Partnerships bring together different expertise, create stronger referral pathways and allow knowledge and resources to travel further.

IMPACT
Collaboration extends our reach beyond what any one organisation can achieve alone.

We are building the RAILS of the future, accessible, connected, evidence-led and equipped to extend our impact well beyond our doors.



20.0 Strong Governance. Shared Purpose

Thank you to our Management Committee

Behind a strong organisation is a group of people willing to provide stewardship, ask difficult questions, make considered decisions, and remain focused on purpose.

Throughout 2025-2026, the RAILS Management Committee provided the governance and leadership needed to guide the organisation through a significant period of change. This included navigating a changing funding environment , organisational restructure, workforce transition, increasing demand for specialist refugee and immigration legal assistance, while continuing to focus on RAILS’ long-term sustainability and the communities we exist to serve. Our Management Committee brings together diverse expertise spanning finance, risk, law, human rights, migration, community engagement, refugee settlement, and lived experience. Collectively, they provide oversight, challenge and strategic guidance while supporting RAILS to remain accountable to its purpose and values.

Their contribution is voluntary, but their impact is significant.

We thank every member of the management committee for their time, expertise and care they bring to RAILS, and for their willingness to govern with both responsibility and ambition.

We also acknowledge Abdul Jarrah, who concluded his tenure as President in June 2026 after 4 productive years of involvement with RAILS, including serving as President from November 2022. His leadership and contribution help guide RAILS through an important period in its history. We also acknowledge Kate McKeon, who has served as Treasurer since June 2022 and will conclude her service on the Management Committee in November 2026. We thank Kate for the considerable financial expertise, commitment, and stewardship she has brought to RAILS.



Gayan Mendis
President



Elliott Wood
Treasurer



Abi Ketheeswaran
Member



Alexis Wallace
Member



Shaun Chng
Member



Blaise Itabelo
Member

21.0 Thank You

Our impact is shared

Every person RAILS supports is backed by a much bigger community.

Throughout 2026, our volunteers, pro bono lawyers and firms, community organisations, universities, funders and sector partners have stood alongside us in helping refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants navigate some of the most complex and important moments in their lives.

To our volunteers

Thank you for giving your time, knowledge and energy so generously. From our volunteer lawyers and migration professionals to students, administrative volunteers and those supporting our advice services, your contribution extends the reach of RAILS and helps ensure that more people can access specialist legal support when they need it. You are an important part of the RAILS community.

To our pro bono partners

Our pro bono partners bring extraordinary expertise, capacity and commitment to our work. Whether providing legal advice and representation, supporting clinics, contributing specialist expertise or standing beside RAILS when demand is greatest, your contribution enables us to reach further than we could alone. Your partnership demonstrates what can be achieved when the legal profession comes together around a shared commitment to access to justice.

To our partners and supporters

Our impact is also made possible by the community organisations, universities, government agencies, philanthropic supporters, donors and professional partners who work alongside us. You refer people to us, share knowledge, strengthen our programs, support our clients, collaborate on emerging issues and help us reach communities across Queensland.

To every individual and organisation that contributed to RAILS in 2026, thank you.

Your support is more than a contribution to an organisation. Together, we are helping people understand their rights, find pathways to safety and security, reunite with family, and build a future in Australia.





**Justice is a right,
not a privilege.**

RAILS
Refugee and Immigration
Legal Service

T (07) 3846 9300 | **E** admin@rails.org.au
Level 3, 43 Peel Street, West End, QLD 4101
rails.org.au