

Modern Slavery Statement

2023-24

This statement of Legal Aid Queensland (ABN 69 062 423 924) ("LAQ") details the risks of modern slavery in our operations and supply chain, as well as measures which minimise those risks.

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Foreword

Legal Aid Queensland (“LAQ”) recognises the pervasive nature and serious harm of modern slavery. We are committed to addressing modern slavery as part of our wider commitment to human rights principles.

Modern slavery refers to the use of coercion, threats or deception to exploit victims and undermine or deprive them of their freedom. The use of the term modern slavery is generally confined to serious forms of exploitation, including human trafficking, slavery, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage and the worst forms of child labour.

The *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (Cth) (the “Act”) requires LAQ to prepare an annual Modern Slavery Statement which details the risks of modern slavery in our operations and supply chain, including actions undertaken to address those risks.

This Modern Slavery Statement for the 2023-24 financial year fulfils the Act’s requirements and has been approved by the LAQ Board.

Compliance with the Act:

- furthers our strategic objective of building on our business capability and sustainability,
- aligns with our values including:
 - Social Justice: we seek to protect people’s legal and human rights, promote fair treatment and help those at risk of social exclusion,
 - Respect: we respect the people we assist and those with whom we work and their safety, and
 - Accountability: we are accountable for our actions and decisions, and
- is consistent with our commitment to human rights.

About Legal Aid Queensland

Legal Aid Queensland was established in 1997 under the *Legal Aid Queensland Act 1997* and provides legal help to financially disadvantaged people in relation to criminal, family and civil law matters.

Detailed information on who we are and what we do is available on page 21 of the Legal Aid Queensland Annual Report 2023–24, which can be located on our website: <https://www.legalaid.qld.gov.au/About-us/Corporate-publications/Annual-reports>

Governance

Our organisation is governed by the Legal Aid Queensland Board and our Chief Executive Officer.

Our Board is responsible for managing LAQ and making sure we are achieving our objectives. It is headed by a Chairperson appointed by the Governor in Council. Board members are appointed by the Governor in Council generally for three-year terms. The LAQ Board:

- is our governing body and responsible to the Attorney-General,
- decides our priorities and strategies,
- leads policy direction, and
- ensures sound and prudent financial management.

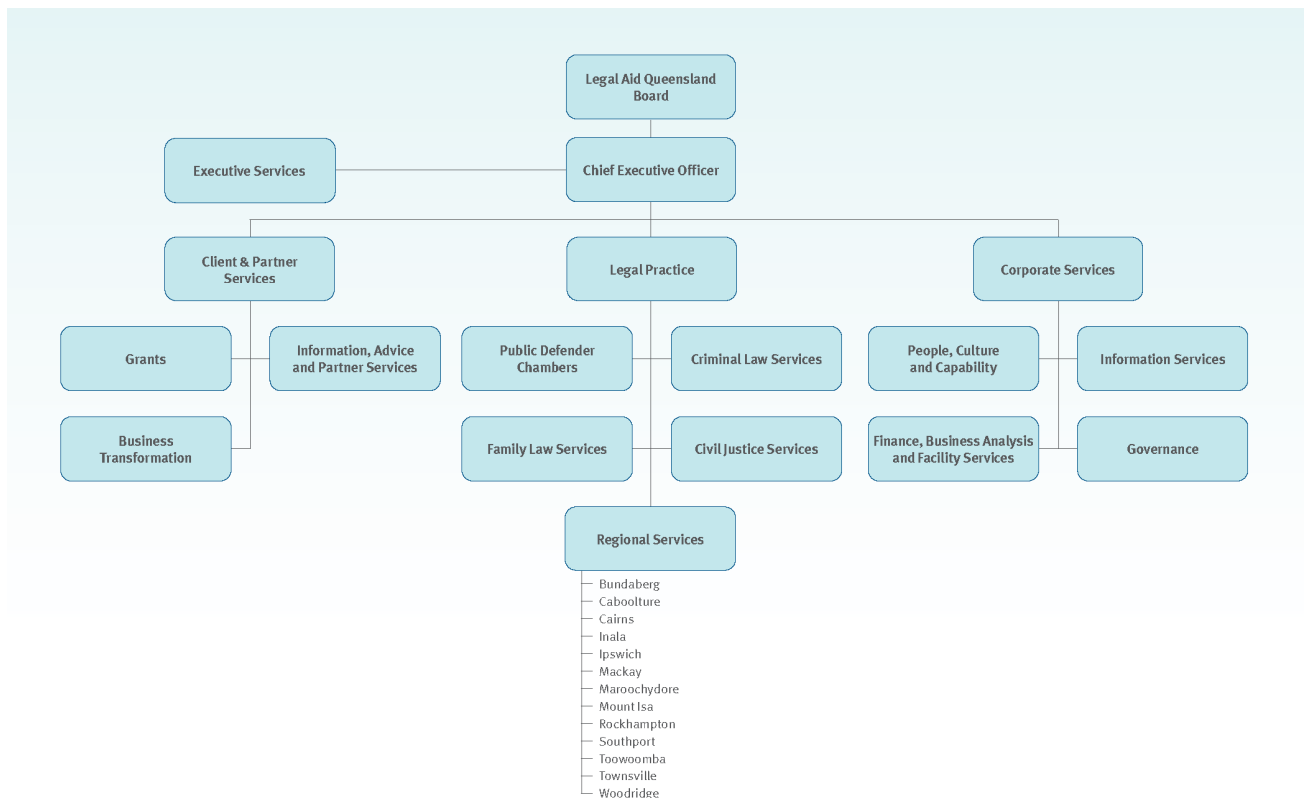
We have five Board members, each with specific knowledge or experience helping us to meet our key strategies and objectives. Their areas of expertise include public administration, financial management, law and legal services provision.

Our governance framework

The *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019* requires that statutory bodies such as LAQ have an appropriate governance framework. Our governance framework outlines the strategies, policies and processes that ensure effectiveness in managing performance, managing risk and managing compliance.

Our continuing work to address modern slavery engages both the risk and compliance elements of our corporate governance framework.

Our structure and operations



LAQ's structure reflects the nature and range of our operations, principally:

- the provision of advice and legal assistance,
- managing the provision of legal assistance through our preferred suppliers,
- the provision of grants of aid, including assessment on the basis of merits and means, and reviews of decisions,
- the provision of the above services through our regional offices, and
- a range of executive and corporate functions which support the above operations (see chart above).

LAQ does not own or control any other entities.

Our supply chain

The key components of our supply chain include:

- office consumables / supplies,
- technology, including devices (computers, telephones etc), software and data services,
- utilities,

- fleet vehicles,
- leased office accommodation, and
- trades and other services, including travel.

Our supply chain also includes our partners who work with us to help deliver quality legal services and related assistance to people in Queensland, including:

- preferred suppliers: private law firms doing work on our behalf for clients applying for legal aid,
- other external service providers: including psychiatrists, neuropsychologists, and allied health professionals,
- community legal centres: organisations providing general and specialist legal services to the local community,
- community access points: local community organisations that provide a range of support services to the community, information about Legal Aid services and help to access free telephone legal advice,
- community service providers: organisations providing support services to the local community (including community workers),
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD) Ltd: the primary legal service provider to Indigenous Queenslanders in the areas of criminal, civil and family law, and
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service: delivering services related to traditional adoptions in the Torres Strait.

LAQ aligns to the Queensland Government's procurement policies and engages under Queensland Government Standing Offer Arrangements ("SOAs") wherever possible. In these instances, our relationship with our supply chain is shaped and governed by the terms of the relevant SOA.

Modern Slavery Risks

The ongoing assessment of the risk of modern slavery in our operations and supply chain is embedded within our corporate governance framework and procurement processes.

The risk factors considered as part of our modern slavery risk assessment include:

- sector and industry risks,
- product and services risks,
- geographic risks, and
- entity risks.

The modern slavery risk assessment rating for our operations remains low. This continues to reflect our specific operational environment, including:

- operating within Australia (low geographic risk - the least vulnerable country in Asia Pacific),¹
- provision of legal services (low sector risk),
- public sector statutory entity with developed governance processes and structures (e.g. Board and sub-committees, internal and external audit functions), and subject to various statutory compliance obligations (low entity risks).

Our current supply chain modern slavery risk assessment rating ranges from low to medium. Supply chain risk is identified to be higher in relation to office supplies and technology, where manufacturing occurs within, or resources are sourced from, areas associated with a higher risk of modern slavery (geographic risks). Existing and planned controls and mitigations to address supply chain risks are set out below.

¹ <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/downloads/> (page 120)

Actions taken to address modern slavery risks

LAQ's governance framework enables us to prioritise risks to maximise the effectiveness of risk control and mitigation measures. In addition to the risk factors specific to modern slavery set out above, the level of expenditure can be used to determine where risk mitigation resources would be most effectively deployed.

Key actions taken to address modern slavery risks during 2023-24 include:

- monitoring changes to the Act, including the establishment of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner,
- further considering the report of the statutory review of the Act published in 2023, including its recommendations,
- continuing the integration and alignment of modern slavery obligations with our existing corporate governance framework from both a risk and compliance perspective, with modern slavery risk now added to our operational risk register,
- continuing to identify, review and assess modern slavery risks within our operations and supply chain, and addressing these risks as a priority,
- ongoing engagement with the Queensland Government procurement community regarding the implications of obligations under the Act for SOAs,
- the adoption of an updated Supplier Code of Conduct and Ethical Supplier Threshold and standard Queensland Government templates which include obligations in respect to modern slavery, in addition to existing modern slavery obligations in relevant requests for quotes, contracts, SOAs, and invitations to offer,
- evaluation of notifications from Chief Procurement Office on modern slavery and application of procurement better practice processes, and
- modern slavery risk reflected within our operational risk register.

Ongoing work

Continuing the work conducted in prior years, we intend to focus on the following activities during the 2024-25 financial year:

- reviewing and updating LAQ's existing modern slavery risk assessment, including categorising spend against known industries or product risks and applying a targeted approach to high level risks, and implementing further risk controls and mitigations,
- ongoing consideration of modern slavery risk within our annual organisational compliance and risk cycles – see below regarding assessing the effectiveness,
- seeking guidance as required from our internal auditors to optimise our work in this area,
- monitoring and assessing relevant changes within Queensland Government procurement practices,
- continuing to embed further measures to address modern slavery in our corporate governance framework and procurement processes,
- continuing professional development through information and training sessions on procurement compliance and best practice, and participation in the community of practice sessions, as led by the Chief Procurement Office, and
- further enhancement of LAQ's contract management and procurement framework to optimise alignment across the organisation and manage contract risks including modern slavery.

The implementation of the Modern Slavery Register further assists our work in this area. Our ongoing risk assessments and identification of key mitigation measures will in part be informed by the Modern Slavery Statements of our key suppliers.

Furthermore, although presently assessed as low risk regarding modern slavery, our preferred suppliers represent a significant proportion of our supply chain. A revised preferred supplier agreement incorporating modern slavery risk assessment and mitigation obligations commenced during 2021-22. These obligations are reviewed regularly and remain in our current preferred supplier agreement.

Assessing the effectiveness of measures – performance indicators

Our response to address modern slavery compliance requirements and risk sits within our corporate governance framework and performance is therefore assessed within this existing framework and associated processes.

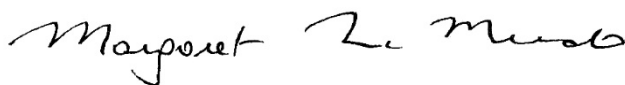
Our obligations under the Act are identified in our compliance register and are therefore partially managed within our annual compliance cycle. This includes assurance activities and reporting to the Board via our Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee and the Executive Management Team. Where a compliance exception is identified, this will be reported accordingly, and the status of all existing compliance obligations (such as those relating to modern slavery) are reported biannually, including an assessment of the level of compliance.

Modern slavery risk assessments are conducted in accordance with our Enterprise Risk Management Framework (ERMF). The ERMF not only manages existing risks in accordance with our Board-approved risk appetite, but also identifies emerging risks and does so in conjunction with our compliance management framework. Identified issues may be elevated for inclusion in our strategic or operational risk registers.

The effectiveness of our measures (such as those listed above under “Actions taken to address modern slavery risks”) is gauged through measuring relevant complaints, compliance, exceptions, and contract breaches relating to modern slavery obligations for suppliers. With modern slavery risk reflected within our operational risk register, it is subject to a continuous review cycle which includes risk assessment, identifying controls and mitigations, and thereafter reviews of the effectiveness of these measures, providing ongoing oversight of the risk. Our internal audit programme monitors LAQ’s risk environment and our responses including to modern slavery risk, with oversight from the LAQ Board and our Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee. The ongoing risk review cycle may in future identify and define specific risk metrics in relation to modern slavery when assessing relevant controls and mitigations, if considered appropriate.

Approval

This statement was approved by the Legal Aid Queensland Board on 28 November 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret Z. Murdoch".

The Hon Margaret McMurdo AC
Chairperson, Legal Aid Queensland Board

28 November 2024