

RAILS: Strategic Plan 2025-29

1. RAILS Values

- **Community-based, accessible, refugee and immigration law expertise**
 - We provide refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in vulnerable situations with specialist legal assistance in refugee and immigration law and policy.
- **Fair and just outcomes**
 - We work to achieve fair and just outcomes and address systemic disadvantage in refugee and immigration law and policy for those seeking safety and settlement in Australia.
- **Trauma informed and culturally safe**
 - We provide trauma informed and culturally safe legal assistance to ensure the dignity and safety of our clients.
- **Collaboration**
 - We work in a collaborative manner with our clients, across legal teams and with external support agencies to deliver better client outcomes.
- **Courage**
 - We are resilient and courageous in our work.

2. RAILS Purpose statement

Our purpose is to seek due process and just outcomes with dignity and respect for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in vulnerable situations seeking safety and settlement in Australia through legal assistance, advocacy and education.

3. Strategic Priorities 2025-29

Strategic Priority 1: Deliver not-for-profit, trauma informed, specialist refugee and immigration legal services

We will continue to deliver community based, specialist legal services to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in vulnerable situations seeking safety and settlement in Australia. We work to achieve fair and just outcomes in protection and immigration law and policy.

Goals/Objectives

- a. Develop a strategically focused and programmatic based approach to legal service delivery to maximise client welfare and optimise flexibility in resource allocation based on client need.
 - i. Maintain and develop strategic program areas: gender-based violence, protection (including on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression), refugee family reunion, legacy and transitory case load, citizenship and cancellation.
 - ii. Data and case studies for reporting, advocacy, and external communications are available on a program basis.
 - iii. Internal training and skill development across core program and delivery areas for legal staff.
- b. Maximise the effectiveness of RAILS' legal practice to ensure legal service delivery which is responsive to changes in both government policy and community need, and which ensures holistic support for our clients.

- i. Internal support and resources can be efficiently re-allocated or scaled in response to changes in government policy, Department processing or community need.
 - ii. Legal advice and case work can be provided to new cohorts of clients on a timely basis in response to changing demand.
 - iii. Clinics are staffed and resourced effectively to offer advice and case work to meet client needs.
 - iv. Participation in programs, projects and partnerships meets client and community needs.
 - v. Education initiatives are flexible and responsive to community need.
 - vi. Agreed processes in place to measure and report service delivery.
- c. Deliver appropriate on-going training for staff and volunteers to ensure trauma and culturally informed legal practice.
- d. Maintain efficient referral processes and strong referral partnerships with support services to ensure collaborative service delivery.

Strategic Priority 2: Strongly advocate for fair and just protection and immigration laws and policies

We will leverage client case studies and data to advocate for systemic change to combat unjust outcomes, policies and processes. We will advocate for change through direct contact with government, law reform submissions, strategic litigation and public awareness.

Goals/Objectives

- a. Make policy submissions informed by client case studies and data in areas directly relevant to our work to advocate for fair and just processes in refugee and immigration law and policy.
- b. Foster relationships with key government stakeholders to inform them and prioritise improving unfair migration policies, processes and decisions and to improve client outcomes.
- c. Advocate at state and federal levels of government to promote fair and equitable refugee and immigration policies.
- d. Develop the capacity to conduct strategic litigation to respond to human rights challenges.
- e. Contribute to law and policy development relevant to our strategic program areas.
- f. Develop a strategic external communications plan to build support for our strategic priorities.

Strategic Priority 3: Develop and maintain strong sector partnerships for better client outcomes

We will foster close working partnerships with other not-for-profit legal providers, sector service providers and pro bono law firms through collaborative service provision, access to interdisciplinary advice and holistic support, to seek better outcomes for our clients.

Goals/Objectives

- a. Build and maintain close working partnerships across the community, education and legal sectors to maximise RAILS resources and capacity

- i. Maintain access to expertise and a strong supply of legal volunteers through close relationships with pro bono law firms and universities.
 - ii. Maintain a volunteer program which meets RAILS needs.
- b. Build and maintain strong relationships with other not-for-profit legal service providers, social service providers and pro bono law firms to ensure collaborative service delivery and holistic support for clients.

Strategic Priority 4: Enhance RAILS organisational capacity and resilience

We will build organisational resilience and sustainability through a supportive work culture and developing reliable and agile organisational systems and clear consistent processes.

Goals/Objectives

- a. Maintain a supportive organisational culture reflective of RAILS values
 - i. Ensure our workplace is trauma informed and a safe place to work and visit for staff, volunteers and clients.
 - ii. Ensure our workplace is driven by RAILS values and our workforce reflects the diversity of our clients and community.
- b. Develop and retain staff through sustainable work practices, career progression and best practice working conditions
 - i. Collaborate with staff to identify potential development opportunities.
 - ii. Ensure sustainable work practices through monitoring workhours, workloads and allocations.
 - iii. Ensure the delivery of high-quality professional development including specific refugee and immigration law and practice training to legal staff and volunteers and relevant training for operations staff.
 - iv. Ensure a consistent onboarding and induction process for all staff and volunteers.
 - v. Offer external supervision for senior lawyers and operations staff and employees with lived experience.
- c. Ensure RAILS maintains the highest standards of governance across the organisation
 - i. Ensure adherence to Management Committee formation and maintenance policies and procedures.
 - ii. Maintain professional accreditation as a community legal centre, including through the regular review of RAILS policies and procedures.
- d. Reliable systems and clear processes
 - i. Foster digital innovation and capability to provide more reliable and efficient legal services.
 - ii. Develop organisation-wide consistent policies, procedures, and templates.
- e. Adopt organisational design principles to increase efficiency and build long term capacity
 - i. Ensure staff structure and reporting processes reflect strategic service delivery goals.
 - ii. Ensure the office design and team physical environments reflect collaborative work practices.

- iii. Ensure staff have flexible work practices to build long term staff retention.
 - iv. Ensure clear roles and responsibilities across all staff and volunteer roles.
- f. Build capacity in data collection and analysis
 - i. Ensure the ability to leverage data and case studies for reporting and advocacy.
 - ii. Ensure the ability to measure and evaluate our services.

Strategic Priority 5: Capacity building for our community in refugee and immigration law and policy

We will continue to educate our profession, stakeholders and community to better understand the legal rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants through education initiatives and community information sessions.

Goals/ Objectives

- a. Build the capacity and confidence of our community in relation to understanding issues arising in refugee and immigration law and policy.
- b. Deliver community education and engagement sessions to enable community members to better navigate and self-advocate in the migration and protection system.
- c. Deliver information and legal professional education sessions to enhance the understanding of the legal rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.
- d. Deliver clinics with university and pro bono law firm partners to provide pathways into refugee and immigration law and practice.
- e. Supply community resources such as legal information fact sheets.
- f. Teach human rights and domestic violence prevention in the Australian legal system.

Strategic Priority 6: Enhancing RAILS financial resilience

We will build financial resilience and sustainability through diversifying income sources.

Goals/Objectives

- a. Increase the diversification of revenue sources.
- b. Ensure robust financial and reporting systems to allow flexibility in allocation and reporting of core funding in response to community need.
- c. Raise awareness of RAILS and our work through external communications (including social media, annual report and RAILS website) and stakeholder events.