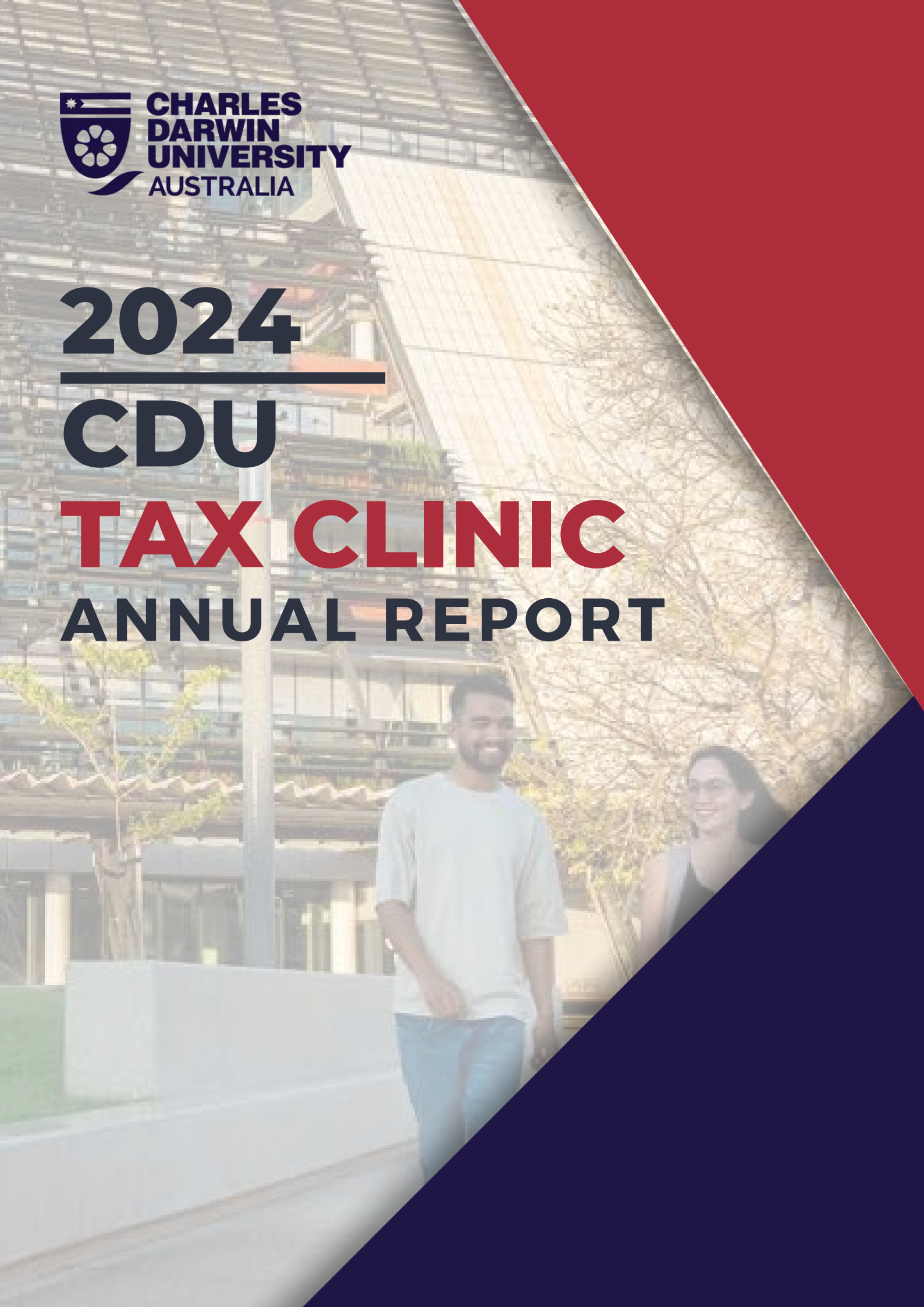
CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

2024 CDU TAX CLINIC ANNUAL REPORT



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Disclaimer

This material has been prepared by SAMAF Consultants and Charles Darwin University's Faculty of Arts and Society for general informational purposes only. This is not meant to be used as accounting, tax, or other professional advice. Please refer to your relevant advisors for specific advice.

INTRODUCTION

The CDU Tax Clinic continues to play a vital role in supporting unrepresented taxpayers across the Northern Territory to navigate their tax obligations and improve financial wellbeing.

Funded by the Australian Government through the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), the CDU Tax Clinic provides free, confidential, and independent tax assistance to individuals, sole traders, small businesses, and not-for-profit organisations who may not have access to professional tax support. The clinic remains committed to making these services accessible to those most in need within our diverse and remote community.

Assistance is provided by Charles Darwin University (CDU) undergraduate and postgraduate accounting students, working under the close supervision of academic staff and qualified tax practitioners. This model not only benefits the community but also offers students valuable, hands-on experience in client service and tax compliance.

Since its establishment in 2019, the CDU Tax Clinic has contributed to addressing systemic barriers faced by underrepresented groups by working directly with community organisations and offering warm referral pathways. Our approach is grounded in social equity and capacity-building for Territorians.

Eligibility is assessed based on financial and personal circumstances, with priority given to those experiencing financial hardship or other forms of disadvantage. Eligibility criteria may vary slightly across Tax Clinics operating in different States and Territories.

WELCOME

MESSAGE FROM PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR – FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIETY

Welcome to the 2024 CDU Free Tax Clinic Annual Report.

Professor Maneka Jayasinghe
Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor
Faculty of Arts and Society

This report highlights the remarkable achievements made possible through the dedication of our staff, students, and partners, who have worked together to provide free, accessible tax support to individuals, families, and small businesses across the Northern Territory. Their commitment, professionalism, and care have enabled the Tax Clinic to grow as a trusted source of assistance, empowering clients, enhancing student learning, and strengthening community connections.

The impact of the Clinic would not be possible without the generous support of the funding body— the Australian Taxation Office, the trust of our clients, and the unwavering dedication of our team. Together, we are not only addressing gaps in service but also creating opportunities for learning, connection, and inclusion.

Raul David
Chartered Accountant (CA)
Senior Lecturer in Accounting
***Program Director** – CDU Tax Clinic*

> *Our program has also provided real-life work experience to our accounting students under the supervision of our academic staff and experienced tax practitioners.*

MESSAGE FROM PROGRAM DIRECTOR

As Program Director of the CDU Free Tax Clinic, I am proud to welcome you to our 2024 Annual Report.

This year marks another chapter of extraordinary growth, impact, and collaboration. Our clinic stood firm in its mission: to deliver free, independent, and confidential tax assistance to those who need it most. Since its inception in 2019, we've provided services to over 2,000 Territorians, including First Nations peoples, migrants, international students, sole traders, and not-for-profits. These aren't just statistics, they represent real people, real challenges, and real solutions. Our team approached each case with professionalism, empathy, and cultural sensitivity.

We could not have done this alone. The success of the CDU Tax Clinic is made possible through the unwavering support of our partners, especially SAMAF Consultants and our exceptional Work Integrated Learning (WIL) students and volunteers. They have contributed their time, knowledge, and passion, gaining valuable experience while transforming lives.

WELCOME

Together, we've been recognised nationally. Our inclusion in 'Accountants Daily' as a model of student-led innovation and community service underscores what's possible when education, government, and the community sector unite for a common good.
But our work is not finished. From our outreach to remote communities to our culturally safe services for vulnerable individuals and PALM (Pacific Australia Labour Mobility) workers, we reaffirm our commitment to equity, inclusion, and excellence.
Thank you all for joining us on this journey. Your support enables us to continue shaping careers, transforming communities, and making a lasting difference across the Northern Territory.

MESSAGE FROM PARTNERS

Reflecting on the past fiscal year, we are proud to share a journey defined by resilience, growth, and meaningful community impact. It has been a privilege to work alongside individuals and organisations from all walks of life, and these experiences have only strengthened our commitment to giving back and building capacity within our community.

Ali Dhirani & Manfred Mletsin
SAMAF Consultants

At SAMAF, our mission is grounded in inclusion and empowerment—we strive to ensure that every Australian, regardless of background, has access to tools and support that can help them get ahead. As former CDU students ourselves, we understand the value of gaining real-world experience before graduation. That's why we take great pride in mentoring the next generation of professionals and watching them flourish through initiatives like the CDU Tax Clinic.

Over time, we've witnessed the profound impact that small businesses and community-focused initiatives can have. The CDU Free Tax Clinic is a clear example, offering practical, on-the-ground support to individuals, families, and businesses, while also providing a critical learning platform for students. It's a powerful demonstration of how collaboration between academia, government, and the private sector can deliver shared value.

Our involvement with the clinic is not just professional—it's deeply personal. We believe that when one member of the community thrives, we all benefit. By extending support through this project, we hope to foster a culture of care, mentorship, and opportunity that strengthens the Northern Territory and beyond.

OUR TEAM

BACK: Simon Morris, Ziyang Song, Ngoc Phuong Trang Tran, Ashmi Gurung, Huiting Chen, Manfred Mletsin
FRONT: Raul David, Xinyue Hu, Ni Wayan Indah Pratiwi, Rima Bartaula, Deepika Dubey, Shoyeb Shuvo, Ali Dhirani

CDU Tax Clinic Team 2024

While the core mission of the CDU Tax Clinic is to serve the broader Northern Territory community, an equally important focus lies in supporting the professional development of Charles Darwin University students.

In 2024, the clinic proudly engaged six CDU graduates who had recently completed their undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in accounting. These emerging professionals contributed their time and skills to assist unrepresented taxpayers while gaining invaluable real-world experience in tax compliance and client service.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our long-standing industry partner, SAMAF Consultants, whose unwavering support since 2020 has been instrumental in the continued success of the CDU Tax Clinic. Their mentorship, resources, and professional guidance continue to enrich the experience for students and improve outcomes for the community we serve.

Our 2024 Tax Clinic team consists of:

Raul David CA - Project Manager
Simon Morris FCA - Academic Representative
Ali Dhirani ASA - Clinic Supervisor
Manfred Mletsin ASA - Clinic Supervisor

Volunteers/WIL Students

Ashmi Gurung
Deepika Dubey
Ngoc Phuong Trang Tran
Rima Bartaula
Shoyeb Shuvo
Thi Giang Nguyen
Xinyue Hu
Ziyang Song
Ni Wayan Indah Pratiwi

WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL)

At CDU, learning extends well beyond the classroom. Through the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program, students enrolled in the Master of Professional Accounting and Master of Business Administration courses are offered valuable placement opportunities to gain firsthand experience in real-world business environments.

Deepika Dubey
WIL Student

Participating in the CDU Free Tax Clinic was one of the most rewarding experiences of my academic journey. The program significantly enhanced my communication and analytical skills and gave me the confidence to navigate real client scenarios with professionalism and empathy.
The hands-on exposure to tax matters and community engagement not only complemented my academic learning but also prepared me for the workforce. I'm now proud to be working with SAMAF Consultants, where I continue to build on the foundations laid during my time at the Clinic.

The WIL program is structured to provide practical, skills-based learning by connecting students with leading industry partners. It enables students to apply theoretical knowledge knowledge to real workplace scenarios, while receiving mentorship and supervision from experienced professionals in the field.

For participating businesses, the WIL program offers a unique opportunity to collaborate with talented graduates who bring fresh perspectives and up-to-date academic knowledge. Many students are offered ongoing roles following their placements, already well-acquainted with the organisation's culture and operational goals.

The program is also a cost-effective and flexible workforce solution, especially for businesses in need of short-term support or project-based work. At the CDU Tax Clinic, students often step into roles aligned with accounting, taxation, and client advisory services, guided closely by academic mentors and industry supervisors.

Ultimately, the WIL program is a mutually beneficial model - enhancing student employability while supporting local organisations with capable, job-ready talent.

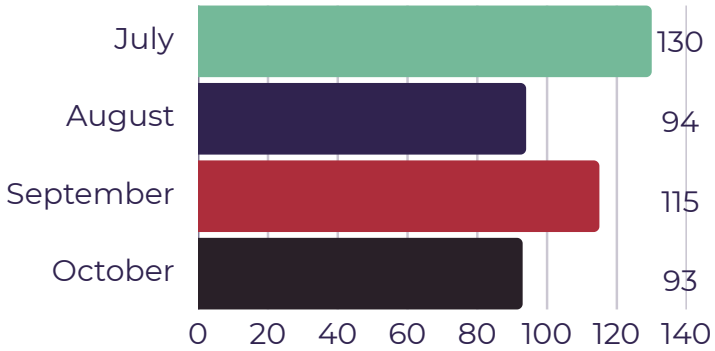
OUR SERVICES

- Tax Consultation
- Responding to ATO Notices
- Negotiating a payment plan
- Computing tax liability
- Tax law, your rights and obligations

OUR INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS

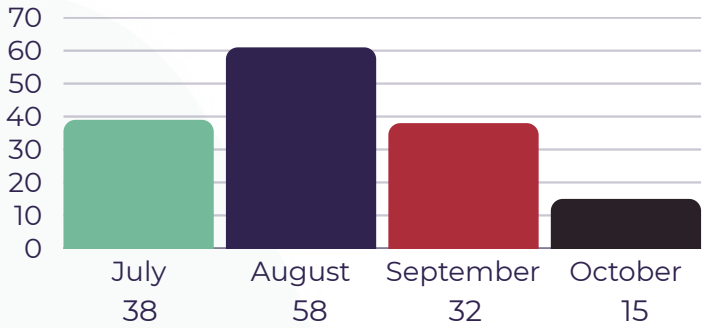
In 2024, the CDU Tax Clinic continued to make a meaningful difference by delivering essential tax support to eligible individual clients and sole traders across the Northern Territory. With over 1500 hours of complimentary tax assistance provided in partnership with SAMAF Consultants, our services were aimed at improving both current compliance and rectifying outstanding tax matters.

No. of individuals assisted by month



The CDU Tax Clinic significantly impacted the community by providing essential tax services to **432 eligible individual clients** and **153 sole traders,** offering over 1,500 hours of complimentary tax advice in collaboration with our SAMAF Accountants & Consultants partners. This effort reflects our dedication to supporting clients in current tax matters and achieving compliance for previous years.

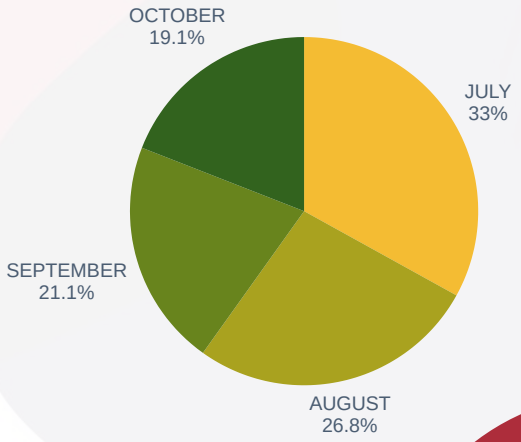
No. of sole traders assisted by month



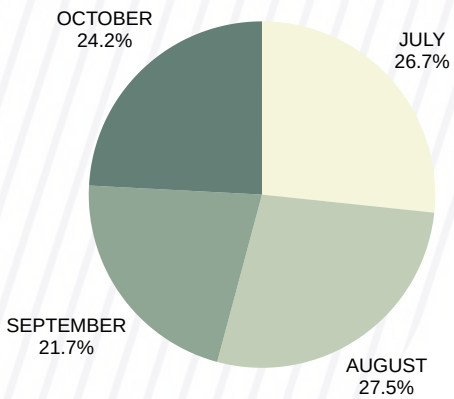
Through these initiatives, we've made strides in empowering individuals with the knowledge and assistance they need to navigate the complexities of tax law and compliance, reinforcing our commitment to the financial well-being of our community members.

In 2024, CDU Tax Clinic assisted **74 Indigenous Australians** over the year. We partnered with the **Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA)** to reach out to more communities.

Current year lodgements for individuals



Prior year lodgements for individuals



98% of individuals said that they are satisfied with the services received from the CDU Tax Clinic.

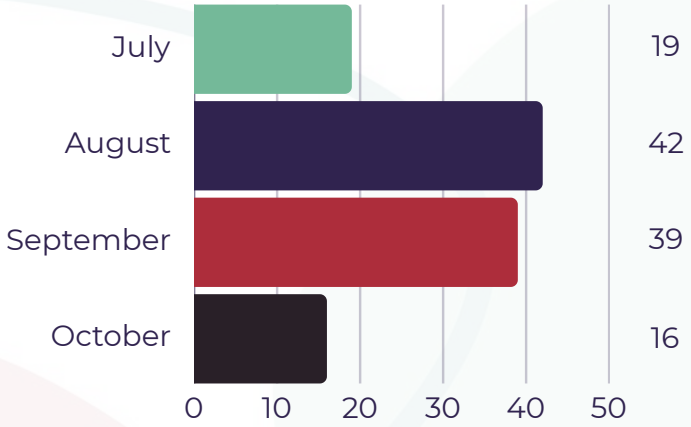
BUSINESSES SUPPORTED

The lasting economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to place individuals, small businesses, and community organisations in financially vulnerable positions. As a result, the demand for accessible, pro bono tax support remains high—particularly among those who cannot afford professional tax services.

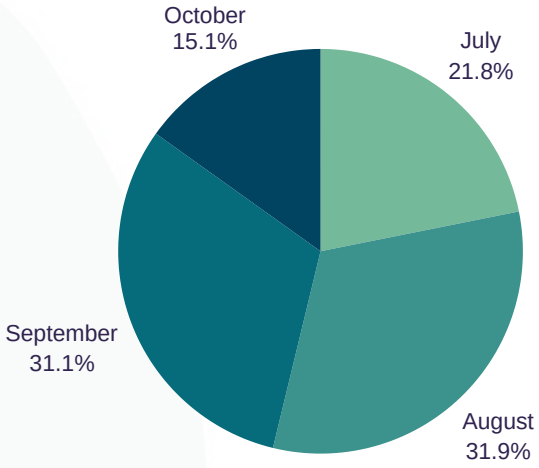
In 2024, the CDU Tax Clinic provided critical assistance to small businesses, sole traders, not-for-profit organisations, and charities across the Northern Territory. Many of these entities operate on limited budgets and are often excluded from mainstream advisory services. The clinic filled this gap by offering tailored, no-cost tax support to help them meet their compliance obligations and better manage their financial responsibilities.

By the end of the 2024 program, the clinic had supported 116 small businesses, not-for-profits, and charitable organisations. Through this work, we not only contributed to their financial sustainability but also strengthened their capacity to continue serving their communities.

Businesses, sole traders, NFPs and charities assisted by the month



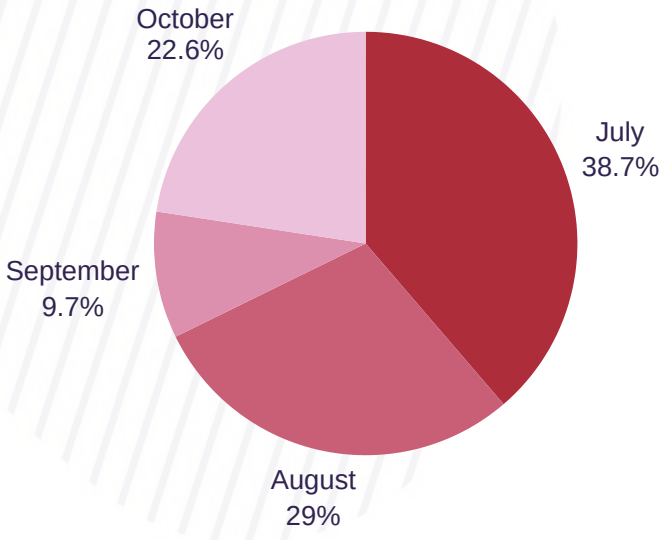
Current year BAS lodgements support for businesses, sole traders, NFPs and charities assisted by the month



I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Tax Clinic this year. It was a fantastic experience working alongside the team and developing new skills and techniques. I gained valuable insights into how things operate in a professional environment - and it was also a meaningful way to give back to the community.

Samantha Tran
Volunteer

Prior year BAS lodgements support for businesses, sole traders, NFPs and charities assisted by the month



SUPPORTING COMMUNITY

In times of uncertainty, many vulnerable individuals and communities continue to rely on not-for-profit organisations and charities for guidance and support. The CDU Free Tax Clinic plays a critical role in this ecosystem by offering professional, accessible tax assistance to those who may otherwise be excluded from mainstream services.

Our services are available to eligible individuals, businesses, and community organisations throughout the Northern Territory. While based in Darwin, we are committed to expanding our reach and ensuring that regional and remote areas are not left behind.

Our Tax Clinic supervisors led outreach trips with CDU students to deliver services beyond Darwin—including visits to Katherine and Alice Springs. These regional visits provided students with a unique opportunity to apply their learning in diverse community contexts and to understand the varying needs across the Territory.

A standout strength of the Tax Clinic is the cultural and linguistic diversity of our student team.

Ashmi Gurung, Indah Pratiwi & Deepika Dubey
CDU Tax Clinic at CDU Open Day 2024

Many students use their first language to engage with clients from similar backgrounds, enhancing the quality and comfort of service delivery. This diversity fosters creativity, encourages innovative thinking, and has consistently contributed to dynamic teamwork and community engagement.

The CDU Tax Clinic not only addresses unmet community needs but also nurtures a new generation of culturally responsive, community-minded tax professionals.

Ali Dhirani, Rima Bartalua & Indah Pratiwi
CDU Tax Clinic at Alice Springs

Indah Pratiwi & Rima Bartalua
CDU Tax Clinic at Alice Springs

FEEDBACK FROM OUR CLIENTS

Client feedback is a vital component of our service delivery model. It ensures that communication has been effective, expectations have been met, and areas for improvement are identified. This continuous feedback loop enables us to reflect, refine, and enhance the quality of support we provide through the CDU Tax Clinic.

The results have been overwhelmingly positive: 98% of clients reported being satisfied with the service they received, and 95% indicated they felt less anxious about their tax affairs after their consultation. This feedback reinforces the value of our work and motivates us to keep improving the service experience for the communities we serve.

I wasn't sure about tax, filing, or returns before visiting the Tax Clinic, but the support and knowledge I received made a big difference. I'm very happy with the experience and would recommend it to everyone I know.

I received help from the Tax Clinic last year—my high expectations were fully met.

I thought doing a tax return would be complicated, but my visit to the Tax Clinic was quick, easy, and convenient—and everyone was so friendly.

I've been coming to the CDU Tax Clinic for five years, and they've always been incredibly helpful. I expected nothing but the best, and they deliver every time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful for the considerable contributions of time, services and insights provided by a wide range of stakeholders during the course of the CDU Free Tax Clinic.

Inputs from current and past students, volunteers, program clients, partners, professional associations, and academics have been generously offered and openly received. We also express our deep gratitude to the Faculty of Arts and Society staff for their assistance in all aspects of this program and worked tirelessly to meet our various deadlines.

We want to thank the Australian Taxation Office and their staff for their support for the past and coming years.

Without the help of these individuals and stakeholders, the success of this program would not be possible.

CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

SAMAF CONSULTANTS

Australian Government

Australian Taxation Office

Thank You!

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to the Northern Territory community.

CONTACT

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https://www.cdu.edu.au/free-tax-clinic