



FEDERATION
OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES VIC

PROUDLY PART OF A 50 YEAR
MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

ANNUAL REPORT

2022–2023

ABOUT US

WE WANT A COMMUNITY THAT IS FAIR, INCLUSIVE AND THRIVING, WHERE EVERY PERSON BELONGS AND CAN LEARN, GROW, HEAL, PARTICIPATE AND BE HEARD.

The Federation of Community Centres Victoria Inc (the Federation) is the peak body for Victoria's 47 Community Legal Centres. Our members are at the forefront of helping those facing economic, cultural or social disadvantage and whose life circumstances are severely affected by their legal problems.

For 50 years, Community Legal Centres have been part of a powerful movement for social change; reshaping how people access justice, creating stronger more equitable laws, and promoting a more accountable government and democracy.

We pursue our vision of a fair, inclusive and thriving community through challenging injustice, defending rights and building the power of our members and communities.

The Federation:

- ▼ enables a strong collective voice for justice and equality
- ▼ mobilises and leads Community Legal Centres in strategic, well-coordinated advocacy and campaigns
- ▼ works with members to continuously improve the impact of community legal services
- ▼ drives creativity and excellence in the delivery of legal services to communities
- ▼ helps make justice more accessible.

OUR PRINCIPLES:

COMMUNITY

Our priority is to be fully accountable to the communities we serve and belong to.

SOLIDARITY

With each other. Community Legal Centres are a part of a movement for justice. We must work together to be a powerful, effective voice. We practice our principles through our engagement with each other. We back each other up, make time and space for everyone's viewpoints to be heard, and act collectively, with a focus on long-term, systemic change.

With communities most affected by injustice. We recognise that people and communities most directly affected by injustice and discrimination are experts in their own lives and have their own voices. We are allies, not saviours.

STAND WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

We celebrate the strength, leadership and resilience of First Nations Peoples. We recognise the ongoing injustices perpetrated against them, and we stand with them in fighting for self-determination and equality.

RESPECT

In all of our work, we show respect. We acknowledge and celebrate differences and commonalities, and the strength that diversity brings to our communities.

LEARNING

We are inquisitive and reflective, committed to adapting and growing in response to evidence about what works, and to sharing our learning with our communities. We learn from our success and failure.

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THE FEDERATION ACKNOWLEDGES THE ORIGINAL CUSTODIANS OF COUNTRY AND WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND EMERGING. WE RECOGNISE THEIR CONTINUING CONNECTION TO LAND, WATER AND COMMUNITY. SOVEREIGNTY WAS NEVER CEDED.

Members are now offered a far greater range of programs and services than just a few short years ago, and the sense of solidarity within the sector has never felt stronger.

"ALTHOUGH MUCH HAS CHANGED DURING MY TIME WITH THE FEDERATION, SOME THINGS HAVE REMAINED THE SAME. THE FEDERATION CONTINUES TO WORK WITH AND FOR ITS DEDICATED, SKILLED AND INNOVATIVE MEMBERS, THEIR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS, AND I AM PROUD TO BE PART OF THIS INCREDIBLE MOVEMENT."

- KRISTEN WALLWORK, CHAIRPERSON

Of course, these achievements would not be possible without our many partners who continue to support the sector, not least our funders and collaborators, who you will read about through this Annual Report.

I would especially like to acknowledge Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes for her genuine commitment to the sector, and with whom we have had the privilege of meeting regularly at our roundtable events. I would also like to thank Federal Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus, whose shared history with the Victorian community legal sector and presence at many events this year have formed a strong foundation on which our relationship has flourished.

Thank you to my fellow Board members, whose passion for community law is present at every Board meeting, and to all the staff at the Federation who demonstrate solution-based thinking and commitment to the Membership. It has been an honour to work with such talented and determined people.

KRISTEN WALLWORK
CHAIRPERSON

OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS, COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES HAVE PARTICIPATED IN PROGRESSING INCREDIBLE, POSITIVE SOCIAL AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES. LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS AND THE RIGHT TO MARRY WHOMEVER WE CHOOSE ARE NOW RECOGNISED AND PROTECTED ACROSS AUSTRALIA; WOMEN AND MARGINALISED GROUPS ARE SEEN, HEARD AND REPRESENTED MORE THAN EVER BEFORE; MORE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES THAN EVER ARE INVOLVED IN CLIMATE JUSTICE, SUPPORTED BY THE FEDERATION TO PREPARE FOR CLIMATE IMPACTS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES IN THE FUTURE; AND CALLS FOR VOICE, TREATY AND TRUTH-TELLING FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES ARE LOUDER AND MORE VISIBLE THAN AT ANY TIME IN OUR HISTORY.

It is important to recognise that some changes have arisen directly from Community Legal Centre-led advocacy. Community Legal Centres have helped win many rights for Victorians including mandatory third-party motor vehicle insurance, increasing awareness of and support for victim-survivors of family violence, and better protection for Victorians against scams.

The community legal sector's eagerly anticipated and thoughtfully developed 10-Year Plan was launched at an event that brought the sector together and evoked a sense of genuine excitement for the decade ahead of us. Working collectively as a sector towards our shared goals, we are confident that implementing the 10-Year Plan in the coming years will strengthen the sector and magnify what we can achieve as a movement for social justice.

Staff and volunteers at Community Legal Centres should be proud to be part of leading the movement for social change that is making our communities fairer places for everyone.

On a personal level, the past year at the Federation has been particularly significant, as it will be my last as a sitting member and Chairperson of the Federation's Board. In my ten years supporting the Federation's governance, I have had the pleasure of watching the Federation grow its staff from five to 18, expand its areas of work, and finesse its models for supporting members and the sector.

PROUDLY PART OF A MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE



© KRISTEN WALLWORK, BOARD CHAIRPERSON AND LOUISA GIBBS, CEO

At a time when many Victorian Community Legal Centres are celebrating 50 years of service to their communities, I reflect on the fact that Community Legal Centres remain as relevant today as they did when the movement started half a century ago. Underpinning this, as a member peak body with a mission to support and enable Victoria's 47 current Community Legal Centres to have maximum impact, lies the Federation.

The Federation focuses on building and facilitating the collaborative momentum of the community legal sector. This momentum enhances and provides the foundations for expansion of successful service delivery models. This year, participation in the Federation's capacity development program increased by 19 per cent and the number of Federation working groups, networks and communities of practice expanded to 27.

Through the Federation's continued specialised accreditation support program, Community Legal Centres continued to grow their own capabilities to create evidence-based frameworks for reporting and service design.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

What kind of leadership is needed, when you are a member peak body? Here at the Federation, the peak body for Victoria's 47 Community Legal Centres, we often find ourselves contemplating this question. At its core, sector leadership is about aligning the collective direction and executing strategic plans on behalf of those who have entrusted you to lead them. But more than that, good sector leadership builds up, and places faith in, others to lead.

During 2022–2023, the Federation played this role for Victoria's Community Legal Centres in a number of ways. We were instrumental in coordinating and amplifying the sector's policy and advocacy across a wide range of issues, including bail reform, family violence reforms, raising the age of criminal responsibility, and climate justice. Enabled by the 27 working groups supported by the Federation, we gathered detailed insights that informed and shaped our strategies for advocating for systemic change, culminating in 21 policy submissions, ten meetings with Members of the Victorian Parliament and more than 15 meetings with other state and federal ministerial advisers. In the lead up to the Victorian State Election in November 2022, we developed an election platform for the sector, which outlined 11 key goals for a fair, inclusive and thriving society for all Victorians. The election platform was the product of many consultations with our Members, and neatly captured the diversity of the work that they do.

An important landmark of the year was the launch of the sector's 10-Year Plan. This represents the collective direction of Victorian Community Legal Centres for the next decade. The sector was able to develop a big picture Plan that is focused, impactful and achievable. Most importantly, the Plan is a blueprint for amplifying the impact of Community Legal Centres in their communities.

But that's not all! The Federation offered a diverse training program, presented at Community Legal Centres Australia's National Conference in Nipaluna-Hobart, continued to improve data

capture and analysis through the data project, and took significant steps to strengthening the sector's future workforce through building relationships with universities.

You don't have to look far in the community legal sector for examples of good leadership. All around us are incredible, passionate people, supporting, enabling and inspiring others. This year, Antoinette Braybrook, CEO of Djirra and Jackie Galloway, CEO of Peninsula Community Legal Centre, were appointed Members of the Order of Australia, for services to their communities. This is national recognition of the exceptional work of our community legal sector leaders at the highest level.

There are many other remarkable people in the community legal sector who I am proud to work with. One in particular is outgoing Federation Board Chair, Kris Wallwork. Not only does Kris lead one of Victoria's oldest and largest Community Legal Centres as Executive Director (South-East Monash Legal Service), she has also been a member of the Board of the Federation for a decade, including six as its Chair. Kris' work on the Board is entirely voluntary and supports the whole community legal sector to achieve incredible impact. Kris is a strategic thinker and, during her tenure, has supported the Federation to grow in size and reach, resulting in more sector-wide services and activities to advance access to justice and influence law reform across the state.

It is fitting then, as we say thank you to Kris as she ends her tenure on the Board, to celebrate her receipt of the 2023 Law Institute of Victoria's President's Award for Outstanding Service.

Kris – *thank you* from the staff, board and Members of the Federation for your exceptional leadership, inspiration and good humour. Yours truly is outstanding service and has been exactly the style of leadership that has enabled the Federation to flourish.

LOUISA GIBBS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

WHO WE ARE

The Federation is the peak body for Victoria's 47 Community Legal Centres and Aboriginal Legal Services. Our role is to support our Members to continuously improve the impact of community legal services (from legal representation and advice, through to information and community legal education), enable strong and effective collective advocacy, and lead the sector in a coordinated approach to creating a just and safe Victoria.

Together with Community Legal Centre Members, we work to create a community that is fair, inclusive and thriving: where every person belongs and can learn, grow, heal, participate and be heard.

Our Community Legal Centre Members are at the forefront of helping those facing economic, cultural or social disadvantage and whose life circumstances are severely affected by their legal problem. Community Legal Centres help the community not only by meeting the legal needs of individuals, but by educating communities on their rights and responsibilities, and advocating for changes to laws and policies to make Victoria a fairer place for everyone.

At the Federation, we pride ourselves on the strong relationships we have with our Members and other stakeholders. It is these relationships that enable us to achieve our goals: to mobilise advocacy, improve service delivery, magnify impact, and ultimately, make justice more accessible.



ROSANNA DI GRAZIA, OFFICE COORDINATOR, LEON HARPER, BREE BOOTH AND OANH TRAN, YOUNG WORKERS' CENTRE, AND KATIE WAND, SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS ADVISER

"THE FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES IS A TRUSTED PARTNER IN MANY ASPECTS. I ADMIRE THE FEDERATION'S FIERCE ADVOCACY AND I WANT TO THANK THEM FOR THEIR VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION. I LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE FEDERATION."

- VICTORIAN ATTORNEY-GENERAL, THE HON JACLYN SYMES, MP

"There's a clear link between disadvantage and involvement with the criminal justice system - a link that VCOSS is determined to break. We're proud to partner with the Federation on this work. As the peak body for Victoria's community legal sector, the Federation is a valued source of subject matter expertise that assists VCOSS's policy development and systemic advocacy in the justice space."

- DEB FEWSTER, DIRECTOR, POLICY AND ADVOCACY, VICTORIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE (VCOSS)

MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR'S 10-YEAR PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE, SARA PHEASANT, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE STUDENT UNION LEGAL SERVICE, EMMA KING, VCOSS, KRISTEN WALLWORK, SOUTH-EAST MONASH LEGAL SERVICE, LYNNE HAULTAIN, VICTORIA LAW FOUNDATION

"The Federation is a critical hub for bringing together the collective minds of clients, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders from the community legal sector. The Federation provides the platform on which Community Legal Centres can communicate and collaborate, and advocates fearlessly on behalf of the sector on issues that impact our communities and the Centres that support them."

- KRISTEN WALLWORK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOUTH-EAST MONASH LEGAL SERVICE

"AS THE PEAK BODY FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES IN VICTORIA, THE FEDERATION PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN BRINGING TOGETHER THE COLLECTIVE VOICES OF 47 DIVERSE, PASSIONATE AND HARD-WORKING ORGANISATIONS. EVERY DAY I SEE THE REAL IMPACT THAT OUR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES HAVE ON EVERYDAY VICTORIANS AND THE IMPORTANT ROLE THE FEDERATION PLAYS IN FACILITATING THEIR WORK. THE FEDERATION PROVIDES A COLLECTIVE AND CLEAR VOICE ON BEHALF OF THE SECTOR THROUGH ITS ADVOCACY, WHILE ALSO ENSURING THAT COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES HAVE THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO FOCUS ON HELPING THEIR CLIENTS."

- ADAM AWTY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, LAW INSTITUTE OF VICTORIA

TIM LEACH (RIGHT), CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AUSTRALIA WITH VICTORIAN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF AT FITZROY LEGAL SERVICE'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

"Congratulations to the Federation and all its members on another year of amazing achievements. So much great work comes out of Victoria, and the Federation is always so generous in sharing its resources and learnings with the national peak and with the sector more generally. We've enjoyed some great collaborations with the Federation and we look forward to more in the years to come."

- TIM LEACH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AUSTRALIA

"THE FEDERATION HAS PROVIDED VITAL SUPPORT FOR OUR WORK AT HUME RIVERINA COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE OVER THE LAST YEAR. THE TEAM HAS PROVIDED STRONG LEADERSHIP REGARDING SECTOR-WIDE INITIATIVES WHICH HAVE DIRECTLY BENEFITTED OUR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE, AND THE FEDERATION HAS HELPED TO CONNECT US WITH OTHER COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE LEADERS AND SUPPORTED US TO WORK TOGETHER AS A SECTOR TO DRIVE CHANGE. AS AN RRR (RURAL, REGIONAL OR REMOTE) COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE THIS IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT FOR US AND HELPS TO OVERCOME REGIONAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL ISOLATION. THE COMMUNICATION WITH OUR CENTRE ABOUT RELEVANT SECTOR, POLICY AND FUNDING TRENDS HAS BEEN OUTSTANDING. WE'VE BENEFITTED SO MUCH FROM THE TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFERINGS AVAILABLE FOR OUR TEAM."

- SARAH RODGERS, MANAGING AND PRINCIPAL LAWYER, HUME RIVERINA COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE

"TO ME, THE FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES IS A COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR CHANGE. ITS STRENGTH COMES FROM A LONG AND STRONG CONNECTION WITH COMMUNITIES ACROSS VICTORIA THROUGH ITS MEMBERSHIP. FOCUSING ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE, THE FEDERATION IS COMMITTED TO REFORM FOR INDIVIDUALS, LOCALITIES, AND CIVIL SOCIETY MORE BROADLY."

- LOUISE GLANVILLE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, VICTORIA LEGAL AID

LOUISE GLANVILLE, VICTORIA LEGAL AID, ATTORNEY-GENERAL THE HON MARK DREYFUS KC MP AND LOUISE GIBBS, CEO AT THE TIM MCCOY DINNER



📷 FEDERATION INTERNS AOIFE WHELAN (LEFT) AND JAMES KROTSIS (FOURTH FROM LEFT) JOIN STAFF IN CAMPAIGNING FOR REDRESS FOR FIRST NATIONS POLICY HOLDERS FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE OF FUNERAL INSURER ACBF-YOUPLA

"Interning at the Federation really opened my eyes to the vital work that Community Legal Centres do, and allowed me to apply my university studies in a way that had a real-world impact. It was so special to help out with advocacy work that genuinely makes a difference and I was sad to go after a semester!" – AOIFE WHELAN, INTERN

"LAW STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES HAVE BEEN CLOSELY CONNECTED SINCE THE 1970S. TO THIS DAY, MONASH UNIVERSITY LAW STUDENTS ARE ENRICHED BY THEIR EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR THROUGH PLACEMENTS AT MONASH LAW CLINICS AND OTHER COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES. THE FEDERATION CONNECTS MONASH LAW CLINICS TO ITS PARTNERS ACROSS THE SECTOR. IT HELPS US TO MAKE SURE CLIENTS GET TO THE RIGHT SOURCE OF ASSISTANCE, AND EFFECTIVELY PUSHES FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE THAT REFLECTS THE EXPERIENCES OF OUR CLIENTS."

- JOEL TOWNSEND ACCREDITED SPECIALIST IN ADMINISTRATIVE LAW, DIRECTOR OF MONASH LAW CLINICS



📷 KATRINA WEBSTER AND COMMISSIONER FIONA MCLEAY, VICTORIAN LEGAL SERVICES BOARD + COMMISSIONER, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE 10-YEAR PLAN

"WE VALUE THE CRITICAL ROLE THE FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES PLAYS IN BRINGING TOGETHER THE COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR TO LEARN, EVOLVE AND ADVOCATE FOR CHANGES THAT IMPROVE VICTORIANS' ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES."

- KATRINA WEBSTER, GRANTS PROGRAM LEAD, VICTORIAN LEGAL SERVICES BOARD + COMMISSIONER

"VALS HAS HAD AN INCREDIBLE YEAR OF GROWTH AND WORKING ON IMPORTANT LEGAL REFORMS. IT HAS BEEN GREAT TO HAVE THE FEDERATION'S SUPPORT WHICH HAS HELPED AMPLIFY THE VOICE OF OUR COMMUNITIES."

- NERITA WAIGHT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE (VALS)

"BEING PART OF A POWERFUL MOVEMENT IS WHAT MAKES COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES UNIQUE. AND THE FEDERATION PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN BRINGING US TOGETHER, MAKING US STRONGER AND HELPING US CREATE A FAIRER AND BETTER VICTORIA."

- MEL DYE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SOUTHSIDE JUSTICE

"AS VICTORIA'S ONLY SPECIALIST EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE RECEIVING 50,000 CALLS PER YEAR, DEMAND FOR OUR SERVICES IS HIGH AND EXPECTED TO RISE. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE FEDERATION STAFF WHO HAVE AN ACUTE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE THAT EMPLOYMENT PLAYS IN THE LIVES OF THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN THE VICTORIAN COMMUNITY. THE FEDERATION'S CONTINUED SUPPORT AND PROMOTION OF OUR SERVICE IS WELCOMED BY ALL VICTORIAN WORKERS."

- ZANA BYTHEWAY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOBWATCH



📷 JENNI SMITH, NORTHERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE, LOUISA GIBBS, CEO, AND TANIA FARHA, SAFE AND EQUAL AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SAFE LANDING PROJECT

"RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER SECTOR PEAKS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO US AT SAFE AND EQUAL. WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE FEDERATION ENABLES US TO KEEP ACROSS IMPORTANT CHANGES IN THE COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR, IDENTIFY SHARED CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS OPPORTUNITIES TO UNITE FOR JOINT ADVOCACY ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES."

- TANIA FARAH, CEO, SAFE AND EQUAL



COLLABORATION FOR IMPACT

SHAWN LEE, WHITTLESEA COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
AND ROHINI THOMAS, SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER



JEFF GIDDINGS, MONASH LAW CLINICS, GILLIAN WILKS,
SOCIAL SECURITY RIGHTS VICTORIA



SALMA ADEN AND CIDIANA TESFAYE, INNER MELBOURNE
COMMUNITY LEGAL, SPEAKING AT THE LAUNCH OF THE 10-YEAR PLAN



RACHAEL PLINER, MANAGER, POLICY AND ADVOCACY AND
STACEY HAMILTON, VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE

VOICE, GROWTH, IMPACT AND ACCESS – THE COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR HAS IDENTIFIED THE AREAS IT WILL FOCUS ON OVER THE NEXT DECADE, AND LAUNCHED ITS 10-YEAR PLAN.

Kindly hosted at the Law Institute Victoria's office, the launch included presentations from a cross-section of people who make up the Community Legal Centre community. We heard from Hubert Algie, a Senior Associate in the environment and planning law team at law firm Norton Rose Fulbright, who is also a Supervising Lawyer at Monash University's Climate Justice Clinic. Hubert shared his experience of working with the community legal sector to respond to bushfires and land management issues in Gippsland.

Salma Aden and Cidiana Tesfaye spoke about their role as legal concierges with Inner Melbourne Community Legal. Salma and Cidiana support a range of collaboration and legal education activities in their community.

A former Community Legal Centre client, Patricia (not her real name), also generously shared her journey. Patricia is a victim-survivor of psychological family violence, who was assisted by Eastern Community Legal Centre in relation to family violence matters. Patricia said:

"My community lawyer helped me in ways I didn't know I needed. People experiencing family violence often don't recognise what is happening to them until it's too late. Eastern Community Legal Centre supported me through my darkest days, and I'll always remember the impact they had on my life. Community Legal Centres provide vital supports to people in dire need every day. I wanted to speak at the community legal sector 10-Year Plan launch because I want to use my experiences to support Community Legal Centres and to help others like me."

- COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE CLIENT

Federal Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus KC MP – who is himself a former volunteer community lawyer and a strong supporter of the sector today – sent a pre-recorded video message from Canberra. It was very special to have representatives from Community Legal Centres across the state attend.

Designed by Victorian Community Legal Centres, sector collaborators, and the people and communities that we work with, the Plan is a product of the community legal sector's remarkable synergy. It focuses on improving access to justice, strengthening our collective voice, showing our impact, growing the sector, and upskilling and supporting our people.

Containing 29 activities, the Plan provides a roadmap for Community Legal Centres to maximise meaningful impact over the next ten years. The first 13 of the Plan's activities will be progressed over the first four year 'horizon' within the Plan.

We thank everyone who was involved in creating the Plan and coordinating the launch. We are confident that the Plan will enable the sector to strengthen existing areas of work, explore new horizons, expand and improve service delivery, and amplify Community Legal Centres' advocacy in the years to come.



Read the sectors
10-year Plan online



WIDENING ACCESS TO SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

VICTORIAN LAW FOUNDATION SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATED

42% HAD COMMONPLACE LEGAL ISSUES INTERWOVEN INTO THEIR LIVES



The Victoria Law Foundation's (VLF) groundbreaking Public Understanding of Law Survey showed that 42 per cent¹ of respondents had commonplace legal issues interwoven into their lives. This equates to 6.4 million problems across the adult population of Victoria. The VLF report notes:

"PROBLEMS DON'T OCCUR IN ISOLATION, THEY LEAD ON FROM ONE ANOTHER, EXTEND TO WIDER SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO DISADVANTAGE. THEIR IMPACT IS SIGNIFICANT AND THE KNOCK-ON COSTS TO PUBLIC SERVICES AND INDIVIDUALS HUGE."²

Responding to this, Community Legal Centres choose to deliver many of their services in an integrated fashion, encompassing legal, social, health and other supports. Working in an integrated manner can also often be the best way to break down structural and systemic barriers to accessing legal information and advice. It can be critical to an effective early intervention or trauma-informed response, policy reform and systemic advocacy. Perfectly placed as part of the network of community services across the state, or through engagement of dedicated social service professionals on staff, Community Legal Centres provide meaningful services to address the complex and intersecting needs of our community members through their integrated models.

The Federation continued to administer a dedicated stream of funding for integrated services (including health justice partnerships) from the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance's Early Intervention and Investment Framework (EIIF), and overseen by the Department of Justice and Community Safety, called the Integrated Service Fund.

We supported our Members who are delivering these 16 projects to report to the Victorian Government on the impact that their integrated services are having in achieving the objectives of the EIIF. Through regular meetings of a community of practice and written reports, the Federation works to quantify and qualify the value of these integrated justice partnerships to the funder, and to illustrate how such partnerships fit into the Department of Treasury and Finance's broader framework of early intervention and prevention.

By reporting on outcome measures indicators, the Federation continues to build an evidence-based case for investment in these vital partnerships.

¹ Nigel J. Balmer, Pascoe Pleasence, Hugh M. McDonald and Rebecca L. Sandefur, *The Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS) Volume 1: Everyday Problems and Legal Need*, Victoria Law Foundation (2023), page 45. Available at puls.victorialawfoundation.org.au/publications/everyday-problems-and-legal-need
² Victoria Law Foundation, *The Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS) Volume 1 Everyday Problems and Legal Need – Key Findings*, (2023) puls.victorialawfoundation.org.au/publications/everyday-problems-and-legal-need

BALLARAT AND GRAMPIANS COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE

Providing family law and family violence services for parents and carers who visit Parent Place, the Sebastopol, Lucas and Ballan Maternal and Child Health Centres and collaborating with Neighbourhood Houses to provide these integrated services in Horsham, Stawell, Ararat and Daylesford.

CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE

A partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service to deliver integrated consumer, credit and debt legal services to Aboriginal communities.

FITZROY LEGAL SERVICE – DAREBIN DRUG OUTREACH LAWYER PROGRAM

Assisting individuals with legal problems related to alcohol and drug use through partnerships with YSAS (Youth Support and Advocacy Service), Living Room, Inner Space, North Richmond Community Health, Odyssey House Victoria and Uniting Care ReGen.

GOULBURN VALLEY COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE

A partnership with Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative to support local Aboriginal community members with complex legal and health issues.

HUME RIVERINA COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE – INVISIBLE HURDLES

A youth and family violence program that identifies systemic issues affecting young people, advocates to address these issues and provides legal services.

INNER MELBOURNE COMMUNITY LEGAL

- ▼ Beyond Survival – Policing Family Violence Project: A partnership with Flat Out responding to police accountability issues.
- ▼ Health Justice Partnership with Royal Melbourne Hospital: Providing advice and casework for patients, delivering community legal education and undertaking strategic policy work.
- ▼ Acting on Warning Signs: a partnership with the Royal Women's Hospital to provide legal assistance to patients at weekly legal clinics, offered via telephone or in-person.

INTOUCH MULTICULTURAL CENTRE AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE

A partnership with Monash Health to provide legal advice for migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence, and secondary consultations for Monash Health staff.

JUSTICE CONNECT SENIORS LAW

A partnership with cohealth and St Vincent's Hospital to increase access to legal support and help progress social justice for people who are experiencing or at risk of elder abuse.

LAW AND ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR WOMEN

Providing pathways out of the justice system for socially and economically disadvantaged women through specialist, gender-informed legal advice and representation alongside in-house social work and case management assistance.

LODDON CAMPASPE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE

- ▼ Health Justice Partnership with Maryborough District Health Service: Providing integrated legal-health services to clients with complex needs, and enabling early intervention support for those at risk of encountering the criminal legal system.
- ▼ Health Justice Partnership with Bendigo Community Health Service: Increasing safety and access to justice for women experiencing family violence.

SENIORS RIGHTS VICTORIA (COUNCIL ON THE AGEING)

Supporting people, including those with dementia, living in targeted regional communities, or part of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, to plan and make informed choices about future financial, health or care arrangements, and document them in an appropriate legal format.

SOCIAL SECURITY RIGHTS VICTORIA

Providing legal and financial counselling services for people experiencing difficulties with Centrelink and associated nonlegal matters.

SOUTH-EAST MONASH LEGAL SERVICE – SPORTING CHANGE

Supporting young people from diverse backgrounds to engage constructively in their local communities and learn about the legal system; and increasing young people's access to justice through the integration of school lawyers at Hampton Park Secondary College and Dandenong High School.

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE AND
CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE

WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP FIRST NATIONS CONSUMERS IN VICTORIA

Sarah is a proud Aboriginal woman and single mother from a small regional town in Victoria. Sarah lives in community housing and her sole source of income is Centrelink.

Having saved up over a long period, Sarah bought a second-hand car from a car dealership for \$9,000. But within weeks of the purchase, she began noticing significant mechanical issues. Sarah took the car to a local mechanic, who advised her not to drive until the issues were fixed. Sarah contacted the dealership on several occasions to ask them to either fix the issues or refund her, but they refused.

Unable to pay for the repairs, Sarah contacted the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service for legal advice. Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service filed a dispute with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to seek financial redress for Sarah. They also examined Sarah's experience to identify any systemic barriers that she faced in accessing justice.

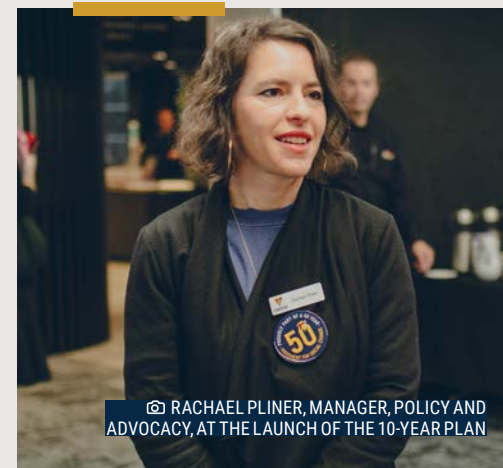
Based on cases like Sarah's and others, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and Consumer Action Law Centre are campaigning for the Victorian Government to establish a fair, accessible and effective mechanism for resolving motor vehicle disputes that is also culturally appropriate and safe. This includes the organisations working together to analyse the experiences of First Nation consumers in Victoria in a report by Consumer Policy Research Centre to be released in late 2023.

Sarah's case is yet to be resolved due to a tribunal backlog, and difficulties she has faced in financing the expert mechanic report needed for her case. Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and Consumer Action Law Centre will continue to support Sarah and others experiencing similar problems to find justice.

FEDERATION STAFF ON THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST'S 'SCAR TREE WALK

CONVENING, COLLABORATING AND CREATING – DIVERSE WORKING GROUPS ACROSS THE FEDERATION

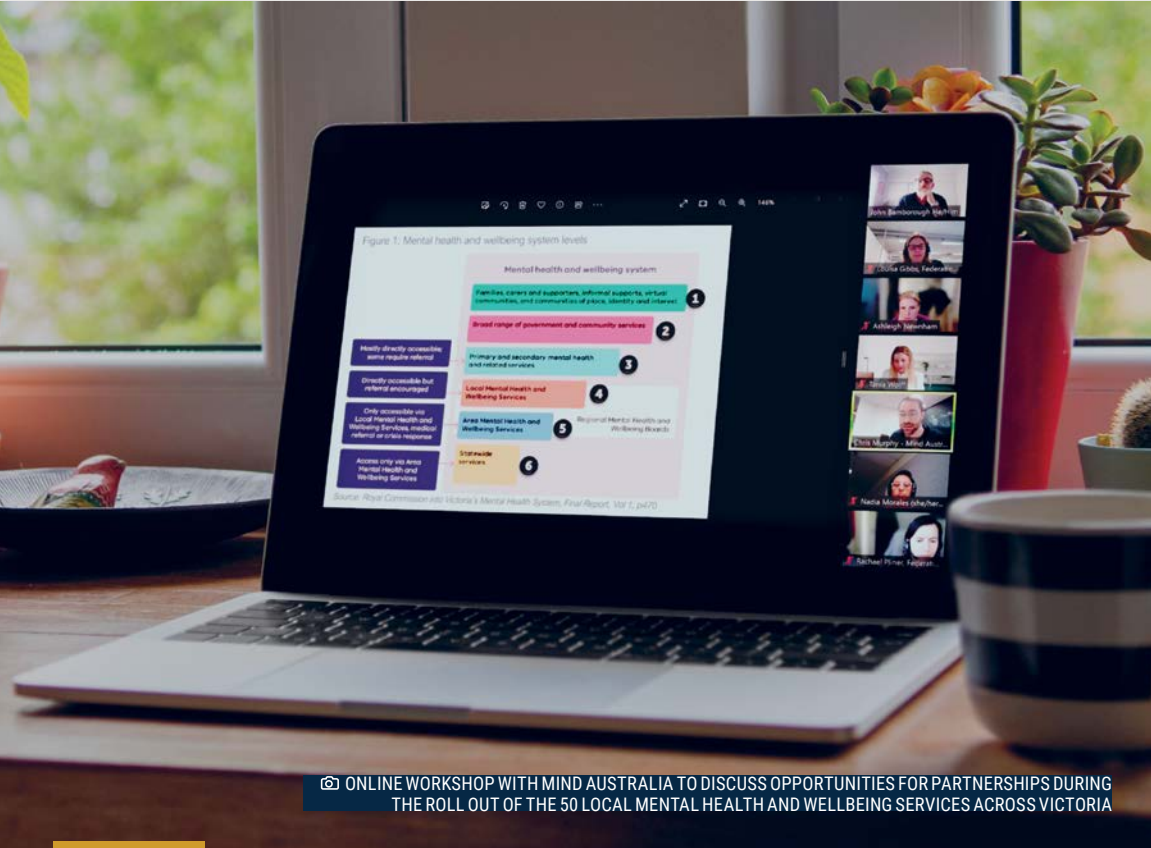
THE FEDERATION PLAYS A LEADING, CONVENING OR SUPPORT ROLE AS NEEDED FOR FEDERATION WORKING GROUPS, NETWORKS AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE WHENEVER THERE IS A DESIRE FROM OUR MEMBER COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES TO COLLABORATE TOGETHER (AND IN BROADER COALITIONS) ON ISSUES OF PRACTICE OR POLICY.



RACHAEL PLINER, MANAGER, POLICY AND
ADVOCACY, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE 10-YEAR PLAN

During 2022-2023, the Federation supported 27 working groups, networks and communities of practice. This involved:

- ▼ Undertaking a review and refresh of the existing working groups and supporting the creation of three new groups: Policy and Advocacy Network, Family Law Network, and Criminal Law Network.
- ▼ Facilitating and leading practice working groups, such as the Communications Network and the Professional Standards and Support Committee where the Federation staff have the technical expertise to guide the group actively.
- ▼ Participating in working groups led by Community Legal Centre staff who are subject matter experts on specific issues. We provided logistical or secretarial support as appropriate to ensure all interested Community Legal Centres were able to participate in the working groups they were interested in.
- ▼ Amplifying the impact of working groups through the Federation's advocacy channels with government; and through information sharing with all Members through forums such as Members' Meetings and our fortnightly newsletter Community Law News.



MENTAL HEALTH WORKING GROUP

CO-CONVENED BY SARAH LEFEVRE, SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER AND RACHAEL PLINER, MANAGER, POLICY AND ADVOCACY

When the Minister for Mental Health, James Merlino announced the Victorian Government’s 2022 funding response to the Royal Inquiry into Mental Health, he said “Building our mental health system from the ground up is a once-in-a-generation reform that will change lives and save lives.”³ One of these reforms is the establishment of 50 Local Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services across the State.

The research is clear that legal supports provided in an integrated manner with other supports will deliver better outcomes for people experiencing mental ill health and psychological distress.

This year, the Federation’s Mental Health Working Group built on its previous work of designing an integrated model of practice that could be implemented in the 50 Local Services, by learning more about the tender process for awarding the contracts to operate the Local Services.

The Working Group ran workshops with community mental health service providers to build relationships across the sector. This resulted in the establishment of a number of partnerships on tenders to manage the Local Services.

The Federation also continued to advocate to the Department of Health and the Department of Justice and Community Safety for increased inclusion of legal services in the design model.

3 Press Release: Premier the Hon Dan Andrews, A Mental Health System To Work For Every Victorian (2022), premier.vic.gov.au/mental-health-system-work-every-victorian

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

CO-CONVENED BY TANIA MCKENNA, NORTHERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND JACINTA MALONEY, VICTORIA LEGAL AID

The Community Development and Community Legal Education Working Group (CD & CLE Working Group) is a Federation working group for people involved in the legal assistance sector, community development and in community legal education, including lawyers, educators and advocates.

Membership of the working group is broad, and includes representatives from Community Legal Centres, Victoria Legal Aid, Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner, Victoria Law Foundation, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Aged Care Justice and the Victorian Ombudsman. The diverse membership offers a wealth of experience and breadth of perspectives to this dynamic working group.

The CD & CLE Working Group meets twice a month to provide peer support for those working in community development and community legal education. Members are encouraged to share information and resources, enhance cross-sector collaboration, and develop and explore innovative joint projects based on community participation and consultation. The working group also organises and encourages participation in professional development opportunities, such as the CD & CLE Working Group forum, which is an annual professional development day for working group members and the sector.





THE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

CONVENED BY KATIE WAND, SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS ADVISER

The Communications Network is a Federation community of practice that supports Members to build the community legal sector's collective voice and increase communications capacity across Community Legal Centres in Victoria. Meetings occur on a monthly basis and are an opportunity for Members to showcase campaigns, share communications 'tricks and tips', and to encourage support from other Members on media and communications initiatives when appropriate.

The Communications Network involves over a third of Victoria's Community Legal Centres. The Communications Network exists to support all Members, but is a particularly valuable resource for Community Legal Centres with little or no communications resourcing who want to build up communications skills and capacity within their team.

This year, the Communications Network also supported the roll out of the Your Right to Ask public education campaign. This important campaign developed by the Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner in consultation with legal agencies (including the Federation), has been designed to ensure all users of legal services - whether public or private - are empowered to know about their rights when engaging a lawyer.

VICTORIAN EMPLOYMENT LAW WORKING GROUP

CONVENED AND CHAIRED BY JENNIFER JONES, WESTJUSTICE, WITH SECRETARIAT SUPPORT FROM HEATHER BELL, JUSTICE CONNECT

Workplace exploitation is widespread, and many Community Legal Centres provide services for clients regarding unfair dismissals, wage theft, sexual harassment, discrimination, sham contracting, and workplace injury. The Victorian Employment Law Working Group was established to bring together the Victorian community and legal assistance sectors to improve employment outcomes, enhance the protection of worker rights, and increase the awareness and effectiveness of employment laws.

It does this by:

- ▼ Creating a space for sharing information, professional knowledge and skills relating to employment law services, and for undertaking professional development
- ▼ Building a shared understanding of the employment law needs of vulnerable workers in Victoria and consolidating a joint approach to meeting these needs
- ▼ Advocating for systemic change to improve employment outcomes for vulnerable workers in Victoria.

In 2022–2023, the group held continuing professional development sessions on a wide range of topics including modern slavery, sex work law reform, the High Court decisions of *Jamsek* and *Personnel Contracting*, recovery of underpayments, human centered service design, and workers compensation. It also progressed its strategic advocacy in relation to wage theft, gig economy reforms, and the costs model for Federal sexual harassment and discrimination matters, and submitted a number of joint submissions to the Federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.



SMART JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

CO-CONVENED BY ELENA PAPPAS, LAW AND ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR WOMEN, AND SARAH LEFEVRE, SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER

The Smart Justice Coalition for Women has continued to advocate for criminal justice reform. This coalition includes a broad range of 38 members from the legal, community, health and academic sectors and focuses on reducing the criminalisation of women in Victoria.

For a number of years, women have been the fastest growing cohort in Australian prisons. The number of women in Victorian prisons almost doubled between June 2007 and June 2019 and almost tripled for Aboriginal women.⁴

Women have specific, gendered pathways to criminalisation and imprisonment. Between 70 and 90 per cent of women in prison experienced trauma and abuse before entering prison. Women are more likely to be criminalised due to minor offences associated with drug dependence or poverty.

Smart Justice for Women advocated for key reforms to reverse the increasing incarceration of women. Throughout 2022–2023, the coalition played a critical role in highlighting the plight of women in prison and advancing reforms through its contributions to inquiries and reviews, including bail reform and implementation of key recommendations arising from the Inquiry into Children Affected by Parental Incarceration.

The Coalition released its Policy Platform 2022–2024: *Reducing the criminalisation of women in Victoria* which sets out its key reform priorities. Smart Justice For Women hosted a webinar during Law Week on the harmful impact of Victoria's bail laws and why they need to change with expert panelists: Nerita Waight (Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service), Karen Fletcher (Executive Officer, Flat Out) and Elena Pappas (Chief Executive Officer, Law and Advocacy Centre for Women).

4 Corrections Victoria, Annual Prisoner Statistical Profile, June 2019.



PREPARING FOR CLIMATE CRISES AND DISASTERS WITH COMMUNITIES

Climate change is increasingly impacting the everyday lives of the people in the communities we work with. For people already experiencing legal challenges, climate events such as fires, floods, droughts and rising temperatures can exacerbate pre-existing legal issues. For others, the impact of climate change may bring about their first experience of a legal challenge.

The reality of accelerating climate change means that communities and laws must adapt.

Recognising this, Community Legal Centres are innovatively applying their unique legal and social expertise to support communities to build resilience and adapt to climate change impacts. Community Legal Centres strive to embed climate justice in their work and communities, and to respond to climate impacts in an integrated and holistic way.

During the devastating 2022 floods in Victoria, specialist Community Legal Centres offered vital support to communities in complex areas of the law, and place-based Community Legal Centres in affected areas were able to provide localised and integrated services to those seeking climate justice.

The flooding events brought into focus the urgent need for climate preparedness, and for laws that are fit-for-purpose in our changing climate.

In response to the increasing demand from Community Legal Centres to deepen their expertise and leadership capacity in disaster response and recovery, the Federation increased its focus on strengthening the sector's preparedness and resilience to climate impacts during 2022–2023.

The Federation worked closely with Members who were providing services on the ground during and after the flooding events that occurred across Victoria in 2022. This included both place-based and specialist Community Legal Centres.

OUR IMPACT

- ▼ Listening to the experiences of Community Legal Centres in disaster-affected regions and their clients, the Federation laid the case for legislative changes to ensure that all Victorian communities are better prepared for climate impacts in the future.
- ▼ The Federation supported Community Legal Centres involved in the flood response by providing technical expertise, advocating for funding, and connecting Members to enhance their responses to the disaster.
- ▼ Through successful funding advocacy with government and philanthropic organisations, the Federation was able to increase the work of Community Legal Centres in the climate justice and disaster response space during 2022–2023.

© ANN SPITTLES, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES BENDIGO, PRUE BAGLEY, ARC JUSTICE, PETER COLES, ARC JUSTICE, DR BRONWYN LAY, CLIMATE JUSTICE AND DISASTER RESPONSE LEAD AND SHARON KEITH, DISASTER LEGAL HELP VICTORIA UNDERTAKING COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN FLOOD IMPACTED ROCHESTER

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES RESPONDING TO THE 2022 FLOODS

- ▼ ARC Justice: Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre and Goulbourn Valley Community Legal Centre
- ▼ Consumer Action Law Centre
- ▼ Inner Melbourne Community Legal Centre
- ▼ Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre
- ▼ Social Security Rights Victoria
- ▼ Tenants Victoria
- ▼ Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- ▼ WEstjustice
- ▼ Women's Legal Service Victoria

Throughout the year, the Federation actively supported Community Legal Centres to develop skills, strengthen their internal structures, build networks and to initiate innovative responses to disaster impacted communities. Importantly, it enabled systemic climate justice through its advocacy.

The Federation convened the Disaster and Climate Justice Working Group, which brought Members together to share knowledge in climate and disaster law.

THE FEDERATION MADE ITS SUBMISSION TO THE VICTORIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY INTO THE 2022 FLOODING EVENT IN VICTORIA.

We also participated in numerous consultations with key decision makers from government, emergency management agencies, peak bodies and other industries throughout the year.



DISASTER LEGAL HELP VICTORIA PARTNERSHIP

Disaster Legal Help Victoria (DLHV) is a partnership between the Federation, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Justice Connect, Victoria Legal Aid, Law Institute of Victoria and the the Victorian Bar Association. It connects communities with legal help for problems related to disasters.

In 2022–2023 the Federation met with DLHV partners on a weekly basis to convey the needs, experiences and learnings of Community Legal Centres in disaster-affected regions. We also assisted DLHV to coordinate services and outreach to Community Legal Centres, supported monitoring and evaluation processes, and contributed to DLHV’s community legal education program.

CLIMATE JUSTICE LEGAL PROJECT

The Climate Justice Legal Project is an innovative partnership between the Federation, Environmental Justice Australia and the Climate Council that seeks to illuminate the connection between climate change and social inequality.

We know that the impact of climate change is disproportionately felt by people already experiencing hardship and marginalisation. The Climate Justice Legal Project sets out to amplify the unheard voices of people and communities impacted by the climate crisis, and to empower them to advocate and litigate for climate justice. It does this through working with community lawyers to identify climate impact trends, building community resilience, and drawing attention to the gaps and flaws in current systems as a first step in advocating for change.

During the year, the Climate Justice Legal Project partners signed an MOU and commenced implementation of a project plan to undertake an ambitious and important program of work, including participating in the delivery of a climate justice masterclass at the National Community Legal Centre Conference.



FUNDING FOR STRENGTHENING PLACE-BASED RESILIENCE IN YARRA RANGES AND CAMPASPE COMMUNITIES PROJECT

There is opportunity and potential for place-based and community-led initiatives to address the climate crisis from the bottom up. In June 2023, Commonwealth Government’s National Emergency Management Agency awarded \$1.8 million to the Strengthening Place-Based Resilience in Yarra Ranges and Campaspe Communities Project. The project, which will be co-delivered by Jesuit Social Services’ Centre for Just Places, ARC Justice: Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre, Eastern Community Legal Centre, and the Federation, will build resilience to extreme climate events through collaborative action between local community-based organisations.

SECTOR DATA SNAPSHOT

JULY 2022 TO JUNE 2023

On page 40 we talk about the Federation’s role in supporting individual Community Legal Centres to record clean and comparable data on their services and clients.

Due to the existing limitations in sector-wide data capture, the information presented in this sector snapshot is the aggregation of just 35 of Victoria’s 47 Community Legal Centres, making up 76 per cent of our overall membership. As a result, the figures provided are an underrepresentation of the Victorian community legal sector’s true impact on the lives and wellbeing of Victorians.

CLIENTS SERVED BY COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

10.3% WERE CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE (UNDER 25)



7.8% WERE OLDER AUSTRALIANS (OVER 65 FOR NON-INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AND OVER 50 FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS)



68.1% WERE WOMEN | 31.4% WERE MEN | 0.5% IDENTIFIED AS ANOTHER GENDER (FIGURES EXCLUDE UNKNOWN OR UNDISCLOSED GENDERS)



37.9% WERE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF FAMILY VIOLENCE



26.8% WERE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY



25.9% WERE SINGLE PARENTS WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN



15.6% DID NOT SPEAK ENGLISH AS THEIR MAIN LANGUAGE



11.4% WERE EXPERIENCING OR WERE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS



4.3% LIVED IN A RURAL OR REMOTE AREA



3.1% IDENTIFIED AS ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER (FIGURE DOES NOT INCLUDE DATA FROM VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE)



MOST COMMON LEGAL PROBLEMS

FAMILY VIOLENCE AND RELATED PROTECTION ORDERS	PARENTING ARRANGEMENTS	TENANCY AND HOUSING ISSUES	FINES AND INFRINGEMENTS	EMPLOYMENT
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121,967* LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDED TO VICTORIANS BY COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

SERVICES PROVIDED

→ 48,712 LEGAL ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

→ 17,566 DUTY LAWYER SERVICES IN COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

→ 8,490 LEGAL CASEWORK AND REPRESENTATION SERVICES

→ 42,238 LEGAL INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

→ 3,643 SERVICES TO COMMUNITIES INCLUDING COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

→ 1,282 HOLISTIC SUPPORT SERVICES FROM SOCIAL WORKERS, FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS, AND OTHER MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROFESSIONALS EMBEDDED IN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

*FIGURE FOR 36 OF VICTORIA'S 47 COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES. ACTUAL SECTOR-WIDE FIGURE IS HIGHER



“GREAT THINGS ARE COMING” – A PERFECT T-SHIRT SLOGAN FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE 10-YEAR PLAN

INCREASED DEMAND SINCE LAST FINANCIAL YEAR

9.7x HIGHER FOR OFFENCES AGAINST GOVERNMENT PROCEDURES AND SECURITY (INCLUDING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN FINES)

6.5x INCREASE IN BURGLARY ISSUES

3x MORE DRUG OFFENCES

3x MORE PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES

2.5x MORE ROBBERY OFFENCES

1.5 M+ USES OF ONLINE SELF-HELP TOOLS PRODUCED BY VICTORIAN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES IN 2022-2023

EXAMPLES OF ONLINE TOOLS AND INFORMATION ACCESSED

→ WESTJUSTICE'S SUITE OF LEARNING MODULES ON ECONOMIC VIOLENCE AND FINANCIAL ABUSE

→ MOONEE VALLEY LEGAL SERVICE'S FINEFIXER, WHICH HELPS PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR OPTIONS WHEN THEY HAVE RECEIVED A FINE

→ ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE'S GUIDE FOR APPLYING FOR A PERMANENT VISA

→ INTOUCH'S EDUCATIONAL VIDEO FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH MEN WHO USE VIOLENCE

→ NORTHERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE'S GUIDE FOR WRITING FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION ORDERS



CORRINA GRAHAM, MALLEE FAMILY CARE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND RUTH FOX, INTOUCH MULTICULTURAL CENTRE AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE 10-YEAR PLAN

THE FEDERATION 2022-2023



DELIVERED 22 TRAININGS AND 10 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS WITH 947 REGISTRATIONS



FUNDED 28 MEMBERS TO ACCESS TRANSLATION INTERPRETER SERVICES (12 SPECIALIST AND 16 PLACE-BASED SERVICES)



HOSTED 2 ROUNDTABLES FOR MEMBERS WITH THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL



MADE 21 SUBMISSIONS TO INFLUENCE LAW AND POLICY REFORM



MET WITH 10 MEMBERS OF THE VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT, AND HAD MORE THAN 15 ADDITIONAL MEETINGS WITH STATE AND FEDERAL MINISTERIAL ADVISERS



INVITED 28 EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS TO MEMBER MEETINGS



FUNDED 46 EPISODES OF 'DONE BY LAW' ON 3CR



SHARED 23 MEMBER E-NEWSLETTERS (WITH LEGISLATIVE REFORMS, ADVOCACY AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES)



SUPPORTED 30 MEMBERS TO IMPLEMENT MODERN CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS



SUPPORTED 27 WORKING GROUPS, NETWORKS & COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

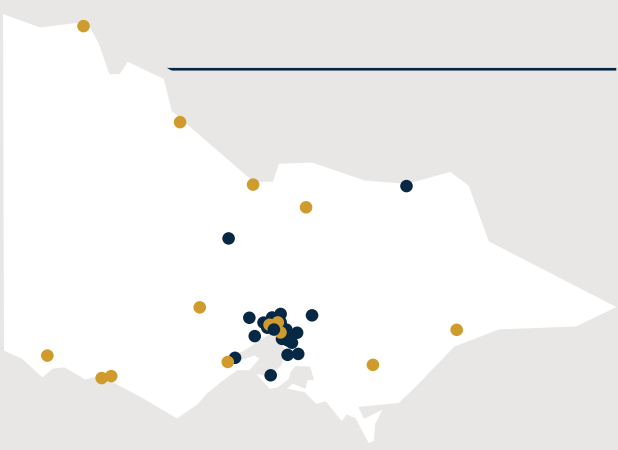


ASSESSED AND ACCREDITED 7 MEMBERS TO PHASE 3 OF THE NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SCHEME

47 COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AND ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICES WORKING TOGETHER FOR A FAIR AND JUST VICTORIA

MEMBERS OF THE FEDERATION

- 21 PLACE-BASED SERVICES
- 26 SPECIALIST SERVICES INCLUDING 2 ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICES
- 68% METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE-BASED
- 32% PERI-URBAN-BASED OR IN REGIONAL VICTORIA
- 51.1% OFFERING STATEWIDE SERVICES



BUILDING CONNECTIONS

WHEN PEOPLE ASK WHAT A TYPICAL DAY IS LIKE FOR A WORKER AT A COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE, THE RESPONSE IS USUALLY THAT THERE IS NO TYPICAL DAY. THAT WAS CERTAINLY THE CASE IN SEPTEMBER WHEN 20 VICTORIAN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE CEOS MET UP FOR A DAY OF GAMES!

The CEOs spent the day with Mark Collard, a leading experiential trainer who has worked with more than 100,000 people across 11 countries. Mark is an expert at helping leaders design and deliver programs that make a difference in the lives and performance of their teams.

One of the repeated themes that came out through the 10-Year Plan consultations was that Community Legal Centres are stronger, able to accomplish more, and achieve better results when we collaborate and work together. This is true for the quality of our programs, our ability to attract funding and our success in advocating for law reform.

Collaboration is key to a strong, sustainable and vibrant community legal sector in the future. But how can we do this effectively when we are a sector full of diverse interests and strengths?

Mark led a 'Building Connections' workshop to give the CEOs space to connect meaningfully together. Through interactive and experiential group games and exercises that challenged CEOs to take risks, problem solve, and develop personal relationships, the CEOs interacted, shared and built trust, amplifying connections across the state – whilst also having lots of fun along the way.

OUR IMPACT:

The Federation brought together Community Legal Centre CEOs from around the state for a Building Connections Workshop, which has been a catalyst for more confident, honest and creative discussions around collaboration.



PROUDLY PART OF A MOVEMENT FOR

CEOs FROM VICTORIAN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AT THE BUILDING CONNECTIONS WORKSHOP



DR BRONWYN LAY, CLIMATE JUSTICE AND DISASTER RESPONSE LEAD, SARAH LEFEVRE, SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER, LINDA LOVEDER, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CEO AND BOARD, FEDERAL ATTORNEY-GENERAL THE HON MARK DREYFUS KC MP AND KIMBERLY YEUNG, QUALITY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT OFFICER AT THE TIM MCCOY DINNER

A VOICE FOR JUSTICE

WORKING WITH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO ADVANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our elected parliamentarians have the power to implement the legislative change that we want to see. Consequently, the Federation works actively with Attorneys-General, Ministers and MPs to advance social justice critical to the community legal sector and the communities we work with.

This has included the continuation of the highly useful roundtables between the Victorian Attorney-General, Jaclyn Symes, and the community legal sector. The roundtables provided an opportunity for the sector to showcase innovative programs, share insights about how current laws, policies and systems are impacting their communities and engage in dialogue around achieving systemic change.



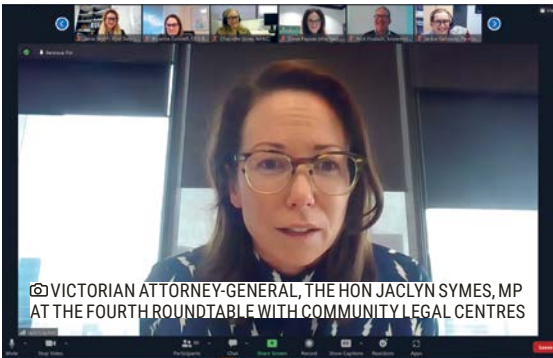
MARIKA MANIOUDAKIS, EASTERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE, LOUISA GIBBS, CEO, THE HON JOHN PESUTTO MP, LEADER OF THE VICTORIAN OPPOSITION, MEL DYE, SOUTHSIDE JUSTICE, AND MICHAEL O'BRIEN MP, VICTORIAN SHADOW ATTORNEY

At the fourth roundtable in August 2022, Community Legal Centres had an opportunity to learn more about the Attorney-General's journey to assuming her current political role, the hurdles she faced along the way and her vision for the future. There was also an opportunity for Community Legal Centres to engage in dialogue about key social justice issues, heading into the November election, including implementing a whole of system approach in response to family violence, raising the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 in Victoria, and investing in self-determination for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

At the fifth roundtable with the Attorney-General in June 2023, the theme for the session was opportunities for civil law reform. The Infringements Working Group presented key reforms needed when imposing fines on people experiencing hardship. This included binding enforcement review for people presenting with special circumstances, people working off court fines by partaking in therapeutic activities and how to respond more effectively to victim survivors who have been unfairly held responsible for traffic fines caused by their abusive partner.

The Tenancy Coordination Group highlighted key reforms to the way residential tenancies matters are dealt with at VCAT and the need for improved responses to family violence.

Recognising the need for integrated community legal assistance in the roll-out of the new Local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services across Victoria, Community Legal Centres showcased effective examples of existing partnerships with mental health services. These examples showed how health justice partnerships and integrated programs in the mental health area can achieve better legal and wellbeing outcomes for people experiencing mental ill health and psychological distress.



VICTORIAN ATTORNEY-GENERAL, THE HON JACLYN SYMES, MP AT THE FOURTH ROUNDTABLE WITH COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

WE THANK THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND HER TEAM FOR JOINING IN SUCH ENGAGING AND FRUITFUL DISCUSSIONS AT THE ROUNDTABLES. THIS HAS BEEN ENORMOUSLY BENEFICIAL AS WE WORK TOGETHER TOWARDS A SHARED VISION TO REDUCE INEQUALITY AND IMPROVE THE LIVES OF VICTORIANS.

It is important for the Federation to engage across the political spectrum to ensure that all politicians can be engaged on the issues that are important to the community legal sector. The Federation works with Member Community Legal Centres to arrange strategic meetings to share policy priorities. In 2022-2023, this included meetings with portfolio Ministers and Shadow Ministers and other members of both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council from government, the opposition and the cross bench.

A key advocacy strategy in 2022-2023 was to engage with existing and former cross-benchers to draw on their expertise to better understand how to influence the government and parliamentary decision making.

The Smart Justice for Women co-chairs had the privilege of meeting with Rod Barton and Fiona Patten, former MPs and influential cross-benchers who played a significant role in progressing important inquiries and reforms during their terms in Parliament. Rod and Fiona have been integral in developing advocacy strategies to target key decision makers and exert influence in the reform process.

The Federation and Smart Justice for Women also met with members from the Legalise Cannabis Party, Victorian Greens Party and the Animal Justice Party to advocate for bail reform in line with the community legal sector's position.



FEDERATION STAFF WITH FORMER VICTORIAN CROSSBENCHER FIONA PATTEN

DRIVING JUSTICE REFORMS FOR VICTIM SURVIVORS

©KIMBERLY YEUNG, QUALITY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT OFFICER, ANGELA MCCORRIE, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE COO, NICOLE BURNARD, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CEO AND SIMON KUUT, QUALITY AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT MANAGER ON THE STEPS OF VICTORIA'S PARLIAMENT HOUSE

There has been significant reform in Victoria to improve justice responses for victim survivors following a number of important inquiries.⁵ The Federation has been integral in elevating the voices of the community legal sector and the communities we serve in driving meaningful change for victim survivors.

It is well recognised that family violence is a key driver of legal need and can result in victim survivors having multiple compounding legal issues.⁶ There is also a strong correlation between experiences of crime and legal need with studies showing the likelihood of having civil legal issues increased by 192 per cent for victims of crime.⁷ Improving justice responses for victim survivors has been a key reform priority for the Federation across the following critical areas: family violence, family law, sexual consent laws and victim's compensation.

⁵ See for example: Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016), *Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan 2020-2023*, the Victorian Law Reform Commission's report into *Improving Justice Responses to Sexual Offences* (2021).
⁶ For example, Victim survivors of family violence have been found to be 10 times more likely to face legal problems compared with the general population. See: Christine Coumarelos. *Quantifying the legal and broader life impacts of domestic and family violence in Justice Issues*, Paper 32, The Law and Justice Foundation NSW (2019).
⁷ The Centre for Innovative Justice, *Strengthening Victoria's Victim Support System: Victim Services Review*, (2020), p. 147.

KEY ADVOCACY AND IMPACT

Strengthening system responses to family violence:

- ▼ Contributing to the development of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2023 and the related action plans and elevating the critical role legal services play in supporting victim survivors of family violence.
- ▼ Strengthening system responses to coercive control, including contributing to the development of the National Principles to Address Coercive Control.
- ▼ Ensuring key Royal Commission priorities are being implemented effectively through our contributions to the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's reviews.
- ▼ Advocating for the roll-out of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)-aligned training for the legal assistance sector to improve risk assessment and safety outcomes for victim survivors.
- ▼ Advocating for Victoria Police to address the misidentification of victim survivors as perpetrators as part of the Family Violence Justice Advocacy Network – a broad coalition of family violence and legal services.
- ▼ Contributing to the development of the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality where we emphasised the critical need to address structural inequalities for women, implementing gender responsive budgeting and reducing violence against women.

Improving justice responses for victim survivors of sexual violence:

- ▼ Advocating for law reform to strengthen consent laws and ensure victim survivors have access to independent legal assistance in Victoria and nationally through contributions to various consultations.
- ▼ Driving other policy changes, such as raising community awareness around sexual violence and consent education in schools, that operate alongside legislative changes.
- ▼ Advising government on the design of a specialist legal service for victim survivors of sexual assault to ensure it is holistic, trauma-informed and culturally safe.

Reforming the family law system to improve safety for victim survivors and their children:

- ▼ Leading the sector response to proposed family law changes to improve safety for victim survivors of family violence and their children.
- ▼ This included advocating for the removal of the principle of equal shared parental responsibility, improving the children's best interest factors and strengthening the role of independent children's lawyers. The Federal Government introduced the removal of the principle of equal shared parental responsibility in March 2023.

Leadership roles:

- ▼ The Federation has supported the design and roll-out of key state-wide programs. This includes the legal services in the Legal Assistance in the Orange Door pilot project which seeks to increase integration of legal assistance within the family violence support system.
- ▼ The Federation has continued to support the roll-out of the Pre-Court Engagement/Early Resolution Service and the Specialist Family Violence Court model at Magistrates' Courts across Victoria to improve victim survivors' experiences of navigating the family violence intervention order process at court.
- ▼ The Federation has supported the establishment of the Victims Legal Service which expands the support available to victims of crime seeking financial assistance.
- ▼ The Federation has continued to co-chair the Family Violence Legal Assistance Working Group with the Department of Justice and Community Safety and represent the community legal sector as an appointed member on the Victorian Government's Family Violence Reform Advisory Group.
- ▼ The Federation has represented the community legal sector at key forums and advocating for reform priorities as a member of the Victorian Government's Family Violence Working Groups, the Magistrate Court's Family Violence Committee and the Victim Legal Services Working Group.



SARAH LEFEVRE, SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER AND LOUISA GIBBS, CEO, VISITED WANGARATTA TO SUPPORT ADVOCACY BY ALISON MAHER, SARAH RODGERS AND JODIE WELLS, HUME-RIVERINA COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE FOR A SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE COURT IN NORTH-EASTERN VICTORIA

ADVOCATING FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE AT SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE COURTS

The Federation continued to advocate with Community Legal Centres for funding to be provided for legal services at seven Specialist Family Violence Courts (SFVCs) in Victoria.

SFVCs improve the safety of victim survivors of family violence and strengthen accountability mechanisms for people who use family violence through the court process. On-site legal services at SFVCs play an important role in providing victim-survivors with a more intensive, specialist and therapeutic service, embedding trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approaches to help Victorians who have been affected by family violence.

The Federation and a coalition of Members presented the case for funding for legal assistance at SFVCs, using our networks to leverage the issue among policymakers and the media.

In May 2023, the Victorian Government announced that victim survivors of family violence will be better supported, with \$22.8 million over four years to provide SFVCs with early resolution and legal assistance at courts in Ringwood, Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Latrobe, Melbourne, Sunshine, Werribee and Geelong.

The funding falls short of what is required to adequately support those going through the courts, but it is a sign that our voices are being heard. We will continue to advocate for additional support for legal assistance at SFVCs, to ensure that all victim survivors of family violence have access to justice.

In September, Sarah Lefevre, Senior Legal Policy Adviser and Louisa Gibbs, CEO, joined the team from Hume-Riverina Community Legal Service at a Roundtable hosted by Tania Maxwell MP in Wangaratta, to urge for the establishment of a SFVC in North-Eastern Victoria.

OUR IMPACT:

We ensured that Community Legal Centre experiences and perspectives were included in the broader work being undertaken around the state to end family and sexual violence.

We amplified the collective voice of Community Legal Centres – and achieved some wins – in calling for better funding for legal assistance services for victim survivors around the state.

We supported the quality of service provision to survivors of family violence through providing sector sharing, learning and training opportunities.

THE FEDERATION SUPPORTS POCCUM'S LAW AS THE BLUEPRINT FOR BAIL REFORM IN VICTORIA

Veronica Marie Nelson was a strong Gunditjmara, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman. Victoria's unfair and discriminatory bail laws put Veronica in prison for minor shop-lifting related charges. Veronica passed away in that prison, alone and isolated from culture and support.

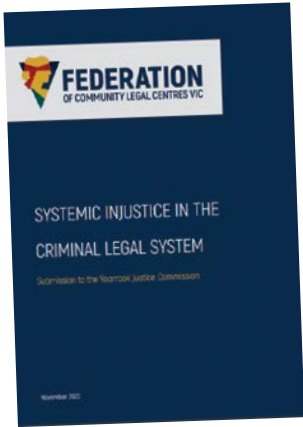
Veronica's nickname was 'Pocum', from the way she used to pronounce 'possum' as a child. Veronica's loved ones have called for urgent changes to the bail laws and have asked that these reforms are referred to as Pocum's Law.

- ▼ The Federation contributed to reform of Victoria's bail laws to address the discriminatory and disproportionate impact of these laws on First Nations people, particularly First Nations women. The Federation has strongly advocated for the implementation of Pocum's Law in full through submissions, media stories and meetings with members of Parliament and government.
- ▼ The Federation contributed to the Yoorrook Justice Commission's inquiry into the systemic injustices faced by First Nations peoples in Victoria's criminal legal system. We joined the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service in calling for the realisation of Aboriginal self-determination in the criminal legal context, addressing systemic racism and focusing on healing over criminalisation.
- ▼ The Federation advised government and advocated for reform in other areas of criminal law. This included minimising the role of police in Victoria's public health response to public intoxication, and opposing the expansion of police powers at police premises and the creation of new indictable offences.

RETHINKING APPROACHES TO THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

The Federation, alongside community legal sector partners, has continued advocating for reform to the criminal legal system.

Too often, Community Legal Centres witness their clients being unnecessarily caught up in the criminal legal system due to poverty, disadvantage and substance dependency. This exacerbates trauma and leads to ongoing cycles of imprisonment. The Federation has continued to work with Members to advance the clear need for investing in early intervention, community-based support and diverting people from the criminal legal system.



FEDERATION SUBMISSION TO THE YOOROOK JUSTICE COMMISSION ON THE SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE IN THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

POLICY FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

As we headed towards the end of 2022, Victoria held its state election. The Federation capitalised on this opportunity by advocating for key commitments required by our political leaders to embed a fairer system in Victoria. Working closely with Members, the Federation released its 2022 election platform, titled *"A fair, inclusive and thriving society for all Victorians."*

The Federation's election priorities were grounded in a core belief that access to a fair and just legal system is at the heart of an equitable community. We drew on Community Legal Centres' collective experience of how unfair laws and unresolved legal issues can have a devastating impact on people's daily lives, including significant financial strain and bankruptcy, physical ill-health, psychological distress, incarceration and homelessness.

To promote our key election asks and build support, we released media statements and met with MPs and advisers from across the political spectrum. This was just the beginning. Following the election, we have used our key election asks to develop a policy platform for 2022-2023 and drive meaningful reform in Victoria. We have continued to meet with MPs across various political parties to advocate for key reform priorities and engage with media. As part of the 10-Year Plan, we will develop a detailed and comprehensive policy platform for the sector to continue this important advocacy.

ELECTION GOALS

Our election platform was underpinned by 11 goals to achieve a fair, inclusive and thriving society for all Victorians:

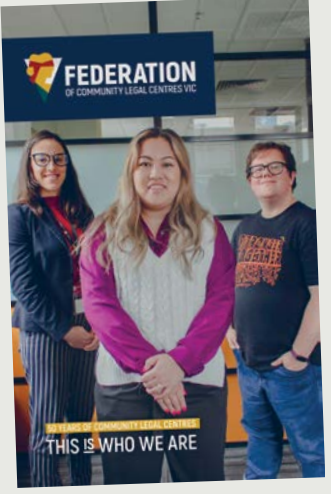
- ▼ Building a resilient and well-resourced community legal sector
- ▼ Ensuring all Victorians have access to affordable and secure housing
- ▼ Implementing a fairer fines system
- ▼ Strengthening consumer protections
- ▼ Reforming laws to stop the criminalisation of poverty and disadvantage
- ▼ Strengthening police accountability
- ▼ Investing in the community rather than prisons and making prisons human rights compliant
- ▼ Improving Victoria's mental health and wellbeing by integrating legal help in the roll out of Victoria's mental health services
- ▼ Ensuring Victorian communities are resilient to the impact of climate change and disasters
- ▼ Increasing safety for victim survivors of family violence
- ▼ Keeping children out of the child protection system and with their families

IN THE MEDIA

Being a trusted and authoritative voice on the legal and social issues that affect our communities is an important role for the Federation to play. As well as linking Members to media opportunities when they are the ones best placed to provide expert opinion, the Federation also continued to advocate for, and speak on behalf of, the sector on issues that affect Victoria's Community Legal Centres. We did this across a range of platforms, including print, online and social media, radio and the Federation's channels. Notable platforms included:

- *The Age newspaper*
- *ABC radio*
- Regional and local news outlets including *Lilydale Star Mail*, *Riverine Herald* and *Campaspe News*
- *Done by Law*, the Federation's weekly podcast hosted by 3CR radio

We also created a key document to help our Members communicate clearly about the work that Community Legal Centres undertake. The document, titled *'50 years of Community Legal Centres – this is who we are'* provides a clear and succinct description of the sector's history, vision, purpose and activities.



Read about the work of the sector 50 years document



©DR BRONWYN LAY, CLIMATE JUSTICE AND DISASTER RESPONSE LEAD, IZZY LYNDON-JAMES, DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, RACHAEL PLINER, MANAGER, POLICY AND ADVOCACY, SARAH LEEVRE, SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER





VICTORIAN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE
STAFF AT THE LAUNCH OF THE 10-YEAR PLAN

SUPPORTING GROWTH

STRENGTHENING OUR WORKFORCE
THROUGH INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

The community legal sector's Workforce Survey conducted by the Victoria Law Foundation and published in 2021 gave us an understanding of our workforce needs, opportunities and challenges.⁸ This has led to a key focus in the sector's 10-Year Plan on building a sustainable workforce that is able to meet the legal needs of Victorians.

The Workforce Survey clearly showed that a career in the community legal sector is meaningful and rewarding, with 90 per cent of respondents reporting a sense of pride when telling others what they do.

So how do we share this message effectively, to promote careers in community law and attract more great people to work in the sector?

By building innovative partnerships with university law schools during 2022–2023, the Federation was able to increase the visibility of career pathways into community law, and to create opportunities that will benefit students, Community Legal Centres, and universities for years to come.

⁸ Jozica J. Kutin, Hugh M. McDonald, Tenielle Hagland, Clare Kennedy and Nigel J. Balmer. *Working in Community Legal Centres in Victoria*, Victoria Law Foundation (2021) victorialawfoundation.org.au/research/projects/community-legal-centres-workforce-project

HAVING A BALL WITH STUDENTS AT LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

It has been many moons since any of the Federation staff attended a university ball, so we were delighted to be invited as special guests to the 2022 La Trobe Law Students Society Ball.

The Law Students Society used the event to raise awareness of the work of Community Legal Centres. Federation CEO Louisa Gibbs gave a short speech about the different ways students support community law and the students raised an incredible \$6,000 to support the Federation's social justice work!

The occasion gave the Federation a fantastic platform to showcase community law as a career pathway for Victorian law students, and was an opportunity for Federation staff to meet prospective community lawyers.



IZZY LYNDON-JAMES, DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS
OFFICER, SARAH LEFEVRE, SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER
AND ROSANNA DI GRAZIA, OFFICE COORDINATOR AT LA
TROBE LAW STUDENTS SOCIETY BALL

COMMUNITY LAW CAREERS ON CAMERA

The University of Melbourne Law School and the Federation put our heads together to find creative ways of attracting students and recent graduates to take up meaningful careers in the community legal sector.

One idea was to create engaging video content that could be shared around the law school, at careers events, by the Federation and online. We invited four community lawyers who are Melbourne Law School alumni into the Melbourne Law School film studio to talk about their work at Community Legal Centres in front of the camera.

The outcome was a brilliant video series that paints a clear picture of life as a community lawyer, addresses real life questions and pre-conceptions about community law, and gives the sector a charmingly human face.

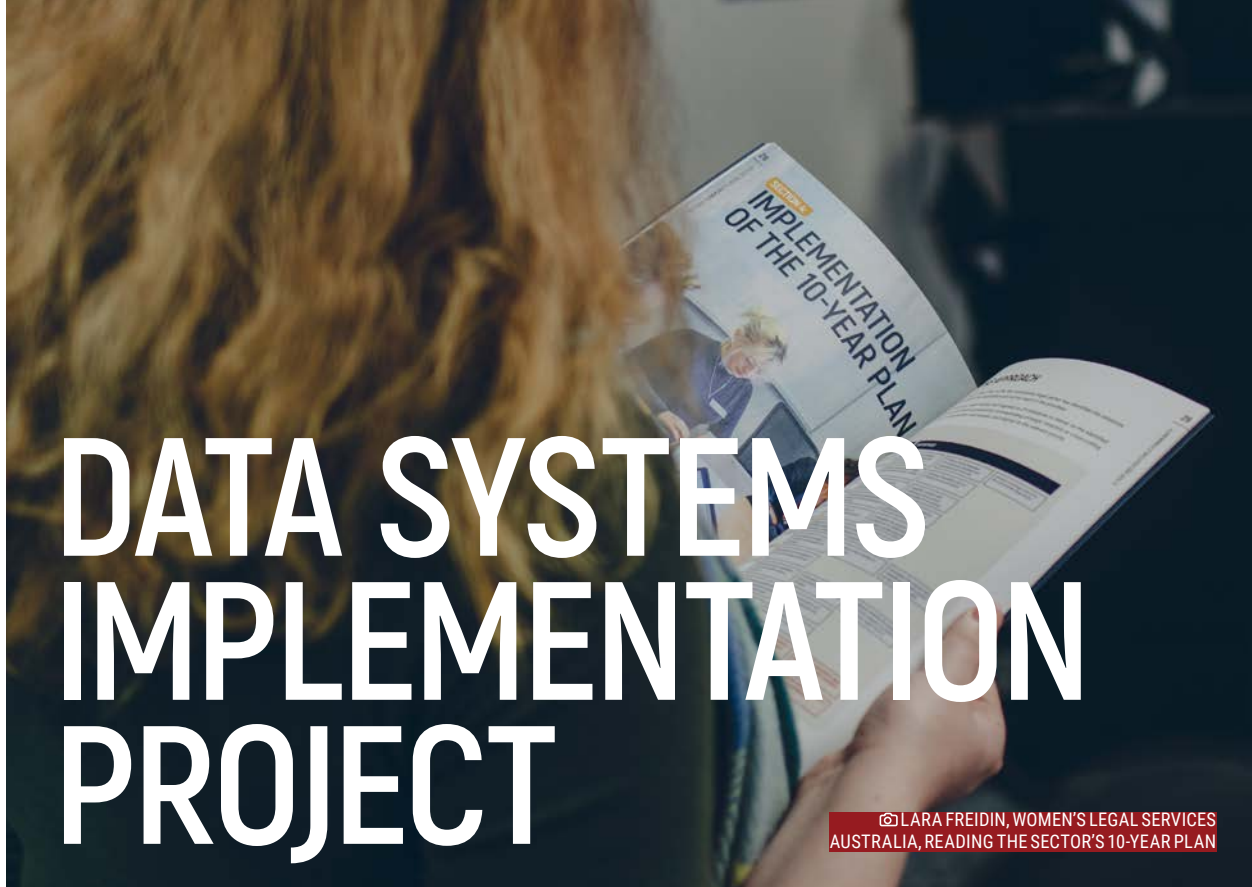
We had the privilege of utilising the Melbourne Law School's exceptional in-house filming and editing talent of Greta Robenstone, who transformed raw video footage into the suite of professional and compelling films.

We would like to thank the University of Melbourne for their participation in the project. We also extend the warmest of thanks to the following community lawyers for the candid, witty and thought-provoking responses they gave during the filming: Elena Pappas, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Law and Advocacy Centre for Women; Connie Chen, Managing Lawyer, Eastern Community Legal Centre; Belinda Lo, Principal Lawyer, Eastern Community Legal Centre; and Tanya Stelmach, Community Lawyer, Whittlesea Community Connections.



BELINDA LO, EASTERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND TANYA STELMACH, WHITTLESEA COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS, DOCUMENTING THEIR JOURNEYS IN COMMUNITY LAW

PROUDLY PART OF A MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE



DATA SYSTEMS IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT

© LARA FREIDIN, WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA, READING THE SECTOR'S 10-YEAR PLAN

Data allows us to make informed decisions, improve processes and solve problems. It is vital for designing systems that work and for implementing evidence-based solutions. To provide quality legal advice and to advocate on behalf of communities, Community Legal Centres rely on data to understand the social and economic context in which they operate.

Data enables Community Legal Centres to understand and meet their clients' needs, identify trends, and allocate resources accordingly. Data also plays an essential role in telling the stories of Community Legal Centres that illustrate the need for funding.

But data capture is not easy, and can be particularly challenging for smaller Community Legal Centres with limited resources.

In 2022–2023 the Federation continued to progress the Data Systems Implementation Project, which was established to improve Community Legal Centres' data capacity, and streamline and standardise their data capture.

DATA SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

CONVENED AND CHAIRED BY TIM MCMAHON, PROJECT MANAGER DATA SYSTEMS

The Federation's Data System Implementation Community of Practice helps Community Legal Centres to implement their legal practice management systems and manage data issues. During 2022–2023, Members and the Federation were able to share their experiences of implementation and the advantages and challenges of the new system at group meetings. They presented on topics including web form integration, improved communications with clients, and their increased capacity to share work and workflows with other Community Legal Centres.

The community of practice also coordinated feedback to the platform developer on suggested system enhancements, and some have already been implemented. The group has helped to coordinate responses to Community Legal Centres Australia on data issues.

IMPLEMENTING A NEW SYSTEM

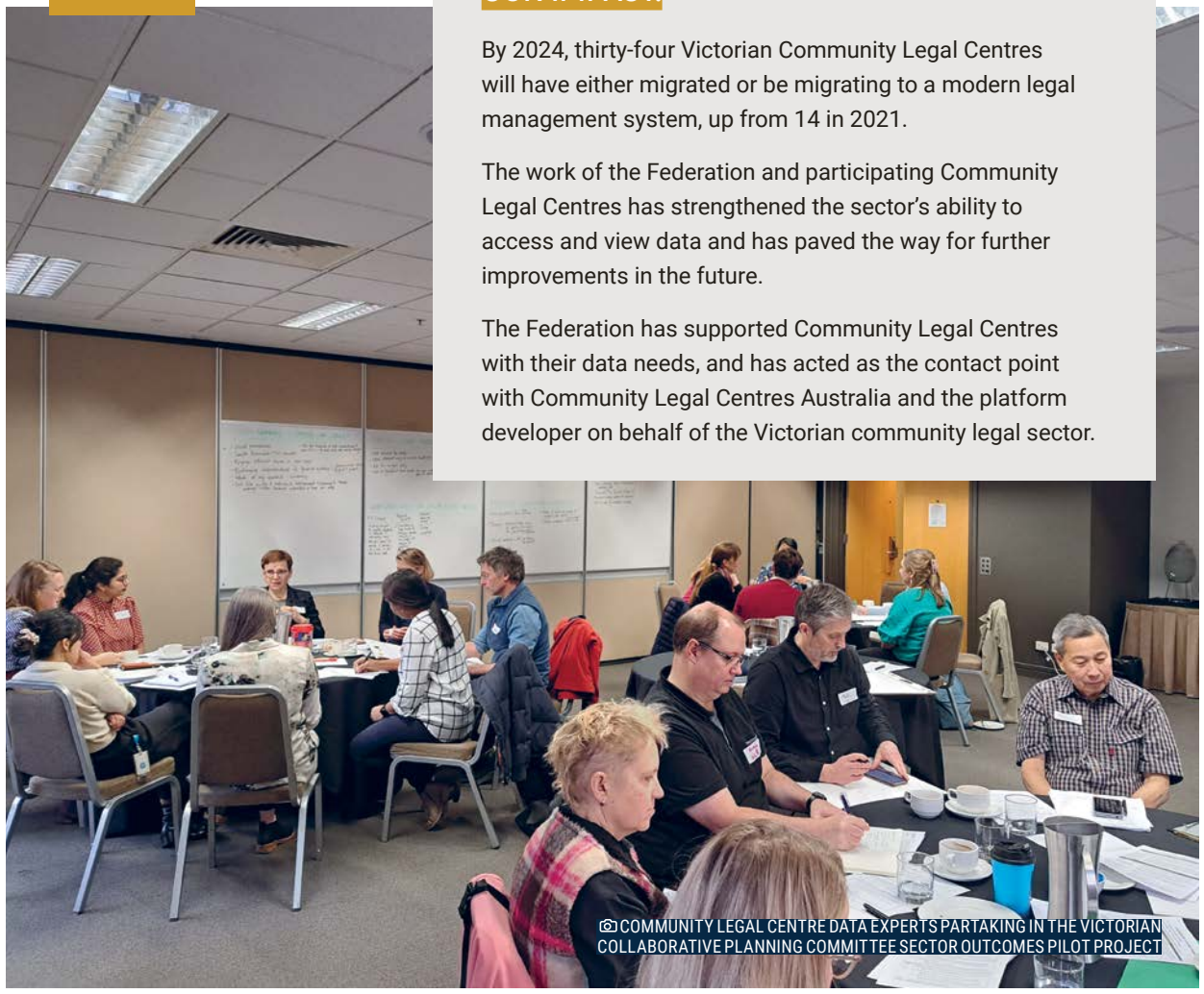
Modern legal practice management software can be used to increase productivity and reduce administration for legal practices. Importantly, it also facilitates and streamlines data capture. Twenty-eight Community Legal Centres across Victoria are currently implementing or integrating legal practice management systems into their operations. These not only support individual Community Legal Centres in their data capture and reporting, but will ultimately aid the sector's ability to aggregate sector-wide data.

SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENTS

The Federation's Implementation Analyst, Skye Forster, provided continuous bespoke support for Community Legal Centres in the process of preparing, implementing and developing the new system. Throughout 2022–2023, Skye advised on change management and assisted with key configuration decisions and data migration. The Federation also supported many Community Legal Centres to report to funders using the new system.

BUILDING A NEW DATA REPOSITORY

The Federation is working with Community Legal Centres Australia to develop a new reporting data repository that, when completed, will be the universal source of reporting data and visualisations for the sector. The Federation continues to work on a model to simplify the flow of data from Victorian Community Legal Centres into the Community Legal Centres Australia reporting repository.



OUR IMPACT:

By 2024, thirty-four Victorian Community Legal Centres will have either migrated or be migrating to a modern legal management system, up from 14 in 2021.

The work of the Federation and participating Community Legal Centres has strengthened the sector's ability to access and view data and has paved the way for further improvements in the future.

The Federation has supported Community Legal Centres with their data needs, and has acted as the contact point with Community Legal Centres Australia and the platform developer on behalf of the Victorian community legal sector.

© COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE DATA EXPERTS PARTAKING IN THE VICTORIAN COLLABORATIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE SECTOR OUTCOMES PILOT PROJECT

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE SUCCESS

CAPACITY BUILDING DELIVERED TO
947 COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND BOARD MEMBERS
UP FROM 795 IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR



THERE'S AN OLD SAYING THAT IF YOU GIVE SOMEONE A FISH, YOU FEED THEM FOR A DAY, BUT IF YOU TEACH THEM HOW TO FISH, YOU FEED THEM FOR A LIFETIME. THE FEDERATION PROUDLY OFFERS MEMBERS WIDE-RANGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEIR WORKERS TO BUILD CAPACITY, STRENGTHEN SKILLS AND DEVELOP PROFESSIONALLY, TO BE EFFECTIVE IN THEIR VARIED ROLES THROUGHOUT THE LIFETIME OF THEIR CAREERS.

This year's capacity development program was characterised by its variety. Covering topics as diverse as governance and media training, to wellbeing and cultural safety, the Federation's training program offered targeted, holistic support that was accessible to all people working in Community Legal Centres, including staff, board members, volunteers and students. The Federation's unique approach to training emphasises both personal and professional growth and aims to create opportunities for development that are not readily available elsewhere.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

REPRESENTATIVES FROM 45 OF 47 MEMBER COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES ATTENDED ONE OR MORE SESSIONS



567 REGISTRATIONS FOR 22 TRAINING SESSIONS

370 REGISTRATIONS FOR 10 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

230 REGISTRATIONS FROM REGIONAL COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES INCLUDING 60 REGISTRATIONS FOR THE CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENT

"I always find the training sessions helpful and informative – thank you!"
-PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

The Federation was approached by a number of different stakeholders wanting to increase proficiency for Community Legal Centre workers on skills relevant to their work. The Magistrates' Court of Victoria, eSafety Commissioner, Commission for Children and Young People, Law Library of Victoria, International Social Service Australia and Victorian Ombudsman all delivered free sessions and offered services to support Members and their clients.

TRAINING OFFERED 2022-2023 BY THE FEDERATION



"Well done on providing a varied and relevant program. It is not so easy to cater to all of the different Community Legal Centres' needs!"
-PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

----->	ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION Victorian Ombudsman
----->	CLIMATE JUSTICE Dr Bronwyn Lay, Federation of Community Legal Centres, Vic
----->	CULTURAL SAFETY Djirra and Koori Heritage Trust
----->	THE DIGITAL LIBRARY Law Library Victoria
----->	ESAFETY – OPPORTUNITIES AND REFERRAL eSafety Commissioner
----->	GOVERNANCE Integrity Governance
----->	INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION International Social Service Australia
----->	MANAGING VICARIOUS TRAUMA knowmore and David Cherry
----->	MEDIA RELEASE WRITING Diane Squires, Federation of Community Legal Centres, Vic
----->	MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID College of Law
----->	PLEA 101 FOR NEW ADVOCATES Magistrates' Court of Victoria
----->	VICTORIA'S 11 CHILD SAFE STANDARDS Commission for Children and Young People
----->	VICTORIAN OMBUDSMAN 101 Victorian Ombudsman

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Federation's annual Continuing Professional Development event took place over 10 sessions in February and March 2023. The sessions provide community lawyers with free, targeted learning and skills to meet their practicing certificate requirements, across all categories of study required by the Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner. Delivered by Community Legal Centres and their partner organisations, all sessions were well attended and were rounded off by vibrant Q&As.

PROTEST LAWS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS Environmental Justice Australia and Human Rights Law Centre	←---
TECHNOLOGY AND CLIENT TRIAGE Northern Community Legal Centre	←---
TRAUMA-INFORMED LEGAL PRACTICE knowmore	←---
ELDER ABUSE; THE WARNING SIGNS IN YOUR LEGAL PRACTICE Senior Rights Victoria	←---
MARAM (FAMILY VIOLENCE MULTI-AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT) FRAMEWORK Eastern Community Legal Centre and Safe + Equal	←---
SEX WORK DECRIMINALISATION AND THE SEX WORKER LEGAL PROGRAM Southside Justice and Vixen	←---
THE MIGRATION ACT AND THE FAMILY VIOLENCE EXEMPTIONS InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence	←---
WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE; TIPS FOR BEST PRACTICE Youthlaw	←---
ADVOCACY IN CASES OF MORTGAGE STRESS WEstjustice	←---
RESEARCH USING ADMINISTRATIVE DATA South-East Monash Legal Service and the Australian Centre for Justice Innovation in the Law Faculty at Monash University	←---

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

"The webinars cover a wide variety of topics, which will assist with identifying issues that may arise in client interviews. I will better know where to refer clients for specific issues."

-PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK



COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Federation values our close relationship with more than 165 Community Legal Centres across Australia, and works collaboratively with the national peak, Community Legal Centres Australia, and the other state peaks.

In March 2023, Community Legal Centres Australia hosted the first National Community Legal Centre Conference in four years in Nipaluna-Hobart. The conference was attended by over 500 delegates from across the country, and included a wide range of network meetings, evening functions, conference sessions and masterclasses.

Federation staff presented at a number of events, including a panel discussion, a masterclass and a network meeting.


At the panel discussion on 'Reimagining a sustainable, resilient and thriving sector', the Federation joined the Executive Director of the Victorian Law Foundation, Lynne Haultain to share findings from the Victorian community legal sector Workforce Survey. The session included reflections on the strength and diversity of the community legal sector workforce, and how the sector can better engage and retain its highly skilled staff.

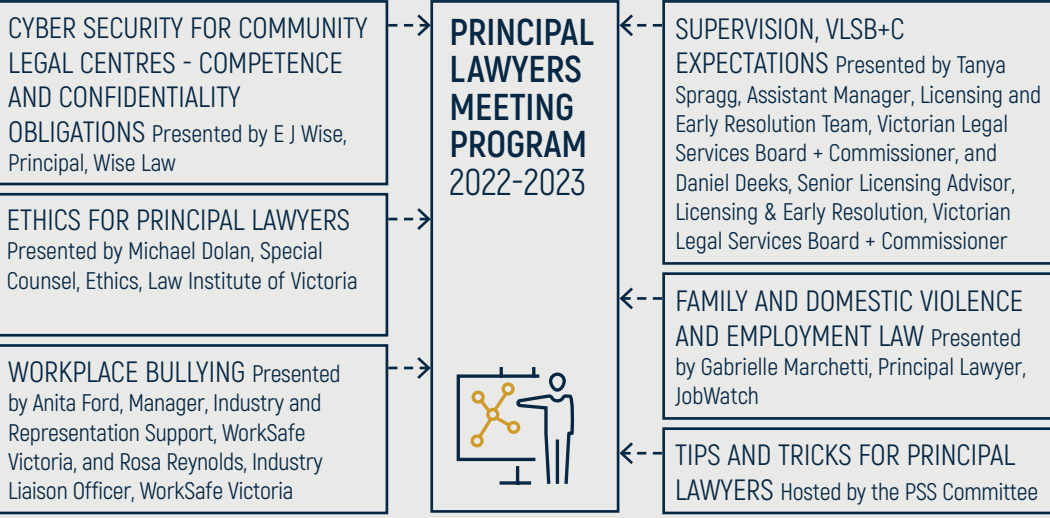
The Federation's Climate Justice and Disaster Response Lead, Dr Bronwyn Lay, presented a Climate Justice Masterclass, which was co-designed with the Climate Justice Legal Project (see page 24). The aims of the masterclass were to upskill Community Legal Centres from around Australia in building resilience to extreme weather events, and to create a forum for Community Legal Centres to share knowledge and learnings. It explored examples of equitable responses to climate change and outlined approaches for Community Legal Centres to achieve climate justice in their communities.

Rachael Pliner, the Federation's Manager, Policy and Advocacy, co-convoked the national Human Rights Network with Sarah Marland, Policy and Advocacy Manager at CLCs NSW. The network focused on how Community Legal Centres could contribute to advocacy for national human rights legislation, including through a national charter. The network also considered other national priorities, including international human rights monitoring, First Nations justice, housing and homelessness, harmonising and improving the family violence system, criminal and youth justice reforms, discrimination and climate justice. Since the conference, the network has joined the call for a national Human Rights Act as part of the Commonwealth Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework.



The Professional Standards and Support (PSS) Committee and the Federation collaborated to hold the Annual Principal Lawyers Meeting in November. This was the first in-person session since 2019 and was kindly hosted at the offices of Holding Redlich. The wide-ranging program was inspired by the Professional Indemnity Insurance report, annual cross-checks and a survey completed by principal lawyers, and was designed to support the learning and development needs of principal lawyers.

 "Until you are actually all in a room together, you forget how good it is meeting in person." - PRINCIPAL LAWYER FEEDBACK



"Every session was interesting and worthwhile and the whole day ran seamlessly. Well done!" - PRINCIPAL LAWYER FEEDBACK

"I thought it was a great event and very well organised. All the topics were relevant." - PRINCIPAL LAWYER FEEDBACK



MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND SUPPORT COMMITTEE MARTIN HA, MARQUITA NOLAN, SOKHA UM, JOANNE CARLTON, REBECCA EDWARDS, MEGAN ROSS, DEBORAH MILLER AND STEPHEN NOWICKI

SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE DELIVERY:

NATIONALLY RECOGNISED ACCREDITATION

Victorians deserve the best possible service when they seek support through a Community Legal Centre.

The National Accreditation Scheme (NAS) is Community Legal Centres Australia's industry-based certification process for Community Legal Centres that assures quality and acts as a framework for organisational risk management. It supports and recognises good practice in the delivery of community legal services, and increases confidence in the sector's operations. Participation in the scheme enables Community Legal Centres to maintain high service standards, and to reflect and develop increasingly effective governance and management practices. Through engaging with the NAS, our Members can improve service delivery and achieve better outcomes for clients and the broader community.

The Federation implements the accreditation process for Victorian Community Legal Centres and makes certification decisions in line with the NAS guidelines.

The Federation team recommenced in-person site visits in January 2023, having shifted online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seven Community Legal Centres were accredited against the NAS in 2022-2023.

The Federation also assists Community Legal Centres with onboarding to the CLCA NAS Portal, which acts as a central repository for resources, guidance and updates on NAS requirements.

The National NAS Review Working Group was established to improve the accreditation process and requirements for Community Legal Centres nationwide. As a member of the working group, the Federation has been instrumental in implementing continuous improvement for the sector. In 2022-23, the working group updated the NAS guidelines and standards. The Federation supported Victorian Community Legal Centres to transition to the updated accreditation process, ensuring that Victorian Community Legal Centres align their operations with the national guidelines.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Professional Standards and Support Committee provides guidance and support for the Federation and the community legal sector in risk management. The committee oversees the cross-check process, in which Community Legal Centres review each other's work to standardise best practice and mitigate risk across the sector. The co-convenors also represent Victorian Community Legal Centres at the National Professional Indemnity Insurance network meetings.

- Martin Ha (Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre)
- Stephen Nowicki (Consumer Action Law Centre)
- Deborah Miller (Eastern Community Legal Centre)
- Megan Ross (Eastern Community Legal Centre)
- John Tadros (Mallee Family Care)
- Joanne Carlton (Moonee Valley Legal Service)
- Marquita Nolan (Northern Community Legal Centre)
- Sokha Um (Peninsula Community Legal Centre)
- Rebecca Edwards (Seniors Rights Victoria/ARC Justice)

OUR IMPACT:

The Federation conducted accreditation at seven Community Legal Centres in 2022-2023.

The Federation provided bespoke support for all Members seeking guidance regarding the NAS process and requirements.

As of 30 June 2023:

- 15 Community Legal Centres are accredited to Phase 3 of the National Accreditation Scheme (Phase 3 builds on compliance, helps Community Legal Centres take on greater ownership of continuous quality improvement, supports early intervention strategies when Community Legal Centres experience organisational change, and acknowledges achievement and high performance)
- 11 Community Legal Centres are in the process of becoming accredited to Phase 3 of the National Accreditation Scheme
- 20 Community Legal Centres are accredited to Phase 2 of the National Accreditation Scheme

THE HEART OF A STRONG COMMUNITY LEGAL FUTURE

At the Federation, we pride ourselves on our commitment to creating a staff culture that is supportive, cohesive and balanced. This commitment is embedded in our recruitment process, which focuses on finding individuals with the right combination of skills, team fit and values alignment.

In 2022–2023 the team said farewell to a few valued staff members who had been with us for some time, all of them progressing to great new professional growth opportunities. We wish them all the best for the future. When one door closes, another opens, and we have been fortunate to have recruited brilliant new staff members, who bring broad experiences and fresh ideas to our growing team.

We restarted our internship program, welcoming three University of Melbourne Juris Doctor students into our team. The interns very capably supported the work of our Policy and Advocacy team and Climate Justice Support Unit, honing their research, writing and analytical skills in a professional setting. The interns reported enjoying the diversity and impact of our work, and being part of our passionate team. The curiosity, openness and fresh perspectives that the interns brought to their work at the Federation contributed positively to the office environment and added value to our work.

We continued to encourage individual and team professional development, supporting staff to undertake training, study, and to attend conferences. The Strengths Program that we embarked on as a whole team centred on professional and personal development. It enabled us to acknowledge, understand, contemplate and utilise our individual and collective strengths.

Our skilled and engaged team remains committed to a strong, capable and trusted Federation that supports and enables our 47 Community Legal Centres and their communities to thrive.

FEDERATION STAFF ON KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST'S 'SCAR TREE WALK'

COLLABORATION WEEKS:

We continued to foster team connection and working collaboratively through two whole team, in-person 'Collaboration Weeks' in October 2022 and May 2023. Collaboration Weeks provided rare, dedicated opportunities for us to strengthen connections, reflect on how we work, build and share knowledge, and to focus on "us" as the Federation team.

Activities included learning more about court-made law plus an excursion to the Magistrate's Court, a workshop to unpack the elements that support successful collaboration, journeying the Koorie Heritage Trust's 'Scar Tree Walk' to understand better the Aboriginal history of the city we live in, and an 'amazing race' through the CBD.



ROHINI THOMAS, SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER, KIMBERLY YEUNG, QUALITY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT OFFICER, SKYE FORSTER, IMPLEMENTATION ANALYST AND SARAH LEFEVRE, SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER, DURING COLLABORATION WEEK IN MAY 2023

OUR TEAM (AS AT 30 JUNE 2023)

Angela McCrorie	Executive Assistant to Chief Operating Officer
Dr Bronwyn Lay	Climate Justice and Disaster Response Lead
Deborah Wilson	Finance Officer (Good Financials)
Gabby Talmadge	Training Coordinator
Isabella Lyndon-James	Digital Communications Officer
Katie Wand	Senior Communications Adviser
Kimberly Yeung	Quality and Program Support Officer
Louisa Gibbs	Chief Executive Officer
Michelle Taylor	Operations Manager
Rachael Pliner	Manager, Policy and Advocacy
Rohini Thomas	Senior Legal Policy Adviser
Rosanna Di Grazia	Office Coordinator
Sarah Lefevre	Senior Legal Policy Adviser
Simon Kuut	Quality and Capacity Development Manager
Skye Forster	Implementation Analyst – Legal Management System
Tanya Sawtell	People and Culture Adviser
Tim McMahon	Data System Project Manager

Thank you to the University of Melbourne (Melbourne Law School) interns who supported our policy work: Aoife Whelan, James Krotsis and Sacha Bolton.

THANK YOU TO OUR FORMER TEAM MEMBERS WHO MADE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORK OF THE FEDERATION AND OUR TEAM CULTURE OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS.



THE FEDERATION'S BOARD CELEBRATING THE LAUNCH OF THE SECTOR'S 10-YEAR PLAN (BRYANNA CONNELL, BARWON COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE, KRISTEN WALLWORK, SOUTH-EAST MONASH LEGAL SERVICE, ELENA PAPPAS, LAW AND ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR WOMEN, DAMIAN STOCK, ARC JUSTICE AND JENNIFER BEVERIDGE, TENANTS VICTORIA)

OUR BOARD (AS AT 30 JUNE 2022)

Chairperson	Kristen Wallwork, South-East Monash Legal Service
Treasurer	Bryanna Connell, Barwon Community Legal Service
Secretary	Chris Povey, Justice Connect
General members	Damian Stock, ARC Justice
	Elena Pappas, Law and Advocacy Centre for Women
	Jennifer Beveridge, Tenants Victoria

Thank you to outgoing Board members Thomas Green (Deloitte Australia) and Jackie Galloway (Peninsula Community Legal Centre) for dedicated years of service to the Federation's governance.

SPONSORSHIP, IN KIND, PRO BONO

Allens	Law Institute of Victoria
City of Melbourne	Maddocks
Gadens	MinterEllison
Holding Redlich	Tenants Victoria
K&L Gates	University of Melbourne
Lander & Rogers	Wisewould Mahony

FUNDERS

Department of Justice and Community Safety
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Victoria Legal Aid

THANK YOU

OUR FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

OUR MEMBERS

AED Legal Centre	Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre (ARC Justice)
Animal Law Institute	Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre	Melbourne University Student Union Legal Service
Ballarat and Grampians Community Legal Service	Mental Health Legal Centre
Barwon Community Legal Service	Monash Law Clinics
Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre	Moonee Valley Legal Service
Consumer Action Law Centre	Northern Community Legal Centre
Disability Discrimination Legal Service	Peninsula Community Legal Centre
Djirra	Refugee Legal
Eastern Community Legal Centre	Seniors Rights Victoria
Emma House Domestic Violence Services	Social Security Rights Victoria
Environmental Justice Australia	South-East Monash Legal Service
First Step Legal Service	Southport Community Legal Service
Fitzroy Legal Service	Southside Justice
Gippsland Community Legal Service	Tenants Victoria
Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre (ARC Justice)	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
Human Rights Law Centre	Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service
Hume Riverina Community Legal Service	West Heidelberg Community Legal Service
Inner Melbourne Community Legal	WEstjustice
inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence	Whittlesea Community Connections
JobWatch	Women's Legal Service Victoria
Justice Connect	Young Workers Centre
knowmore	Youthlaw
Law and Advocacy Centre for Women	



REPRESENTATIVES FROM MEMBER COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES CELEBRATING THE LAUNCH OF THE SECTOR'S 10-YEAR PLAN

FINANCIAL
REPORTS

YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE
INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JUNE 2023

THE ACCOMPANYING NOTES FORM PART OF THIS FINANCIAL REPORT.

	Note	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
INCOME			
Victoria Legal Aid - Recurrent	8(a)	778,373	1,374,631
VLA - ERO State	8(a)	261,963	59,784
VLA - ERO Extra	8(a)	-	64,186
Grant Income - Other Projects - net of distributions	2	1,932,199	1,349,051
Other Income		71,493	122,732
Interest		8,102	3,125
		3,052,130	2,973,509
EXPENDITURE			
Employee benefit expenses		2,003,253	1,870,665
Occupancy expenses		23,483	21,580
Operating expenses		149,727	128,663
Project related expenses		496,102	667,033
		2,672,565	2,687,941
Surplus before income tax expense		379,565	285,568
Income tax expense		-	-
Surplus after income tax expense		379,565	285,568
Other comprehensive income net of income tax		-	-
Total comprehensive income attributable to the entity		379,565	285,568

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	Retained Earnings (\$)	Total (\$)
Balance at 1 July 2021	1,111,333	1,111,333
Surplus attributable to the entity	285,568	285,568
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2022	1,396,901	1,396,901
Surplus attributable to the entity	379,565	379,565
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2023	1,776,466	1,776,466

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 30 JUNE 2023

	Note	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	1,900,254	1,852,817
Trade and other receivables	4	211,082	3,921,164
Financial assets	5	1,436,747	1,430,311
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		3,548,083	7,204,292
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	6	-	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		-	-
TOTAL ASSETS		3,548,083	7,204,292
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	7	119,077	486,030
Amounts received in advance	8	1,518,359	5,204,662
Provisions	9	116,409	103,993
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,753,845	5,794,685
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Provisions	9	17,769	12,706
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		17,769	12,706
TOTAL LIABILITIES		1,771,614	5,807,391
NET ASSETS		1,776,469	1,396,901
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
Retained surplus'		1,776,466	1,396,901
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS		1,776,466	1,396,901

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from Gov't Grants - recurrent		777,767	1,019,343
Receipts from Gov't Grants - non-recurrent		261,963	-
Receipts from Other Sources		2,026,188	1,326,035
Interest received		7,629	3,031
Payments to Suppliers and Employees		(3,019,674)	(2,390,246)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	10	53,873	(41,837)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Investment in term deposits		(6,436)	(1,610)
Payments for purchase of property and equipment		-	-
Net cash used in investing activities		(6,436)	(1,610)
Net cash increase/(decrease) cash held		47,437	(43,447)
Cash at the beginning of the year		1,852,817	1,896,264
Cash at the end of the year	3	1,900,254	1,852,817

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

NOTE 1: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Financial Reporting Framework - The Board has determined that the Association is not a reporting entity because it is unlikely there are users of these financial statements who are not in a position to require the preparation of reports tailored to their information needs. Accordingly, these financial statements have been prepared to satisfy the Committee's reporting requirements under the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. The Association is a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes under Australian Accounting Standards.

Statement of Compliance - The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the mandatory Australian Accounting Standards applicable to entities reporting under the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. These special purpose financial statements do not comply with all the recognition and measurement requirements in Australian Accounting Standards. The recognition and measurement requirements that have not been complied with are those specified in AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* and AASB 1058 *Income of Not-for-Profit Entities* as, in accounting for income, recognition of all grant income has been deferred until the related expenses are incurred without assessing whether there are enforceable performance obligations to transfer a good or service to a third party which are sufficiently specific to know when the performance obligation has been satisfied. Refer to Note 1(d) Revenue below.

Basis of Preparation - The financial statements, except for the cash flow information, have been prepared on an accrual basis and are based on historical costs unless otherwise stated in the notes. The material accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these financial statements are presented below and have been consistently applied unless stated otherwise. Where applicable they indicate how the recognition and measurement requirements in Australian Accounting Standards have not been complied with. The amounts presented in the financial statements have been rounded to the nearest dollar.

Impact of COVID-19 - FCLC relies on on-going support from both state government and other non-government funders in the form of grant funding to further its principal activities. At the date of this report, there is inherent uncertainty particularly in view of the current global pandemic. The pandemic may have an impact on the Association's financial position and may affect financial performance of the Association in the future.

- a. Cash and Cash Equivalents** - includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.
- b. Income Tax** - The Association is exempt from paying income tax by virtue of Section 50-45 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act, 1997*. Accordingly, tax effect accounting has not been adopted.
- c. Property, Plant and Equipment** - Furniture and equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation. The depreciable amount of all furniture and equipment is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the Association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use.
- d. Revenue - Grant Income** - All grant income has been deferred upon receipt and not recognised as revenue until the related expenses are incurred, without assessing whether enforceable performance obligations exist. This does not comply with AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* or AASB 1058 *Income of Not-for-Profit Entities*. In future financial years, the Association intends to comply with AASB 1058 and AASB 15. **Membership Revenue** - Membership revenue is recognised as revenue in the year that the membership is for. **Interest Revenue** - Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest rate method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate inherent in the instrument. **Donations** - Donation income is recognised when the Association obtains control over the funds which is generally at the time of receipt. All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).

e. Goods and Services Tax (GST) - Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Receivables and payable are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the assets and liabilities statement.

f. Leases - **Exceptions to lease accounting** The Association has elected to apply the exceptions to lease accounting for both short-term leases (i.e. leases with a term of less than or equal to 12 months) and leases of low-value assets. The Association recognises the payments associated with these leases as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

g. Employee Entitlements - **Short-term employee benefits** Provision is made for the Company's obligation for short-term employee benefits. Short-term employee benefits are benefits (other than termination benefits) that are expected to be settled wholly before 12 months after the end of the annual reporting period in which the employees render the related service, including wages, salaries and sick leave. Short-term employee benefits are measured at the (undiscounted) amounts expected to be paid when the obligation is settled. The Company's obligations for short-term employee benefits such as wages, salaries and sick leave are recognised as part of current trade and other payables in the statement of financial position. **Other long-term employee benefits** Provision is made for employees' long service leave and annual leave entitlements not expected to be settled wholly within 12 months after the end of the annual reporting period in which the employees render the related service. Other long-term employee benefits are measured at the present value of the expected future payments to be made to employees. Expected future payments incorporate anticipated future wage and salary levels, durations of service and employee departures and are discounted at rates determined by reference to market yields at the end of the reporting period on government bonds that have maturity dates that approximate the terms of the obligations. Upon the remeasurement of obligations for other long-term employee benefits, the net change in the obligation is recognised in profit or loss as part of employee benefits expense. The Company's obligations for long-term employee benefits are presented as non-current provisions in its statement of financial position, except where the Company does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement for at least 12 months after the end of the reporting period, in which case the obligations are presented as current provisions.

	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
NOTE 2: GRANT INCOME - OTHER PROJECTS		
Total Grant income	5,532,256	3,950,775
Distribution of Integrated Services Fund	(3,600,057)	(2,601,724)
	1,932,199	1,349,051

FCLC administered funding from Department of Justice and Community Safety and provided grants to 12 Community Legal Centres (2022: 16 CLCs) to support their work delivering services to disadvantaged people through integrated services partnerships.

NOTE 3: CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS		
Cash on hand	34	226
Cash at bank	1,900,220	1,852,591
	1,900,254	1,852,817

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
NOTE 4: TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES		
Accounts Receivable	191,331	3,899,524
Prepayments and Sundry Receivables	19,090	21,452
Accrued Bank Interest	661	188
	211,082	3,921,164

As per Note 2, the Federation administered money from the Department of Justice and Community Safety to 12 member centres through the Integrated Services Fund. The notable difference in Trade and other Receivables in 2022-2023 compared with 2021-2022 is as a result of the timing of the Integrated Services Fund funding being received into the Federation’s accounts but not distributed via the grants until 2022-2023.

NOTE 5: FINANCIAL ASSETS		
Term deposits maturity greater than 3 mths	1,436,747	1,430,311

NOTE 6: PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT		
Furniture and fittings - at cost	129,908	129,908
Less accumulated depreciation	(129,908)	(129,908)
	-	-

NOTE 7: TRADE AND OTHER PAYABLES		
Creditors and accruals	15,680	458,600
Salary and wage accruals	103,397	27,430
	119,077	486,030

NOTE 8: AMOUNTS RECEIVED IN ADVANCE		
Victoria Legal Aid (ERO) - State (unused)	-	-
Victoria Legal Aid (recurrent)	-	606
Total Generalist Funds carried forward	8 (a)	606
Non-VLA Project Funds carried forward	1,518,359	5,204,056
	1,518,359	5,204,662

NOTE 8(A) RECONCILIATION OF VLA GENERALIST FUNDS			
	VLA (\$)	VLA SACS	Total (\$)
Funds brought forward - 1 July 2022	606	-	606
Funds received	777,767	261,963	1,039,730
Funds utilised (net of interest)	(778,373)	(261,963)	(1,040,336)
Funds carried forward - 30 June 2023	-	-	-

	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
NOTE 9: PROVISIONS		
Current		
Provision for annual leave	116,409	103,993
	116,409	103,993
Non-Current		
Provision for Long Service Leave	17,769	12,706
	17,769	12,706

NOTE 10: RECONCILIATION OF CASH FLOW FROM OPERATIONS WITH
SURPLUS FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES AFTER INCOME TAX

Surplus after income tax	379,565	285,568
Non-cash flows in profit:		
- Depreciation	-	-
Changes in assets and liabilities;		
- (Increase)/decrease in trade and other debtors	3,710,082	(3,907,955)
- Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	(366,953)	285,432
- Increase/(decrease) in amounts received in advance	(3,686,303)	3,261,997
- Increase/(decrease) in provisions	17,479	33,121
Net cash provided by Operating Activities	53,870	(41,837)

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

The Committee has determined that the Association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements. In the opinion of the committee of Federation Of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc.:

- a) the financial statements and notes of Federation Of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc. are in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Reform Act (Vic) 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, including:
 - i. giving a true and fair view of its financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
 - ii. complying with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2022*; and
- b) there are reasonable grounds to believe that Federation Of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:

Kristen Wallwork, Chairperson	Bryanna Connell, Treasurer
Dated: 9/10/2023	Dated: 9/10/2023

AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION UNDER
SECTION 60-40 OF THE AUSTRALIAN CHARITIES AND
NOT-FOR-PROFITS COMMISSION ACT 2012

OPINION

In accordance with the requirements of section 60-40 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act

2012, as auditor for the audit of Federation Of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc. for the year ended 30 June 2023, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- i. no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- ii. no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Sean Denham Dated: 03/11/2023
Suite 1, 707 Mt Alexander Road.
Moonee Ponds VIC 3039

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IN ALL ITS FORMS. WE BELIEVE DIVERSITY OF
ALL KINDS MAKES OUR TEAMS, SERVICES AND
ORGANISATIONS STRONGER AND MORE EFFECTIVE.



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BACK COVER IMAGE: ANNUAL PRINCIPAL LAWYER MEETING



SKYE FORSTER, IMPLEMENTATION ANALYST, SPEAKING
AT AN EVENT HELD BY CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE IN
RECOGNITION OF GERARD BRODY'S RETIREMENT

**Federation of Community
Legal Centres Victoria**

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