



FEDERATION
OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES VIC



ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025



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.



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CHAIRPERSON REPORT

Last year, the Federation continued to bring community legal centres together, and to coordinate our efforts as a sector to maximise impact. A notable and memorable example of this in action was the inaugural Community Legal Centres Parliament House Exhibition, which was held over three days in October. Held in the magnificent Queen's Hall, the exhibition created opportunities for all community legal centres to initiate and strengthen relationships with MPs, share their work and achievements, and to network and learn from peers.

The feedback on the event – from government stakeholders and community legal centres alike – was glowing, and was testament to the mutual benefits derived from constructive and trusted relationships between our sector and the government, helping to position our role as experts on policy issues, and to hold government accountable to our communities. It also exemplified the Federation's approach to its work and role – providing the foundations on which community legal centres can thrive, and drive sustained positive change.

This was my second year as Board Chair at the Federation, and I was excited to oversee changes that will improve and modernise the Federation's governance. This included work towards a Board Charter, and updates to the Constitution that were passed at the AGM. One of these changes was the creation of a Deputy Chair role, which Damian Stock (ARC Justice) stepped into with skill. This role supports the Board Chair, strengthens the Board, and amplifies its effectiveness. Thanks go to Damian for being a critical support to me in my role throughout the year.

Indeed, I would like to thank all our Board members, who volunteer their time and talents to ensure that our sector's peak body is supported through good governance to be strategic and impactful. The range of skills that they bring to our committee work and Board discussions is far ranging and thoughtful.



BRYANNA CONNELL AND ALEXANDRIA JONES (BARWON COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE) AT THE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE PARLIAMENT HOUSE EXHIBITION



BRYANNA CONNELL (BARWON COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE AND BOARD CHAIR) CHAIRING AN ATTORNEY-GENERAL ROUNDTABLE EVENT WITH THE HON SONYA KILKENNY

ON BEHALF OF ALL COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES, I EXTEND MY SINCEREST THANKS TO THE FEDERATION TEAM FOR ITS MANY EFFORTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE YEAR. COMBINING STRATEGIC THINKING WITH ITS MEMBER-FIRST APPROACH, THE FEDERATION HAS CONTINUED TO DELIVER ON ITS GOAL OF SUPPORTING COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES TO SUPPORT COMMUNITIES. I THANK ALL FEDERATION STAFF FOR MAKING THIS HAPPEN – THEIR WORK AND THE IMPACT IT HAS ON HOW VICTORIANS ACCESS JUSTICE IS INVALUABLE.

The Federation operates on many different levels, including as a national representative for Victorian community legal centres in conversations with the Commonwealth. Community legal centres are chronically underfunded across the country, and the Federation's contribution to advocacy with Victorian members of the Federal Parliament for adequate national funding for community legal centres will support communities not just in Victoria, but throughout Australia.

Last year, the Federation strengthened existing relationships with key stakeholders, while establishing positive new ones. The Federation welcomed the Hon Sonya Kilkeny as the new Attorney-General of Victoria, and hosted the first roundtable meeting with Ms Kilkeny and community legal centre representatives in June. The Attorney-General's knowledge of the work undertaken by community legal centres impressed, and we look forward to working closely with Victoria's highest lawmaker in the coming year.

We also met with the new Chief Justice of Victoria, Richard Niall QC, whose clear values alignment with our sector creates a comfortable space for collaborating towards our shared objectives. And we welcomed Toby Hemming as Victoria Legal Aid's new CEO. The sector's symbiotic relationship with Victoria Legal Aid is one of our most important, and Mr Hemming's demonstrated commitment to access to justice and evidence-based policy reform brings great opportunities for making Victoria safer and fairer for everyone.

Strong and trusted relationships with lawmakers and partners are critical for our sector and the communities we serve, and I am thankful to the Federation for creating and enacting a government relationship strategy that enables us to put forward policy recommendations that are heard and heeded.

BRYANNA CONNELL
CHAIRPERSON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

Community law is unique in its breadth, purpose and impact. In its breadth because of the diverse range of legal areas it encompasses – from family law and family violence, to immigration, disability and tenancy and so many other areas that touch our lives. In its purpose because it is motivated by empowering people in the community to achieve the best outcomes for them. And in its impact, because of the powerful movement for justice it drives to make change happen.

Last year, community legal centres contributed to making many legislative changes happen. After many years of community legal sector advocacy, protections from hate speech were expanded in Victoria, to include people living with disability, gender diverse people and other minority groups, making Victoria safer for more people.

Community legal centres also contributed to the development of the Victorian Government's Women's Safety Package, that will strengthen the family violence intervention order system, and successfully advocated to ban the use

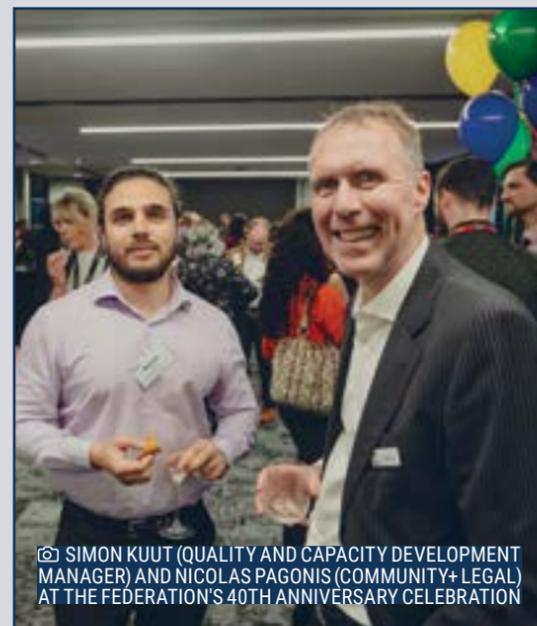
of spit hoods on children and to increase transparency around youth prison practices. Community legal centre staff, volunteers and board members should be immensely proud of the tangible impact their actions have had on the lives and wellbeing of Victorians this year.

Regrettably, last year also saw the adoption and reinstatement of some regressive policies that community legal centres are committed to reversing. Most alarming was the rolling back of bail reforms in Victoria, which are now harsher and tighter than anywhere else in Australia. I am inspired by the steadfast commitment demonstrated by community legal centres to overcoming setbacks, and continuing to advocate for systems that are fair and safe.

A significant achievement from the year was the creation of the *Climate Justice Field for Community Legal Centres*. This seminal resource is the culmination of the experiences and knowledge of community legal centres on their climate justice journeys to date, and an example of what can be achieved when community legal centres come together to share and learn.



© TRACEY GAUDRY (COMMUNITY+ LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR), LOUISA GIBBS (CEO), BRYANNA CONNELL (BARWON COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE AND BOARD CHAIR), MELISSA HARDHAM (WESTJUSTICE AND BOARD MEMBER)



© SIMON KUUT (QUALITY AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT MANAGER) AND NICOLAS PAGONIS (COMMUNITY+ LEGAL) AT THE FEDERATION'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



© SKYE FORSTER (DATA TRANSFORMATION SPECIALIST) WITH COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF SPEAKING ABOUT ACTIONSTEP AT A MEMBERS' MEETING

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND BOARD MEMBERS SHOULD BE IMMENSELY PROUD OF THE TANGIBLE IMPACT THEIR ACTIONS HAVE HAD ON THE LIVES AND WELLBEING OF VICTORIANS THIS YEAR.

The community legal sector's openness to learning and expanding our minds and skills is a key strength of the movement, and one that promotes continuous improvement in the way community legal centres deliver services and advocate for policy changes. Last year there were 3,764 registrations for the 39 trainings delivered by the Federation, a considerable increase on any year prior. This is testament to the eagerness of community legal centre staff to be life-long learners, and the richness and diversity of the training program offered.

Last year community legal centres took strides towards improving the capture and management of data, with 37 community legal centres now using Actionstep. Data really does make the community legal sector go round, enabling us to identify legal need, allocate resources, and advocate for funding to fill in the gaps. For these reasons, the importance of community legal centres' migration to a modern data system cannot be overstated, and the sector's progress in implementing Actionstep is already helping to strengthen our storytelling and amplify our impact.

None of these achievements would be possible without our people. The community legal sector is a well-oiled machine, powered by the creativity, passion and skills of its more than 4,000 staff and volunteers, and I am so thankful to everyone who contributed to community legal centres last year. Special thanks go to the Federation's Board members, who guide the Federation's governance and support me in my role as CEO. And to our Board Chair, Bryanna Connell, who has steered this ship with skill and precision, and who has overseen the sector's many achievements from the year.

In these pages, you will see just a glimpse of the work that the Federation team has undertaken to support our member community legal centres with their impact. We recognise that we work best when we work together, and I am privileged to work alongside people motivated by our shared goal of improving access to justice, to achieve truly great things.

LOUISA GIBBS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

CEOS GATHER IN BALLARAT

In May, 28 CEOs from community legal centres across Victoria gathered in Ballarat for the Victorian community legal sector's quarterly CEO meeting, and for the launch of Ballarat & Grampians Community Legal Service 2025-27 strategy. It was a great opportunity for CEOs to discuss services, sustainability and strategy, and to address issues affecting Victorian communities in a collaborative way.



CEOS MEETING IN BALLARAT

VCOSS ANNUAL TREASURER'S LUNCH

In May, the Federation joined representatives from community legal centres at VCOSS' annual Treasurer's lunch. It can be an advantage having a treasurer who was formerly the Attorney-General, with the discussion between the Treasurer and the social sector focused heavily on justice issues, which we hope will be reflected in future investment decisions.



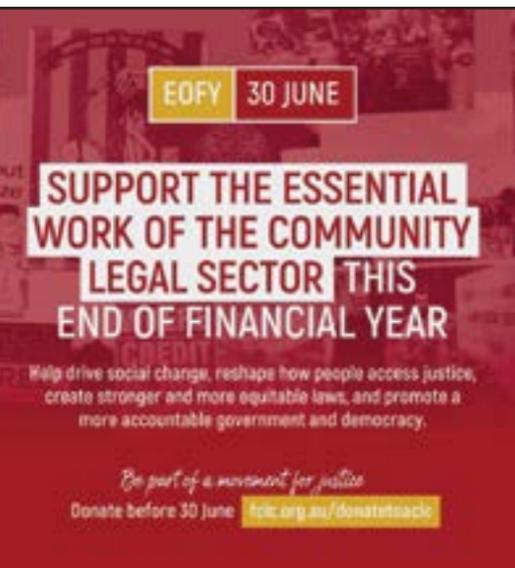
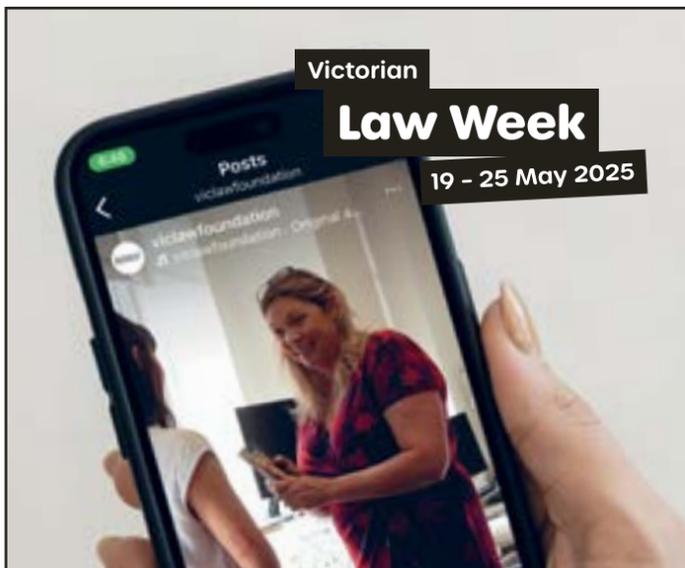
COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND FEDERATION STAFF AT THE VCOSS TREASURER'S LUNCH

Victorian Law Week

19 - 25 May 2025

WE PROUDLY SPONSORED VICTORIAN LAW WEEK

The Victoria Law Foundation's Victorian Law Week is a high-profile opportunity for people in the community to learn about the law, and how it affects us all. The Federation was proud to sponsor this year's event and support members to deliver a huge range of impactful sessions during the week.



END OF FINANCIAL YEAR FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

At the end of the year, we encouraged our supporters to donate to a community legal centre or the Federation in our End of Financial Year campaign. Generous donors got behind the Federation's call to support our sector-wide training program – and we know our member community legal centres benefited from donations too! Thank you to the public who get behind our work with their time, talents and funding.

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL TO REMEMBER VICTIM-SURVIVORS

Federation and community legal centre staff joined the Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre Candlelight Vigil to remember the lives lost to domestic and family violence.

This event serves as a reminder of the urgent need for action and support for victim-survivors. Community legal centres across Victoria provide services for those affected by family violence, including free legal assistance, advocacy, representation community legal education and advocacy for systems improvements.



SAFE STEPS FAMILY VIOLENCE RESPONSE CENTRE CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

COLLABORATION IS THE NAME OF THE GAME

One of the great things about being part of a federated model is the sharing and learning that takes place across the sector. In July, Louisa Gibbs (CEO) travelled to Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre in Mildura to participate in the roll out of the MABELS program. Developed by Eastern Community Legal Centre, the two community legal centres worked together to adapt the model from suburban Melbourne, to regional Victoria. Whilst there, Louisa also spent time with Tessa Amatya, an early career family lawyer being supported through Women's Legal Service's Emerging Lawyers Program.



STAFF FROM EASTERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND THE FEDERATION ON A VISIT TO MALLEE FAMILY CARE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE IN MILDURA.

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF AT THE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE PARLIAMENT HOUSE EXHIBITION.

COLLABORATION FOR IMPACT

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES PARLIAMENT HOUSE EXHIBITION – BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, DEMONSTRATING IMPACT AND CONNECTING WITH THE SECTOR

As the peak body for Victoria’s 50 community legal centres, the Federation is uniquely positioned to strengthen our collective voice, and raise the sector’s profile among important stakeholders. In October, the Federation hosted the inaugural community legal centres Parliament House exhibition in the Queen’s Hall at Parliament House. Over three days, representatives from 43 community legal centres attended the exhibition, to showcase their work and connect with Victorian parliamentarians.

Every Victorian community legal centre was offered the opportunity to set up a stall at the exhibition, from which they could share important information and resources with MPs and advisers passing through.

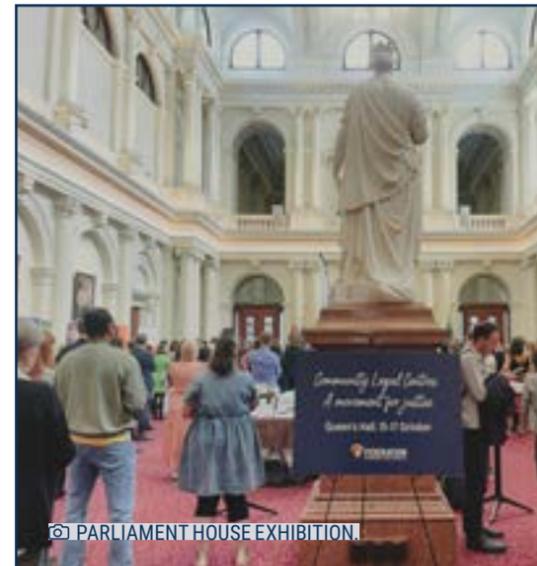
The exhibition presented a fantastic opportunity for community legal centres to demonstrate their value, and share their message – that community legal services help the government to help their communities, through service delivery, early intervention and avoided costs, and by providing an evidence base on how laws are affecting their constituents – with MPs and their advisers. MPs were highly engaged and demonstrated genuine interest in tapping into the community legal sector’s expertise and knowledge to inform debate around law reform. Nearly every Victorian MP (out of 128) engaged with community legal centres at the exhibition at some stage during the week.



SARAH NEWMAN (CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE)



STAFF FROM INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE AUSTRALIA AND LAW AND ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR WOMEN



PARLIAMENT HOUSE EXHIBITION



BRETT MORTON (MOONBEE VALLEY LEGAL SERVICE)

The exhibition wasn’t just about informing sound policy decisions and investment – it was about relationship building too. Community legal centres seized upon the opportunity to network with other centres, finding ample common ground, and laying foundations for future collaboration to achieve shared objectives across the sector.

On the Wednesday of the exhibition, we celebrated the Victorian community legal sector at a lunchtime event, which included some light bites and live music! Speaker of the House, the Hon Maree Edwards (who facilitated our exhibition), Attorney-General the Hon Jaclyn Symes, Shadow Attorney-General the Hon Michael O’Brien, and Greens Justice Spokesperson Katherine Copsey MP gave short speeches, during which they shared their experiences and appreciation of community legal centres and the work they do.



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE MAREE EDWARDS MP AT THE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE PARLIAMENT EXHIBITION

Community legal centres and MPs share a common goal of building communities that are stronger, happier and safer, and we are confident that this exhibition has provided pathways to work even more closely with MPs towards solving issues experienced by people in our community going forward. We thank all community legal centre staff who participated in the event, and helped to make it such a great success.

BACK TO CANBERRA TO SAVE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

In August, Federation staff joined representatives for 160 community legal centres in Canberra, in our second trip to our national's capital to support of CLCs Australia's 'Save our CLCs' campaign. Federation staff met with Maria Vamvakinou (Federal Member for Calwell), Josh Burns (Federal Member for Macnamara), the Hon Peter Khalil (Federal Member for Wills), Cassandra Fernando (Federal Member for Holt), Lisa Darmanin (Senator for Victoria), the Hon Ged Kearney (Federal Member for Cooper), and the Hon Daniel Mulino (Federal Member for Fraser) at Parliament House, to discuss the funding crisis affecting community legal centres nationwide.

Every day, around 1,000 Australians are turned away from community legal centres that do not have the resources to help them. That's twice as many people as they have capacity to serve.

CLCs Australia's important campaign urged the Commonwealth Government to recognise the critical role that community legal centres play in resolving issues or preventing them from escalating, and alleviating pressure on other systems, such as the criminal legal, housing, and medical systems, and social services.

Thanks to the campaign, in September the Commonwealth Government announced an injection of additional funding through the five-year National Access to Justice Partnership, with community legal centres, women's legal services, Aboriginal Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services receiving the bulk of the new funding.

The campaign was an excellent example of leveraging national action, with the Federation able to focus on discussions with Victorian members of the Federal Parliament. We thank CLCs Australia for leading this work.



© FEDERATION STAFF JOIN REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR IN CANBERRA

CREATING CAREER PATHWAYS INTO THE COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR

Community law offers innumerable career opportunities for people who want to make a difference, from lawyers and social workers to administrative staff and educators.

This year, the Federation connected with students, new graduates and lawyers to showcase what a career in the community legal sector has to offer. Careers in the community legal sector are profiled on the Federation's website, and this year we developed a value proposition to encourage engagement with the extraordinary opportunities that a career in community legal centres offer.



© TANYA SAWTELL (DIRECTOR OF MEMBER EXCELLENCE, PEOPLE AND OPERATIONS) AND LOUISA GIBBS (CEO) AT A CAREER PATHWAYS EVENT AT THE LAW INSTITUTE OF VICTORIA



© TANYA SAWTELL (DIRECTOR OF MEMBER EXCELLENCE, PEOPLE AND OPERATIONS) WITH STUDENTS AT A VOLUNTEERING EXHIBITION AT DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

Last year we participated in:

- ▼ A panel event on law reform at Deakin Law Student Society
- ▼ A volunteering exhibition at Deakin University
- ▼ A career pathways event at Law Institute of Victoria
- ▼ A community law panel event for the students participating in Monash University's Street Law program

Through expanding and strengthening the sector's workforce, the Federation supports and sustains community legal centres' critical service delivery into the future.

INDYA MCMAHON AND MOLLY WILLIAMS (INNER MELBOURNE COMMUNITY LEGAL) SHARING ABOUT THEIR HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS AT THE FEDERATION OFFICE

INTEGRATING SERVICES

TO REACH MORE PEOPLE IN NEED

The Federation continued to administer the Integrated Services Fund (ISF), which is funded through the Victorian Government’s Early Intervention and Investment Framework (EIIF) and overseen by the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Through facilitating a regular community of practice and supporting written reports, the Federation assisted members delivering 16 integrated services projects (including health justice partnerships) to report to the Victorian Government on the demonstrated value and impact of their project in achieving the objectives of EIIF. The support offered by the Federation enabled Community Legal Centres to align with the requirements laid out by the Victorian Government, and to build a case for continued investment in the integrated partnerships into the future – which was achieved through a \$40 million commitment for integrated services over the next three years announced in the State Budget in May.

BALLARAT AND GRAMPIANS COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE

Providing an integrated health and legal service for vulnerable and disadvantaged people visiting their local maternal and child health service.

CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE

Supporting and building capacity of partner organisation(s) to deliver culturally safe consumer, consumer credit and debt legal services to Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The program uses the insights gained from partnership activities to inform policy and advocacy work to benefit First Nations consumers in Victoria.

FITZROY LEGAL SERVICE

Assisting community members in Darebin with legal problems where alcohol and other drug use is an underlying factor, and who experience complex intersectional disadvantage. The program advocates to advance the rights, health and wellbeing of people who use drugs.

GOULBURN VALLEY COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE (ARC JUSTICE)

A health justice partnership with Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative that aims to increase access to justice for local Aboriginal communities in Shepparton and the surrounding areas, including Seymour.

HUME RIVERINA COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE

The Invisible Hurdles - Youth & Family Violence Project is a health justice partnership with Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre, North East Support and Action for Youth and the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service that connects more young people at risk of or experiencing family violence with legal assistance.

INNER MELBOURNE COMMUNITY LEGAL (IMCL)

The Acting on Warning Signs project is a health justice partnership with the Royal Women’s Hospital that provides advice, casework and community legal education for patients experiencing or at risk of family violence, and basic training on how to identify and respond to incidents of family violence for frontline health professionals.

The Melbourne Legal Care program is a health justice partnership with Royal Melbourne Hospital that provides advice, casework, community legal education to inpatients and outpatients of the hospital, focusing on preventative law.

The Beyond Survival Project (formerly Policing Family Violence: Changing the Story) is a partnership with Flat Out Inc that operates at the intersection of policing and family violence, where impacts of high-risk family violence are compounded by duty failures, harms or accountability issues in family violence policing. The program seeks to prevent the criminalisation of victim-survivors and to provide survivor-led support, legal assistance, advocacy and campaign work that is grounded in genuine improvements to safety.

INTOUCH MULTICULTURAL CENTRE AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE

Integrated model of support for migrant and refugee women provided through outreach clinics at Monash Health (Dandenong Hospital) and Your Community Health in Northern Melbourne.

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY: IMCL HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP

Ana is an older person with disabilities who lives with her adult son, Sam. She was brought to Royal Melbourne Hospital emergency department by police following an incident where Sam had assaulted her. When a social worker spoke with her in emergency, Ana was highly distressed and scared to speak further to police for fear of Sam getting into trouble. As it was not safe for her to be discharged home, Ana was referred to the hospital’s Family Safety Team (FST).

After a secondary consultation with an on-call lawyer from Inner Melbourne Community Legal (IMCL), FST staff confirmed that police had issued a safety notice against Sam and there would be an intervention order (IVO) hearing the following week. Through the health justice partnership with IMCL, the FST knew to offer Ana a referral to IMCL and the lawyer met with her the following day on the ward.

Ana expressed that she didn’t want Sam to live with her anymore, but still wanted to have contact with him. Ana disclosed concerns that Sam had incurred debts in her name and had been driving her car. IMCL represented Ana at the IVO hearing. The court issued an IVO that excludes Sam from the home. IMCL then opened another file to assist Ana to remove Sam from the lease on her house. After returning safely home, IMCL assisted Ana to resolve \$6,000 of fines Sam had incurred in her name and referred Ana to a financial counselling service for further support. To protect Ana from future risk of financial abuse by Sam, IMCL also helped Ana make a power of attorney.

**Name changed for privacy*

"BY LINKING GOVERNMENT'S FUNDING TO QUANTIFIABLE IMPACTS BOTH FOR PEOPLE USING THE SERVICES AS WELL AS THE SERVICE SYSTEM, THE EIIF GUIDES INVESTMENTS TO WHERE TIMELY ASSISTANCE FOR VICTORIANS WILL IMPROVE LIFE OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND REDUCE PRESSURE ON ACUTE SERVICES."

- VICTORIAN DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND TREASURY

JUSTICE CONNECT

Justice Connect Seniors Law runs three health justice partnerships across metropolitan Melbourne, which increase access to legal support and help progress social justice for older people who are experiencing or at risk of elder abuse.

LAW AND ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR WOMEN

The Pathways out of the Justice System project supports women, trans and non-binary people who are experiencing disadvantage and at risk of entering the criminal legal system to take alternative pathways. The program provides integrated, early intervention legal advice and representation alongside social work and case management support to address their unmet legal and non-legal needs.

LODDON CAMPASPE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE (ARC JUSTICE)

A health justice partnership that helps parents, families and individuals engaged with Bendigo Community Health Services to deal with legal situations and achieve sustainable legal outcomes.

The Maryborough Therapeutic Justice Project provides early intervention support to divert vulnerable clients away from the justice system and to strengthen their connections to community supports, and improves service integration and coordination among those community supports available for complex clients in the Maryborough region.

SENIORS RIGHTS VICTORIA (COUNCIL ON THE AGEING)

Planning Ahead is a project for raising awareness of and encouraging supportive decision making for adults experiencing vulnerability, including those who have been recently diagnosed with dementia, focusing on regional and diverse communities. This integrated partnership provides assistance for adults experiencing vulnerability to plan ahead and to make informed choices about their future financial, health or care arrangements.

SOCIAL SECURITY RIGHTS VICTORIA

The Social Security Rights Victoria and Financial Counselling Victoria Integrated Services Project is a partnership designed to enable financial counsellors and social security rights experts to work together more effectively to improve client outcomes.

SOUTH-EAST MONASH LEGAL SERVICE

The Sporting Change program empowers young people from diverse backgrounds to engage constructively in their local communities and learn about the legal system, and increases young people's access to justice through the integration of lawyers in schools.



HUGH DE KRETZER (PRESIDENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION) DELIVERING A KEYNOTE SPEECH AT THE TIM MCCOY MEMORIAL DINNER.



HUGH DE KRETZER (PRESIDENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION), AMANDA GEORGE (FORMERLY AT BRIMBANK COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE) AND ADVOCATE AUNTY VICKY ROACH AT THE TIM MCCOY MEMORIAL DINNER.

34TH ANNUAL TIM MCCOY MEMORIAL DINNER

Last year the Federation took on the privileged role of organising the Tim McCoy Memorial Dinner, on behalf of the trustees of the Tim McCoy Trust.

Every year, the dinner brings together current and former supporters and members of the Victorian community legal sector to celebrate the life and legacy of Tim McCoy, a young community lawyer, student radical, and founding member of the community legal sector, who passed away tragically and suddenly in 1987.

The dinner gives us occasion to celebrate the enduring impact that Tim's life had on the community legal sector movement, and to recognise community legal centres' many achievements since his tragic passing.

More than 150 people attended 34th year of this special event, which was a mix of contemporary community legal centres staff, founding members of the movement, and friends of the sector.

Hugh de Kretzer, President of the Human Rights Commission (and former CEO of Human Rights Law Centre, CEO of the Federation and Principal Solicitor of Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre (now commUnity+ Legal)), delivered an inspiring speech that expressed his deep appreciation of the sector and commitment to its cause.

Congratulations to Refugee Women Action for Visa Equality (WAVE), who were awarded the annual Tim McCoy Prize for their incredible work campaigning for the abolition of the 'fast track' refugee assessment process that has led to the unfair refusal of refugee status for many people who arrived to this country by boat.

We thank the trustees of the Tim McCoy Foundation for allowing us to support this important event for our sector.



TIM MCCOY PRIZE RECIPIENTS REFUGEE WOMEN ACTION FOR VISA EQUALITY (WAVE)

WORKING GROUPS

The Federation is in the unique position of being connected to all of Victoria's wonderful community legal centres that form part of its membership. With broad oversight of activities happening across the spectrum, the Federation is able to identify key areas of activity and coordinate opportunities for collaboration and advocacy across the sector.

Working groups, communities of practice and networks convened or supported by the Federation:

- ▼ Access to Interpreters
- ▼ CEO Multi Enterprise Agreement Working Group
- ▼ CLC Board Governance Community of Practice
- ▼ CLC Data Community of Practice
- ▼ Client Centred Working Group
- ▼ Communications Network
- ▼ Community Development and Community Legal Education Working Group
- ▼ Consumer Champs
- ▼ Criminal Law Network
- ▼ Disaster and Climate Justice Working Group
- ▼ Early Career Lawyer's Network
- ▼ Family Law Network
- ▼ Family Violence Lawyers Network
- ▼ Family Violence Working Group
- ▼ Impact and Evaluation CLC Community of Practice
- ▼ Infringements Working Group
- ▼ Integrated Legal and Social Support Network
- ▼ Justice Working Group (formerly Access to Justice)
- ▼ Older Person's Legal Services Network
- ▼ Police Oversight Working Group
- ▼ Policy and Law Reform Network
- ▼ Principal Lawyers Working Group
- ▼ Prison Rights Working Group
- ▼ Professional Standards and Support Committee (PSSC)
- ▼ Red Phone Network
- ▼ Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Network
- ▼ School Lawyer Reference Group
- ▼ Smart Justice for Women
- ▼ Smart Justice for Young People
- ▼ Strategic Youth Law Network
- ▼ Tenants Working Group
- ▼ Victims' Rights Working Group
- ▼ Victorian Elder Abuse Strategic Alliance
- ▼ Victorian Student Legal Services Network



COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF AT THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION WORKING GROUP FORUM IN JUNE.



LEEAH CAVERZAN (SOUTHSIDE JUSTICE) AND FELICITY HARTRIDGE (HUME RIVERINA COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE) AT THE WORKING GROUP CONVENERS' COLLABORATION DAY

The Early Career Lawyer's Network (ECLN)

is a newly re-established network that aims to strengthen connection amongst community lawyers and provide early career lawyers with opportunities for development. Co-convened by Southside Justice, Fitzroy Legal Service and Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, the ECLN is aimed at lawyers with under five years of practising experience, or those who are new to the community legal sector. Last year's activities included a session about imposter syndrome and a social dinner to build connection and confidence.

The Impact & Evaluation Community of Practice (I&E CoP) provides an opportunity for community legal centre staff to connect with and learn from others working in the areas of service design, monitoring, evaluation, impact and outcomes in the legal assistance sector. Convened by Eastern Community Legal Centre, last year, the I&E CoP hosted volunteer presenters from a number of community legal centres who shared their expertise and knowledge with the group.

The Infringements Working Group (IWG)

is a joint working group of the Federation, Financial Counselling Victoria, and Victoria Legal Aid that brings together 38 member organisations working directly with Victorians who are disproportionately affected by fines. Last year, the IWG's advocacy focused on removing the ability to imprison people for unpaid fines, expanding the family violence scheme, introducing new options to address court fines and improving the practices of Fines Victoria.



The Policy and Law Reform Network, convened by the Federation, is a sector forum for Victorian community legal centre staff engaged in advocacy, policy and law reform to share updates and learnings and to collaborate on strategic priorities and campaigns. Last year, the Policy and Law Reform Network supported the design, consultation, and coordination of the development of the Victorian community legal sector's policy platform, Action for Justice: A Roadmap for Change, which was launched in July 2025.

The Regional, Rural and Remote Network provides a confidential forum for strategic collaboration and information sharing on issues and opportunities unique to these regions. Last year the Network developed the Collaborate for Change: Advancing Housing Justice in Regional Victoria initiative, which aims to address housing challenges faced by regional communities.

Convened by the University of Melbourne Student Union Legal Service, the **Victorian Student Legal Services Network (VLSLN)** is a group of services which provide legal assistance to tertiary students. The VLSLN's overall purpose is to address the high prevalence of legal issues among tertiary students, and to promote access to justice among this cohort of the community. Last year, the network enjoyed a presentation by representatives from the new National Student Ombudsman service, and a lively follow-up discussion on how the long-awaited complaints service for students will operate.



© SARAH LEFEVRE (SENIOR LEGAL POLICY ADVISER) LEADING A SESSION AT THE WORKING GROUP CONVENERS' COLLABORATION DAY



© COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND FEDERATION STAFF AT THE WORKING GROUP CONVENERS' COLLABORATION DAY

The Victims' Rights Working Group advocates for stronger legal and systemic support for victim survivors of sexual and family violence and is co-convened by South-East Monash Legal Service, Northern Community Legal Centre and Women's Legal Service Victoria. Through strategic law reform, policy development, and sector representation, the group works to improve outcomes for victims. Last year, key activities included monitoring the Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme (including a series of meetings with the Minister for Victims, Anthony Carbines MP), contributing to advisory bodies, and advancing recommendations from major reviews such as the Australian Law Reform Commission's report on sexual violence and the Victims Charter Review.

WORKING GROUP CONVENERS' COLLABORATION DAY



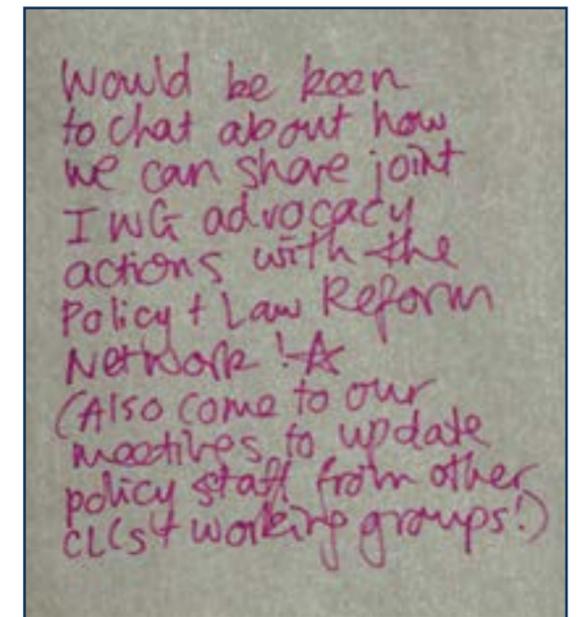
© COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND FEDERATION STAFF AT THE WORKING GROUP CONVENERS' COLLABORATION DAY

Bringing the sector together to share ideas, strengthen and coordinate advocacy, and build cross-sector support is key to our value as a peak body. The Federation convenes eight working groups, communities of practice and networks, and oversees an additional 25 for the sector. These groups add innumerable value to our sector, which thrives off collaboration, innovation, and shared problem-solving.

For the first time, we convened a Working Group Conveners' Day, connecting convenors from all the Victorian sector's 33 working groups to share information on their activities, identify opportunities for collaboration across working groups towards our shared vision and goals, and recognise best practice to apply to convening working groups.

The event was warmly welcomed by participants, the majority of whom indicated in the post-event survey that they found the session valuable, and would like similar sessions to be held on an annual basis.

We loved getting everyone together in person for the event, and hearing about the fantastic work that the sector's working groups do. We can't wait to do it again next year!



© FEEDBACK FROM THE WORKING GROUP CONVENERS' COLLABORATION DAY WRITTEN ON A POST-IT NOTE.

SECTOR SNAPSHOT JULY 2024 TO JUNE 2025

DATA FROM 42 OUT OF 49 COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES WHERE CONSISTENT DATASETS ARE USED. TOTAL FIGURES ARE HIGHER FOR WHEN 50 CENTRES ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

171,006 SERVICES PROVIDED TO AT LEAST 75,000 CLIENTS BY 42 COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

MORE THAN 25,000 OF THE CLIENTS WERE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF FAMILY VIOLENCE.

2/3 OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES PROVIDED SERVICES RELATING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE, PERSONAL SAFETY AND INTERVENTION ORDERS.

DEMAND FOR SERVICES AT COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES INCREASED ON AVERAGE BY 6.85%.

MOST NOTABLE INCREASES IN DEMAND FOR SERVICES RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT AND TENANCY ISSUES.

COMMON LEGAL NEEDS



DIGITAL SELF-HELP TOOLS*

12,851 FACTSHEET/TEMPLATE DOWNLOADS

1,488,968 UNIQUE VISITS TO COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE WEBSITES

413,263 USES OF INTERACTIVE WEBPAGES TOOLS OR APPLICATIONS

*DATA IS FROM 14 OUT OF 49 COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES.

CLIENTS SERVED BY COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

13.44% WERE CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE (<25) | 10.94% WERE OLDER PEOPLE (>65) | 4.47% IDENTIFIED AS ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

64.57% IDENTIFIED AS FEMALE | 34.19% IDENTIFIED AS MALE | 1.24% IDENTIFIED AS NON-BINARY OR OTHER (EXCLUDING DATA WHERE THE GENDER IS UNKNOWN)

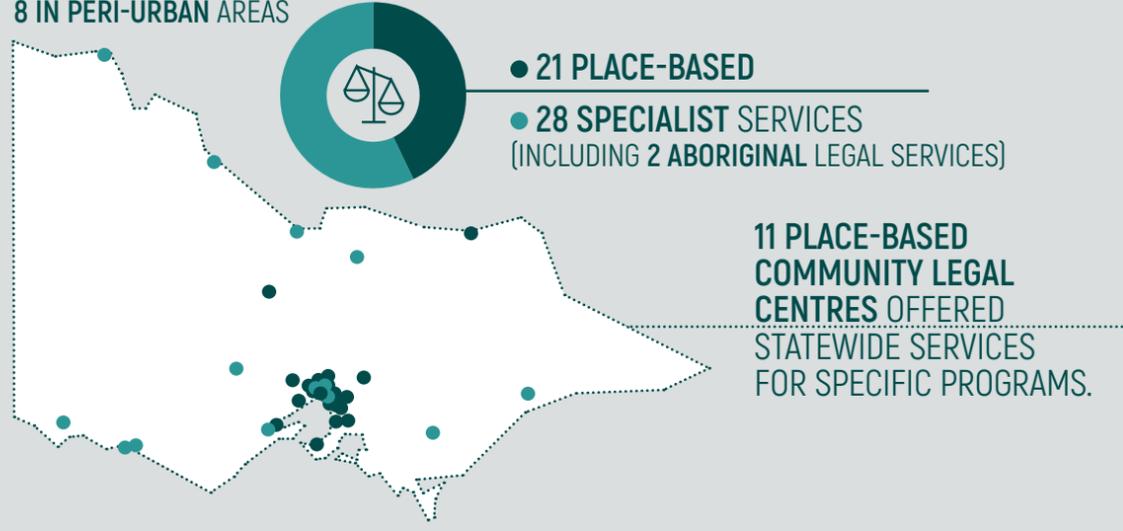
40.05% WERE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF FAMILY VIOLENCE | 18.80% WERE SINGLE PARENTS WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN | 36.86% WERE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY

17.97% DIDN'T SPEAK ENGLISH AS THEIR MAIN LANGUAGE | 17.96% WERE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS | 6.24% LIVED IN RURAL OR REMOTE AREAS

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

50 COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES WORKING TOGETHER FOR A FAIR AND JUST SOCIETY

31 IN METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE
11 IN REGIONAL, RURAL OR REMOTE (RRR) AREAS
8 IN PERI-URBAN AREAS



IN 2024-25, WE WERE ABLE TO INCLUDE DATA FROM 42 COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES IN OUR ANNUAL REPORT, UP FROM 37 IN 2023-24. THIS INCREASE IS TESTAMENT TO HOW FAR THE DATA SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT HAS COME IN IMPROVING AND STANDARDISING THE SECTOR'S DATA CAPTURE AND MANAGEMENT. THANKS TO THE PROJECT, MORE CENTRES HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO REPORT CONSISTENT AND ACCURATE DATA, WHICH IMPROVES THE WAY THE SECTOR IDENTIFIES LEGAL NEED, ALLOCATES RESOURCES, AND DEMONSTRATES IMPACT.

THE FEDERATION

DELIVERED 39 TRAININGS (3,764 REGISTRATIONS) AND 10 LEGAL CPD SESSIONS (602 REGISTRATIONS) | SHARED 24 MEMBER E-NEWSLETTERS (WHICH HIGHLIGHTED POLICY REFORM, ADVOCACY AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES)

INVITED 23 EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS TO MEMBERS' MEETINGS | FUNDED AND PROMOTED 46 EPISODES OF 'DONE BY LAW' ON 3CR

ATTENDED 86 MEETINGS WITH MPS AND ADVISERS | FUNDED 31 MEMBERS TO ACCESS TRANSLATION INTERPRETER SERVICES

HOSTED A ROUNDTABLE MEETING FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES WITH THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL SONYA KILKENNY | CONVENED, CHAIRED OR SUPPORTED 324 CLC WORKING GROUP MEETINGS, TO DISCUSS POLICY AND LAW REFORM ISSUES.

SUPPORTED 37 MEMBERS TO IMPLEMENT OR MAINTAIN MODERN CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS | ACCREDITED 15 CLCS AGAINST THE NATIONAL STANDARDS.

PUBLISHED 15 POLICY SUBMISSIONS AND 19 MEDIA RELEASES TO INFLUENCE LAW AND POLICY REFORM | APPEARED IN 3 PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES, INCLUDING IN RELATION TO THE PERSONAL USE OF CANNABIS, FAMILY VIOLENCE PERPETRATOR DATA, AND DISASTER INSURANCE.

A VOICE FOR JUSTICE

MASTERING MEDIA

The media remains an important tool for leveraging the Federation's advocacy and engagement. This year, we continued to build trusted relationships with journalists and harness media opportunities for members.

In addition to generating and coordinating media opportunities for the sector, we also hosted our inaugural media training series to upskill community legal centres in media, using the skills and expertise of the Communications Network.

Mastering Media Month was a six-part event during October during which members of the Communications Network delivered training to community legal staff on elements of working with the media. Over 60 members registered for events, which were tailored to the unique experiences, resources and goals of community legal centres.

Sessions included: What media wants and working with clients; Campaign and communications planning; Social media for CLCs; Digital marketing for CLCs; Measuring and evaluating your communications; Pitching power; and Media release writing for beginners.

"THIS IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT SPACE FOR OUR SECTOR TO MOVE INTO, AND AT CURRENT WE'RE WADING THE WATERS AS A WHOLE - SO THIS WAS PERFECTLY PITCHED AT BEGINNERS IN THIS SPACE."

- MEDIA MONTH FEEDBACK

Media and communications are essential tools for demonstrating the sector's impact. A lack of funding means that many community legal centres do not have the resourcing for trained communications and media professionals. Mastering Media Month was an opportunity for community legal centres to develop media skills, tailored to the needs of the sector, free of charge.

We thank Mark Pearce (Consumer Action Law Centre), Emma Lang (Fitzroy Legal Service), Kim Koelmeyer and Genevieve Polderman (Justice Connect) for sharing their expertise to help upskill community legal centre staff and volunteers.

ADAPTING TO THE CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE - LAUNCHING INSTAGRAM

In April, the Federation launched Instagram, an immensely popular social media platform. It presents an opportunity for us to raise the profile of the sector, and to tap into new audiences, in particular young people.

Many community legal centres are now on Instagram. This prompted us to enter this space. Through our Instagram account, we've been able to amplify our members' work, connect community legal centres, and strengthen our advocacy.



SHARING THE EXPERIENCES OF OUR COMMUNITIES WITH THE NEW ATTORNEY-GENERAL

In June, representatives from Victorian community legal centres were joined by the recently appointed Victorian Attorney-General, the Hon Sonya Kilkeny, at a roundtable event, to explore evidence-based solutions for making Victoria a safer and fairer place. We were delighted that the new Attorney embraced the opportunity to continue the practice of engaging in regular roundtables with the community legal sector, which has proved an important and productive forum over the past four years.



VICTORIAN ATTORNEY-GENERAL SONYA KILKENY AT A ROUNDTABLE EVENT WITH COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF

The theme for this roundtable event was the collaborative nature of community legal sector work to support and advocate for clients navigating complex legal challenges across the breadth of the system.

During the session, representatives from six community legal centres presented two case studies to the Attorney-General that illustrated the intersecting legal needs of clients, and the ways that community legal centres work together as part of a connected legal ecosystem that supports Victorians who are at risk of falling through the gaps.

The case studies demonstrated the breadth of the sector's work, exploring how community legal centres harness both legal and social services, and partner with each other to address issues including family violence, victim survivor misidentification, recovering from a disaster, seek redress following a crime, migration, infringements, intervention orders and employment.

During the event, we heard that the Attorney-General shares many of our objectives, and recognises the value of community legal centres in supporting communities, and advising her and the broader parliament on policies and laws that bring to life our shared vision of a fair, safe and thriving Victoria.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO STRENGTHENING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ATTORNEY KILKENY, AND WORKING EVEN MORE CLOSELY WITH HER OFFICE GOING FORWARD.



VICTORIAN ATTORNEY-GENERAL SONYA KILKENY AT A ROUNDTABLE EVENT WITH COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF



CENTRING FIRST NATIONS JUSTICE AT OUR CORE

© SKYE FORSTER (DATA IMPLEMENTATION SPECIALIST), SIOBAHN DOYLE AND TALI RECHTMAN (VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE) AT THE LAUNCH OF THE CLIMATE JUSTICE FIELD GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES.

Community legal centres have long recognised that there can be no justice without justice for our First Nations Peoples, who have stewarded this land for more than 65,000 years. Despite centuries of First Nations resistance and courage, colonial systems and attitudes that govern what we now call Australia continue to weigh heavily against them.

As a sector, breaking down the structural disadvantages that First Nations Peoples face is a key priority, and this is reflected across the broad spectrum of the Federation’s work.

Last year, we amplified Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service’s (VALS) powerful advocacy for bail laws that are safe and fair, and to put an end to Aboriginal deaths in custody. We supported VALS to reach their goal of 100 organisational signatories for their Bail Saves Lives campaign, and provided operational and policy support for their snap action on bail demonstration in March with Flat Out.

This year, we were privileged to be joined by Gunditjmara man Rueben Berg, a Reserved Seat Holder and co-chair on the First People’s Assembly of Victoria at a Members Meeting. Rueben updated members about the status of the Treaty process in Victoria and provided practical guidance on how community legal centres can be allies to support and embed the Treaty in Victoria. As a proud ally of Treaty in Victoria, the Federation prepared a project plan to start the Friends of Treaty process across our sector. This was overwhelmingly well received by members, and will be implemented in the coming year.

Throughout the year we prioritised deep listening to First Nations voices and experiences to inform just solutions for everyone. In our policy platform, self-determination, Treaty and First Nations justice are at the top of our agenda of policy recommendations, reflecting the sector’s true commitment to standing with First Nations Peoples. We will continue to follow the lead of our Aboriginal members, and to embed the voices of First Nations Peoples in all we do.



© YOORROOK JUSTICE COMMISSION WALK FOR TRUTH SMOKING CEREMONY

WALKING FOR TRUTH –STANDING WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES IN THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

In June, thousands of First Nations Peoples and allies joined Travis Lovett, a Kerrupmara Gunditjmara man and Deputy Commissioner of the Yoorrook Commission, on his 500-kilometre Walk for Truth.

The walk began in Portland, where colonisation began in Victoria, and culminated in Melbourne (Naarm) on the steps of Parliament House. The final day of Yoorrook’s Walk for Truth marked the beginning of a new era of Truth-telling.

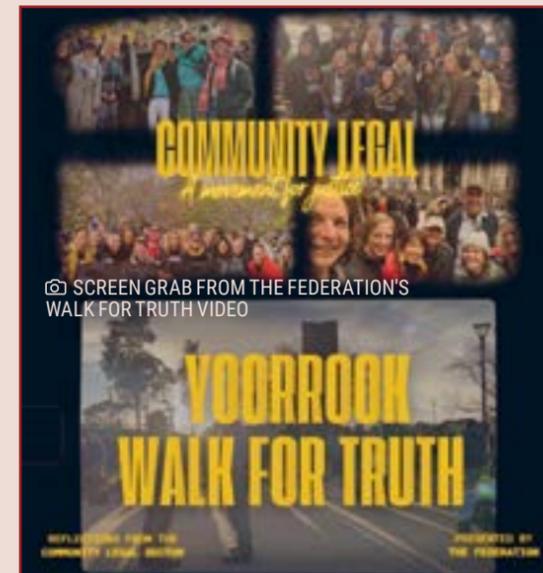
Federation staff attended various legs of the Walk for Truth, and promoted the walk across the sector, coordinating community legal centre staff who took part on its final day.



© WINYINNAR MENDEZ WILLIAMS (CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE) AT THE WALK FOR TRUTH

The Federation created a video from footage taken during the final leg of the walk, to capture the sentiment of people taking part, and to encourage people to read the report and reflect on its findings. The video included community legal centre staff speaking about what the walk and First Nations Truth-telling mean to them, why First Nations justice remains at the heart of all community legal centre work – and how we can move forward to implement the recommendations in the report.

Thanks to all the community legal centre staff who attended this important event, and who advocate for First Nations justice every day.



© SCREEN GRAB FROM THE FEDERATION’S WALK FOR TRUTH VIDEO

CLIMATE JUSTICE FIELD GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

Last year the Federation's Climate Justice Support Unit (CJSU) took significant steps towards fortifying the community legal sector's capacity and capability to adapt and respond to climate change and disasters, and to realise climate justice.

Thanks to the hard work and commitment of the CJSU and many community legal centres involved in climate and disaster justice, the much-awaited, one of its kind **Climate Justice Field Guide for Community Legal Centres** (the Field Guide) was launched in March. Dr Karyn Bosomworth, Program Manager Healthy and Climate Resilient Communities at the Greater Melbourne Foundation (formerly Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation) gave an emotive speech at the launch, which was well attended by colleagues from the sector.

The Field Guide is a foundational climate justice resource for community legal centres, that builds on extensive practice knowledge emerging from the community legal sector and collaboration between the Federation and community legal centres.

The Field Guide was co-designed by Victorian community legal centres, the Climate and Disaster Justice Working Group, and the CJSU, which coordinated the process. It defines key concepts and terminology and explores the intersection between legal need, access to justice and climate change and disaster events. It includes guidance on how to make climate justice more integrated, accessible, and equitable, by applying systemic thinking and collective approaches that centre on local knowledge, leadership and lived experience.

The Field Guide and **online toolkit** documents are designed to be used by community legal centres. Climate justice staff will use them for training, presentations, community legal education, partnership design, funding proposals, developing policies and processes, and advocacy and submissions.

Read more: fclc.org.au/cjfg



DR KARYN BOSOMWORTH (GREATER MELBOURNE FOUNDATION) AT THE LAUNCH OF THE CLIMATE JUSTICE FIELD GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES



DEBORAH FISHER (HUME RIVERINA COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE) AT THE LAUNCH OF THE CLIMATE JUSTICE FIELD GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES



DEBORAH FISHER (HUME RIVERINA COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE), MICHAEL SMITH (EASTERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE), PROFESSOR MURRAY RAFF, CLINT WESTIG, LOUISA GIBBS (FEDERATION), DR KARYN BOSOMWORTH (GREATER MELBOURNE FOUNDATION), DR BRONWYN LAY (FEDERATION), PETER WALTON (GREATER MELBOURNE FOUNDATION), AT THE LAUNCH OF THE CLIMATE JUSTICE FIELD GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

WE THANK ALL THOSE WHO TOOK PART IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIELD GUIDE, WHICH WE KNOW WILL PROVIDE INVALUABLE SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE LONG INTO THE FUTURE.

The Field Guide shares Victorian community legal centres' climate justice journeys, brought to life through case studies that showcase the value of the innovative, courageous, and collective approaches that community legal centres have embraced as they support Victorian communities to deal with the impacts of climate change. These case studies offer the reader practical examples of how climate justice can be embedded in organisations and communities and highlight the role that the Federation has played in responding to the emerging legal need for climate justice.

The Field Guide is complemented by an online toolkit of document templates that can be customised by community legal centres to fast-track climate justice integration into their service delivery, community legal education, governance, operations, and policy and advocacy work.

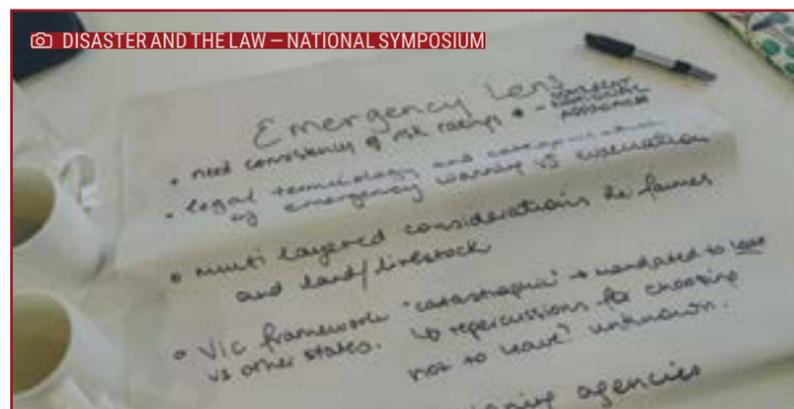
The toolkit supports community legal centres to become more adaptable, resilient, and prepared in their journey of integrating climate justice across all their activities and operations, and to embed monitoring, evaluation and learning into processes to evolve practice and capacity into the future.

DISASTER AND THE LAW – NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

In March, the Federation partnered with Red Cross Australia and Disaster Legal Help Victoria to host a National Symposium, to explore access to justice and legal needs in relation to disaster events, and collaboration between the community legal sector and emergency management organisations.

We welcomed a range of expert speakers at the symposium, including Yvette Zegenhagen OAM (Australian Red Cross), Professor Rosemary Lyster (The University of Sydney), Monica Taylor (Queensland University of Technology), Dr Emily Kothe (Law and Justice Foundation of NSW) and a panel of community legal centre representatives working in this emerging field of disaster response.

The symposium exemplified how far the community legal sector has come on our collective journey to recognise and realise disaster justice in our climate-changing world. The road ahead is long and largely unknown, but events like the symposium demonstrate a clear commitment to identifying and responding to legal need in the context of disaster management, and to working together as a sector to achieve climate and disaster justice in our communities.



PREMIER JACINTA ALLAN WITH COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF AT THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE EXHIBITION



VICTORIAN BUDGET FUNDING ADVOCACY

Funding from the Victorian Government is a key resource for most Victorian community legal centres. The Federation continued its annual funding advocacy ahead of the release of the Victorian state budget in May 2025. In addition to a much-needed uplift in core funding for community legal centres to meet high legal need, our budget submission advocated for targeted funding for legal assistance in a range of areas, including integrated legal services provision, housing issues and homelessness, mental health, family violence and disability.

On the day the budget was handed down, Louisa Gibbs (CEO) and Katie Wand (Communications Manager) attended the 'budget lock up' where Premier Allan and Treasurer Symes provided an overview of the year's key investments.

In its 2025 budget, the Victorian Government confirmed that it would continue to fund a range of community legal centres' lifechanging integrated justice programs, the victims legal service, and legal assistance for family violence matters, through the continuation of the pre-court engagement model and the CLC Family Violence Assistance Fund. These programs are essential to provide family members experiencing violence, typically women and children, with independent legal advice.

Other new investments in the community legal sector included funding for Mortgage Stress Victoria; and for community legal and Aboriginal legal services operating at the new Wyndham Law Courts. Integrated funding for financial counselling services as part of renter services was also welcomed by the sector.

Whilst community legal centres were relieved that existing programs that are proven to work are being re-funded, the budget failed to increase investment to allow community legal services to expand their early intervention and crisis support work. With 91 per cent of community legal centres reporting increased demand for their services over the past year, and nearly 2,000 help-seekers being turned away each week across the state, the absence of significant investment by government in the community legal sector is a barrier for delivering holistic legal assistance services to Victorians.

DISASTER AND THE LAW – NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

ADVOCATING FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF ADVOCATING FOR REFORMS THAT MAKE OUR COMMUNITY SAFER AND MORE EQUITABLE. THE FEDERATION WORKS WITH AND FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES TO SUPPORT, STRENGTHEN, AND COORDINATE ADVOCACY ACROSS THE SECTOR, MAXIMISING IMPACT AND DELIVERING SUSTAINED POSITIVE CHANGE.

It was a year of considerable legislative change in Victoria and the Federation supported community legal centres by strengthening and streamlining the sector's collective advocacy. Leveraging the constructive relationships we have with government, the Federation advocated with and behalf of the sector on a range of important issues affecting people in the communities we serve.



STAFF FROM YOUTHLAW, SMART JUSTICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE FEDERATION ON THE STEPS OF THE VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT.



LEE CARNIE (DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND ADVOCACY), CHIEF JUSTICE RICHARD NIALL (SUPREME COURT OF VICTORIA) LOUISA GIBBS (CEO)

ADVOCACY AGAINST REGRESSIVE CHANGES TO BAIL AND POLICE POWERS

Community safety requires investment in early intervention and community-based prevention, not harsher bail laws that will capture marginalised communities committing low level offending.

The Federation supported community legal centres to stand in solidarity with Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and Djirra in their staunch advocacy against the Victorian Government's bail changes that reinstated previous laws that Corner McGregor held were an "unmitigated disaster", and led to the tragic and preventable death in custody of Aboriginal woman Veronica Nelson.

The Federation held briefings with the sector summarising the proposed bail changes, and with key government policymakers and decision-makers to advocate to reinstate bail changes, and for safeguards and support for communities. We convened responsive sector meetings to coordinate advocacy and conducted research on the impact of similar bail changes that were introduced in New South Wales to promote evidence-based policymaking.

We also strongly opposed a bill to extend the Chief Commissioner's power to declare a designated area for police to search anyone without a warrant or reasonable suspicion of criminal activity from 12 hours to six months. Research has shown that extending "no reason" search powers fails to protect communities, while dramatically increasing stigmatisation of communities experiencing disadvantage.

The Federation coordinated a joint letter from community organisations opposed to these net-widening powers, and backed the Victorian community legal sector to meet with government advisors and parliamentarians to advocate against these rushed changes granting extensive additional powers to Victoria Police, without consultation or clear evidence that they will be effective.

The laws were passed, but we will continue to work with community legal centres to advocate against broader police powers and for an Independent Police Ombudsman.



COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND FEDERATION STAFF AT THE WALK TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE

IMPROVING RESPONSES TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

Statistics from November 2024 confirmed that family violence has continued to rise in Victoria, increasing pressure on already over-stretched community legal services.

The Federation continued to coordinate community legal centres to advocate for reforms to improve family violence and intervention order systems for victims and survivors of family violence. We highlighted the critical legal assistance that community legal centres provide as a gateway to safety for people experiencing or at risk of family violence in meetings with government, and public advocacy in the media.

We coordinated sector consultations and sector-wide policy submissions to the Victorian Government advocating for key family violence priorities to be included in the Women's Safety reforms. We welcomed many of the reforms announced as part of the Women's Safety Package, particularly those strengthening the family violence intervention order system, and commend community legal centres for successfully advocating for these important changes.

EXPANDING PROTECTIONS FROM HATE SPEECH

Community legal centres have been working in close partnership with impacted communities to advocate for stronger protections from harmful hate speech for almost a decade. We have consistently advocated for laws which provide protections from hate while safeguarding rights to legitimate public protest.

To push for greater protection against hate to be enshrined in law, we coordinated sector policy submissions to government consultations on the details of the legislation introduced to Parliament; organised sector briefings for parliamentarians on the legal details and nuances of the proposed changes; and supported VALS' advocacy for amendments that clarified that a key purpose of the new laws is to provide protections from vilification for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other groups experiencing systemic injustice and structural oppression.

In April, the Victorian Government finally passed the Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Act 2025. Community legal advocates were at the heart of last-minute changes to strengthen the bill as it passed through parliament in the middle of the night. Community legal centres welcomed these reforms, which will provide essential legal protections from hate speech for communities under sustained attack and promote diversity and respect in our society, while ensuring that local communities and grassroots advocates angered by injustice can continue to campaign for fairer laws.



COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF AT THE CEOS MEETING IN BALLARAT

COORDINATING SECTOR-WIDE ADVOCACY

The Federation also progressed activities to strengthen the sector's coordinated advocacy practices as part of the 10-Year Plan, including:

Action for Justice policy platform – preparing our sector-wide Action for Justice policy platform, to guide our collective advocacy and law reform efforts over the next five years (launched at the community legal sector Law Reform Summit in July 2025).

Sector mapping – conducting a Policy & Law Reform Survey to understand law reform priorities, how to improve day-to-day collaboration, most useful Federation supports and trainings, and how community legal centres collect data about policy activities.

Template policy tools – preparing template endorsement frameworks and trackers for community legal centres and working groups to use to codify, clarify and strengthen how they make decisions about signing on to joint advocacy actions and campaigns.

 Published **15 policy submissions and 19 media releases** on policy and law reform issues.

Appeared in **3 parliamentary inquiries**, including in relation to the personal use of cannabis, family violence perpetrator data, and disaster insurance. 

 Attended **86 meetings with MPs** and advisors.

Convened or chaired **324 CLC working group** meetings to discuss policy and law reform issues. 

LAW REFORM SUBMISSIONS

Throughout the year, the Federation contributed 15 submissions to inform inquiries and provide feedback on public policy. Submissions form an important part of our work in the law reform and advocacy space.

Read our submissions on our website fclc.org.au/policy_submissions



LOUISA GIBBS (CEO) WITH KIRSTEN SULLIVAN, EMILY FYFFE AND LINDA RICHARDSON (MADDOCKS) WHO WERE RECOGNISED AT THE LAW INSTITUTE OF VICTORIA AWARDS FOR THEIR PRO BONO WORK NEGOTIATING A NEW MULTI-ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT ON BEHALF OF VICTORIAN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The Federation is fortunate to be part of a strong ecosystem of social and legal assistance providers in Victoria.

We work closely with organisations including Victoria Legal Aid, Victoria Law Foundation, Centre of Innovative Justice at RMIT, the Law Institute of Victoria, the Victorian Bar, the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner and VCOSS in a collaborative approach to enabling access to justice. This includes working together on coalitions such as the Collaborative Planning Committee, Disaster Legal Help Victoria and the Smart Justice coalitions, and also acting as a conduit for community legal centres to contribute to, and learn from, the initiatives of the other organisations.

CASE STUDY: VLSB+C HOUSING JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS GRANTS

The Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner (VLSB+C) provides important leadership and funding for access to justice projects in Victoria. In July, the VLSB+C hosted a workshop to introduce its 2024 Advancing Housing Justice grants round. Expertly facilitated, the workshop introduced the VLSB+C's report by Gerard Brody titled 'Advancing Housing Justice: the opportunity for legal services to improve access to housing', and the aims of the grants round.

Following the workshop, the Federation supported members to keep the conversations about partnerships going and to apply for the grants. This included creating spaces for our members to share their ideas for projects and look for ways to build on each other's ideas.

Eighteen community legal centres were successful as part of collaborations to receive grants under this important funding round. We thank the VLSB+C for supporting the innovative and evidence-based projects of community legal centres in the housing space.

ENSURING QUALITY SERVICES

TRAINING COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF TO DELIVER EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

DELIVERING TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF IS A KEY TENET OF THE FEDERATION'S ROLE AND PURPOSE. THE FEDERATION ENDEAVOURS TO CREATE A TRAINING PROGRAM THAT IS ENGAGING, RESPONSIVE TO NEED AND FIT FOR OUR SECTOR.

We have many partners across our sector and allied sectors who we work with to deliver a unique training program that provides all community legal centre staff with the skills they need to serve their communities.

We take pride in the broad range of trainings that we offer to our members, each of which is tailored to the unique and complex nature of community legal sector work.

Throughout the year, we delivered 39 training sessions on a broad range of relevant topics that reflect the diverse ways that community legal centres work with the people in their communities. There were more registrations from community legal centre staff for Federation-run training than in any year prior, with 3,764 registrations in 2024-25, representing a 16 per cent increase on the previous year.

Examples of training offered to community legal sector staff in FY2024-25:

- ▼ First Nations Data Sovereignty
- ▼ Aboriginal Cultural safety
- ▼ Freedom of Information
- ▼ Privacy
- ▼ Project management
- ▼ Youth Difficult Conversations
- ▼ Managing Vicarious Trauma

With the growth of climate justice work in community legal centres over the past couple of years, the Federation's Climate Justice Support Unit partnered with members doing extraordinary work in this space to offer capacity building experiences throughout the year:

- ▼ Climate Conscious Lawyering Day – partnered with South-East Monash Legal Service
- ▼ Disaster Insurance – partnered with Consumer Action Law Centre and Hume Riverina Community Legal Service
- ▼ Disaster Justice: Generalist and Specialist Centres working together – partnered with Social Security Rights Victoria
- ▼ Climate Justice: Identifying Legal Need – supporting ARC Justice and Ballarat & Grampians Community Legal Service
- ▼ Emergency Day Management – supporting Human Rights Law Centre, Fitzroy Legal Service and Flat Out Inc

CPD EVENT 2025

The Federation's annual cpd event is a targeted intensive program for community lawyers seeking to complete their compulsory continuous professional development (CPD) requirements and develop valuable skills and insights in areas of community law that are not offered elsewhere. The uniqueness of community lawyering requires an equally unique approach to CPD, which the federation designs and coordinates.

The sector benefits enormously when we can learn from our peers, and we thank all the incredible presenters who committed their time and expertise to sharing their skills with the community legal sector.

SCHEDULE	
MON 17 MARCH 2PM-3PM	INTRODUCTION TO REPRODUCTIVE COERCION AND ABUSE AND THE LAW South-East Monash Legal Service & The University of Melbourne Professional Skills - 1 CPD point
TUE 18 MARCH 2PM-3PM	NAVIGATING WORKPLACE BULLYING: KEY DECISIONS OF THE FAIR WORK COMMISSION AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR YOU JobWatch Practice Management and Business Skills, Substantive Law - 1 CPD point
WED 19 MARCH 2PM-3:30PM	CAPACITY, DECISION MAKING, AND CLIENTS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS Mental Health Legal Centre, Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, Seniors Rights Victoria & Independent Mental Health Advocacy Ethics and Professional Responsibility, Professional Skills, Substantive Law - 1.5 CPD points
THU 20 MARCH 2PM-3PM	PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM Fitzroy Legal Service Professional Skills, Substantive Law - 1 CPD point
FRI 21 MARCH 2PM-3:30PM	ABOVE AND BEYOND: HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS Hume Riverina Community Legal Service Professional Skills - 1.5 CPD points
MON 24 MARCH 2PM-3PM	THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF 'CRASH AND BASH': INSURANCE LITIGATION IN MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT CLAIMS Monash Law Clinics & Wotton Kearney Substantive Law - 1 CPD point
TUE 25 MARCH 2PM-3PM	CRIMINAL LAW PROCEDURE 101: FOR NON-CRIMINAL LAWYERS WORKING WITH VICTIMS Law and Advocacy Centre for Women Substantive Law - 1 CPD point
WED 26 MARCH 2PM-3:30PM	EMPOWERING VICTIM/SURVIVORS: NAVIGATING THE NEW FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME (FAS) Women's Legal Service Victoria & South-East Monash Legal Service Professional Skills, Substantive Law - 1.5 CPD points
THU 27 MARCH 2PM-3:30PM	LAWYER ASSISTED FAMILY DISPUTE RESOLUTION MODEL: RESPONDING TO FINANCIAL ABUSE AND FAMILY VIOLENCE Northern Community Legal Centre, Monash Law Clinics, Broadmeadows Family Relationship Centre & Sunshine Family Relationship Centre Professional Skills, Substantive Law - 1.5 CPD points
FRI 28 MARCH 2PM-3:30PM	YOU CAN'T ASK THAT: HOW TO BRIEF EQUITABLY IN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES Human Rights Law Centre & Victoria Legal Aid Ethics and Professional Responsibility - 1.5 CPD points

ALL SESSIONS ARE HOSTED ONLINE.
FREE FOR FEDERATION MEMBERS, INTERSTATE CLCs, TARWIRRI MEMBERS
\$25-\$75 FOR ANYONE WHO DOES NOT FALL INTO THE CATEGORIES ABOVE
- REGISTER HERE

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2,172 REGISTRATIONS FOR 10 TRAINING SESSIONS
OVER THE TWO-WEEK LONG CPD EVENT

ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL COMMUNITY
LEGAL CENTRES IN VICTORIA

INCLUDING **463 REGISTRATIONS FROM REGIONAL**
COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES



PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND SUPPORT COMMITTEE

The Professional Standards and Support (PSS) Committee are a group of principal solicitors who volunteer their time and talents to provide guidance for members on legal practice and risk management. The PSS Committee handles legal practice and risk management issues in Victoria, and how they relate to the National Professional Insurance Indemnity Scheme, which covers law practices against legal liability.

The Federation's Quality and Capacity Development Unit plays a coordinating and administrative role in supporting the PSS Committee, and actively contributes expertise to the PSS Committee meetings, activities and outcomes.

This year, the PSS Committee provided extensive feedback on the review of the Risk Management Guide, which is CLCs Australia's key guiding document for supporting community legal centres to standardise risk management of legal practice and assure quality of service delivery. The PSS Committee held multiple sessions with Victorian community legal centres about the review, and provided feedback to CLCs Australia.

The PSS Committee and the Federation also coordinated the annual cross-check process, where CLCs review each other's work to ensure best practice across the sector.

MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND SUPPORT COMMITTEE

- ▼ Deborah Miller (Eastern Community Legal Centre)
- ▼ Isabelle Butler (University of Melbourne Student Union Legal Service)
- ▼ Luke McLean (Northern Community Legal Centre)
- ▼ Rebecca Edwards (ARC Justice)
- ▼ Sokha Um (Peninsula Community Legal Centre)
- ▼ Tanya Stelmach (Whittlesea Community Connections Community Legal Centre)

The Federation thanks retiring PSS Committee member Nicholas Pagonis (commUnity+ Legal (formerly Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre)) for his time and expertise in contributing to the PSS Committee since January 2024.

ANNUAL PRINCIPAL LAWYERS' MEETING

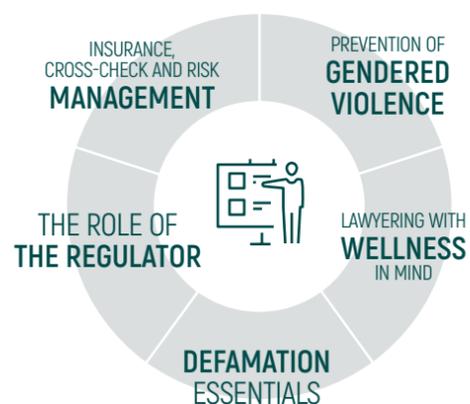
Every year, the Annual Principal Lawyers' Meeting is an opportunity for principal lawyers from across the sector to connect and learn together.

Presentations at this year's meeting:

- ▼ **Prevention of Gendered Violence in Community Legal Centres Presentation and Workshop** - delivered by Monique Keel and Deborah Hann (Women's Legal Service Victoria)
- ▼ **Lawyering with Wellness in Mind** - delivered by Emily Knowles (Law Institute of Victoria)
- ▼ **Defamation Essentials** – delivered by Scott Traegar (Lander & Rogers)
- ▼ **The Role of the Regulator: Complaints and Risk Areas for Community Legal Centres** - delivered by Emily Pompetti and Rex Punshon (Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner)
- ▼ **Insurance, Cross-Check, and Risk Management Guide Panel Presentation** - delivered by the Professional Standards and Support Committee

WE THANK HOLDING REDLICH FOR SUPPORTING THIS ANNUAL EVENT WITH A VENUE AND CATERING.

ANNUAL PRINCIPAL LAWYERS MEETING PRESENTATION TOPICS



EMILY POMPETTI AND REX PUNSHON (VLSB+C)
PRESENTING AT THE ANNUAL PRINCIPAL LAWYERS' MEETING

ASSURING QUALITY AND PROMOTING BEST PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

Supporting Victorian community legal centres to maintain and improve standards of service delivery is a key priority for the Federation. The National Accreditation Scheme (NAS) is CLCs 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, ensures effective governance and management practices, and increases confidence in the sector's operations.

The Federation implements the accreditation process for Victorian community legal centres and makes certification decisions in line with the NAS guidelines based on in-person site visits and assessments, and provides ongoing support throughout the year to community legal centres to ensure they meet their obligations and high quality service delivery.

Through these accreditations the Federation's Quality and Capacity Development Unit is able to identify gaps and analyse trends which inform learning and development outcomes, enhance sector capacity to develop and implement governance and management practices, and improve service delivery outcomes to the community.

All Victorian community legal centres are now accredited to Phase 3 of the NAS, with 15 accreditations completed at centres, and two new member community legal centres supported from start to finish of the accreditation process over the year.

"WE ARE SO HAPPY TO RECEIVE OUR ACCREDITATION AND WILL BE FRAMING OUR CERTIFICATE. MANY THANKS TO THE FEDERATION FOR UNDERTAKING OUR ACCREDITATION - I'VE FOUND THE ENTIRE PROCESS RE-ASSURING AND HAVE LEARNT A LOT."

- CLC PRINCIPAL LAWYER



ADVANCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MODERN DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ACROSS THE SECTOR

© SIMON SUTTIE (GIPPSLAND COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE) PRESENTING AT A MEMBERS' MEETING.

The Federation's Data System Implementation project began in 2021 as a vehicle for standardising and modernising community legal centre data and reporting. Through supporting better data practices, the Federation improves the community legal sector's ability to understand and meet areas of need, allocate resources accordingly, and demonstrate impact.

This year, the modern legal management system Actionstep was rolled out to six more community legal centres, bringing the total to 37. The Federation also supported community legal centres in configuring systems to meet operational and reporting needs.

To improve data quality and relevance, the Community Legal Centre Data Community of Practice (CoP) met monthly, bringing together 25-30 regular members to troubleshoot problems and share strategies that worked.

As well as improving data definitions and quality, the CoP members contributed to the development of better outcome measures and streamlined data collection.

Over the year, the Federation and community legal centres worked together to further develop sector-wide outcome measures.

We continue to develop recommendations and tools, based on the outcomes of a pilot project completed in December 2023, when 15 community legal centres implemented 35 outcome measures, collecting data from 6,000 services. Subsequent analysis of the pilot project led to the development of a consolidated and practical list of fields and outcome measures, that will form the basis for future sector-wide recommendations and tools.

CASE STUDY: OVERCOMING DATA CHALLENGES WITH SOME HELP FROM THE FEDERATION

Last year, the Federation continued to provide Northern Community Legal Centre with data capability support which has consolidated and enhanced our impact reporting.

Skye Forster (Data Implementation Analyst) continues to provide us with ad-hoc data capability support, and technical guidance on how to best include data fields in Actionstep to ensure data quality.

Skye also proactively shares information on the approaches taken by other community legal centres, which informed our decisions and encourages standardisation and best practice across the sector.

Skye has an exceptional and comprehensive understanding of the data reporting requirements for community legal centres, and the challenges associated with obtaining quality data using systems that were not designed for community legal centre work.

Skye supported Northern Community Legal Centre to build and continually improve our case management system, so that it serves our organisation's practical, reporting, and strategic needs, and has helped us to navigate data system issues.

Skye, in conjunction with the CLC Data Community of Practice and the Impact and Evaluation Community of Practice, has supported Northern Community Legal Centre to capture greater impact data, supporting our organisation's advocacy work.

- THE TEAM AT NORTHERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE



© EMMA HENDERSON (NORTHERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE) AT THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE EXHIBITION

OUR PEOPLE

FEDERATION STAFF (AS AT 30 JUNE 2025)

Angela McCrorie	Executive Assistant to Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Albie Colvin	Digital Communications Officer
Dr Bronwyn Lay	Climate Justice Support Unit – Strategic Lead <i>(On secondment to Disaster Legal Help Victoria from 26 May 2025)</i>
Clint Westig	Climate Justice Support Unit – Program Lead
Deborah Wilson	Finance Officer (Good Financials)
Gabby Talmadge	Training and Capacity Development Coordinator
Katie Wand	Communications Manager
Kimberly Yeung	Quality and Program Support Officer
Lee Carnie	Director of Policy and Advocacy
Louisa Gibbs	Chief Executive Officer
Emeritus Professor Murray Raff	Climate Justice Support Unit –Senior Legal Policy Adviser
Naomi Bellingham	Senior Legal Policy Adviser
Nicole Burnard	Executive Assistant to Chief Executive Officer and Board
Rosanna Di Grazia	Office Coordinator
Ryn Hopgood	Operations Manager
Sarah Lefevre	Senior Legal Policy Adviser
Simon Kuut	Quality and Capacity Development Manager
Skye Forster	Data Transformation Analyst
Tanya Sawtell	Director of Member Excellence, People and Operations
Tim McMahon	Data Transformation Manager

We would like to thank staff who left the Federation during the year for their considerable contributions to the Federation’s work and team spirit, as well as their support for the sector: Ariel Parker (Digital Communications Officer), Emeritus Professor Murray Raff (Senior Legal Policy Adviser – Climate Justice Support Unit), Sylvia Soo (People and Culture Adviser) and Thanh Coutts (Project Coordinator).

We acknowledge the work during the year of our team members who are on extended leave as at 30 June 2025: Michelle Taylor (Operations Manager) and Rachel Pliner (Director of Policy and Advocacy). Thank you to the temporary employees who supported the Federation at various times of the year: Bec Taylor-Ashfield, Natalie James, and Shazeena McDonald.



FEDERATION STAFF DURING COLLABORATION WEEK.

INTERNS

What would we do without the bright, thoughtful and creative inputs from our interns? Thank you to the University of Melbourne (Melbourne Law School) Juris Doctorate students who supported our policy and climate justice work: Dominique Noblet and Kristen Beer.



FEDERATION STAFF ROLE PLAYING DISASTER SCENARIO PLANNING DURING COLLABORATION WEEK



FEDERATION STAFF AT A TEAM-BUILDING WORKSHOP DURING COLLABORATION WEEK



FEDERATION STAFF SAYING FAREWELL TO INTERNS DOMINIQUE NOBLET AND KRISTEN BEER

FEDERATION BOARD (AS AT 30 JUNE 2025)

Bryanna Connell	Federation Chair and CEO of Barwon Community Legal Service
Damian Stock	Federation Deputy Chair and CEO of ARC Justice
Jenni Smith	Federation Secretary and CEO of Northern Community Legal Centre
Jo Bradley	Federation Treasurer and Chair of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee and appointed Board member
Elena Pappas	Chair of the Policy Review Committee and CEO of Law and Advocacy Centre for Women
Emma Greeney	Chair of the Governance Committee and appointed Board member
Melissa Hardham	CEO of WESTjustice
Nithya Gopu Solomon	Appointed board member
Tracey Gaudry	CEO of commUnity+



FEDERATION BOARD MEMBERS AT THE FEDERATION'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.



COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE STAFF AT THE FEDERATION'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.

MEMBERS (AS AT 30 JUNE 2025)

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

THANK YOU

OUR FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

FUNDERS

We can only undertake the breadth of activities we do because of our incredibly generous funders.

Greater Melbourne Foundation (Previously the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation)
 Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety,
 Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety – Emergency Management Victoria
 Victoria Legal Aid
 Victorian Legal Services Board + Commission

OUR SPONSORS, IN KIND AND PRO BONO PARTNERS

City of Melbourne	King Wood Mallesons
Clayton Utz	Lander & Rodgers
Gadens	Maddocks
Holding Redlich	Minter Ellison
K&L Gates	Norton Rose Fullbright

More than providing financial support, we benefit enormously from the expertise and collaboration with these organisations as we pursue our joint goal of access to justice.

THANK YOU TO OUR INDIVIDUAL, REGULAR ANNUAL GIVING PARTNERS. YOUR BELIEF IN OUR WORK AS A PEAK BODY INSPIRES US!

Special thanks to our Community Legal Centre colleagues who supported by providing rooms for Federation staff when working outside our Melbourne office:

ARC Justice
 Ballarat & Grampians Community Legal Centre (Ballarat)
 Barwon Community Legal Service (Geelong)
 CLCs Australia (Sydney, NSW)
 Eastern Community Legal Centre (Melbourne)
 Gippsland Community Legal Service (Bairnsdale)
 Hume Riverina Community Legal Service (Wodonga)
 InTouch Women's Legal Centre (Melbourne)
 Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre (Mildura)
 Mortgage Stress Victoria (Melbourne)
 South-East Monash Legal Service (Melbourne)
 Tenants Victoria (Melbourne)
 Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service (Geelong)
 WEstjustice (Melbourne)
 Women's Legal Service Victoria (Melbourne)
 YFS Legal (Logan, Queensland)

FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY
LEGAL CENTRES (VICTORIA) INC.
ABN 30 036 539 902

FINANCIAL REPORTS

YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	Note	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
INCOME			
Victoria Legal Aid - Recurrent		838,541	793,322
VLA - ERO State		282,434	267,203
Grant Income - Other Projects - net of distributions	2	2,214,099	1,922,496
Other Income		121,133	94,395
Interest Received		56,724	49,283
		<u>3,512,931</u>	<u>3,126,699</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Employee benefit expenses		-2,699,685	-2,346,228
Operating Expenses		-212,376	-186,460
Project Related Expenses		-658,381	-468,278
Occupancy Expenses		-23,410	-23,093
Total Expenditure		<u>-3,593,852</u>	<u>-3,024,059</u>
Net Profit		<u>-80,921</u>	<u>102,640</u>
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss when specific con		-	-
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		<u>(80,921)</u>	<u>102,640</u>

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

	Note	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash at Bank and on Hand	10a	1,504,983	2,064,407
Receivables	4	3,374,051	1,078,834
Financial assets	5	<u>1,533,059</u>	<u>1,477,342</u>
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		<u>6,412,093</u>	<u>4,620,583</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Fixed Assets	6	-	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>6,412,093</u>	<u>4,620,583</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	7	239,532	213,095
Funds in Advance	8	4,119,935	2,339,350
Employee Provisions	9	<u>216,417</u>	<u>161,782</u>
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>4,575,884</u>	<u>2,714,227</u>
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Employee Provisions	9	<u>38,023</u>	<u>27,249</u>
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>38,023</u>	<u>27,249</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES		<u>4,613,907</u>	<u>2,741,476</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>1,798,186</u>	<u>1,879,107</u>
EQUITY			
Retained Earnings		<u>1,798,186</u>	<u>1,879,107</u>
TOTAL EQUITY		<u>1,798,186</u>	<u>1,879,107</u>

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	Note	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
RETAINED EARNINGS			
Opening Balance		1,879,107	1,776,467
Profit in the current year		-80,921	102,640
Other Comprehensive Income		-	-
Closing Balance of Retained Earnings		<u>1,798,186</u>	<u>1,879,107</u>
TOTAL EQUITY		<u>1,798,186</u>	<u>1,879,107</u>

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	Note	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from Grants and Other Income		1,506,611	3,029,735
Payments to Suppliers and Employees		-2,067,042	2,866,917
Interest Received		56,724	41,930
NET CASH PROVIDED BY OPERATING ACTIVITIES	10(b)	<u>503,707</u>	<u>204,748</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Proceeds from/(Investment in) Financial Assets		55,717	40,595
NET CASH (USED IN)/PROVIDED BY INVESTING ACTIVITIES		<u>55,717</u>	<u>40,595</u>
		559,424	164,153
Cash at the beginning of the year		2,064,407	1,900,254
CASH AT THE END OF THE YEAR	10(a)	<u>1,504,983</u>	<u>2,064,407</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

NOTE 1: MATERIAL ACCOUNTING POLICY INFORMATION

The accounting policies that are material to the Incorporated Association are set out below. The accounting policies adopted are consistent with those of the previous financial year, unless otherwise stated.

New or Amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations Adopted

The Association has adopted all of the new or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') that are mandatory for the current reporting period.

Basis of Preparation

In the Committee's opinion, the Association is not a reporting entity because there are no users dependent on general purpose financial statements.

These are special purpose financial statements that have been prepared for the purposes of complying with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. The Committee have determined that the accounting policies adopted are appropriate to meet the needs of the members of Federation of Community Legal Centres Vic Inc.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements specified by the Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') and the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 'Presentation of Financial Statements', AASB 107 'Statement of Cash Flows', AASB 108 'Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors', AASB 1048 'Interpretation of Standards' and AASB 1054 'Australian Additional Disclosures', as appropriate for not-for-profit oriented entities, with the exception of the following, where these financial statements do not comply with the recognition and measurement requirements in these standards:

- AASB 15 'Revenue from Contracts with Customers' & AASB 1058 'Income of Not-for-Profit Entities'; and
- AASB 16 'Leases'.

Historical cost convention

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, except for, where applicable, the revaluation of financial assets and liabilities at fair value through profit or loss, financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income, investment properties, certain classes of property, plant and equipment, and derivative financial instruments.

Critical accounting estimates

The preparation of the financial statements requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires Management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the Association's accounting policies. The areas involving a higher degree of judgement or complexity, or areas where assumptions and estimates are significant to the financial statements, are disclosed in Note 1(n).

Accounting Policies

- Comparative Figures** - When required by Accounting Standards, comparative figures have been adjusted to conform to changes in presentation for the current financial year.
- Taxation** - The Association is exempt under Division 50 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* as a non-profit organisation. As such, no allowance has been made for Income Tax.
- Cash and Cash Equivalents** - Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.
- Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE)** - Property, Plant and Equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation. The depreciation amount of all Property, Plant 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.
- Impairment of Assets** - At the end of each reporting period, the Association reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's

fair value less costs of disposal and value in use, is compared to the asset's carrying amount. Any excess of the asset's carrying amount over its recoverable amount is recognised immediately in results from Continuing Operations. Where the future economic benefits of the asset are not primarily dependent upon the asset's ability to generate net cash inflows and when the Association would, if deprived of the asset, replace its remaining future economic benefits, value in use is determined as the depreciated replacement cost of an asset. Where it is not possible to estimate the recoverable amount of a class of asset, the Association estimates the recoverable amount of the cash-generating unit to which the asset belongs.

- Trade and Other Receivables** - Accounts receivable and other debtors include amounts due from customers and any outstanding grant receipts. Receivables expected to be collected within 12 months of the end of the reporting period are classified as current assets. All other receivables are classified as non-current assets.
- Revenue and Other 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'. Grant and donation income is recognised when the Association obtains control over the funds, which is generally at the time of receipt, unless otherwise stated. In the case of funding income received from Victoria Legal Aid (VLA), revenue is recognised when the services have been rendered, and accordingly any unused funds are deferred to be used in future periods in accordance with the service agreement with VLA. All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).
- 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 payables 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.
- Trade and Other Payables** - Trade and other payables represent the liability outstanding at the end of the reporting period for goods and services received by the Association during the reporting period which remain unpaid. The balance is recognised as a current liability with the amounts normally paid within 30 days of recognition of the liability.
- Employee Entitlements - Short-term employee benefits** Provision is made for the Association'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 Association's obligations for short-term employee benefits such as wages, salaries and sick leave are recognised as part of accounts payable and other payables in the Statement of Financial Position. Contributions are made by the Association to an employee superannuation fund and are charged as expenses when incurred.
- Provisions** - Provisions are recognised when the Association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period.
- 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 recognised the payment associated with these leases as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term.
- Current and non-current classification** - Assets and liabilities are presented in the statement of financial position based on current and non-current classification. An asset is classified as current when: it is either expected to be realised or intended to be sold or consumed in the Association's normal operating cycle; it is held primarily for the purpose of trading; it is expected to be realised within 12 months after the reporting period; or the asset is cash or cash equivalent unless restricted from being exchanged or used to settle a liability for at least 12 months after the reporting period. All other assets are classified as non-current. A liability is classified as current when: it is either expected to be settled in the Association's normal operating cycle; it is held primarily for the purpose of trading; it is due to be settled within 12 months after the reporting period; or there is no unconditional right to defer the settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the reporting period. All other liabilities are classified as non-current.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

n. Critical Accounting judgements, estimates and assumptions - The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts in the financial statements. Management continually evaluates its judgements and estimates in relation to assets, liabilities, contingent liabilities, revenue and expenses. Management bases its judgements, estimates and assumptions on historical experience and on other various factors, including expectations of future events, management believes to be reasonable under the circumstances. The resulting accounting judgements and estimates will seldom equal the related actual results. The judgements, estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities (refer to the respective notes) within the next financial year are discussed below. **Estimation of useful lives of assets** - The Association determines the estimated useful lives and related depreciation and amortisation charges for its property, plant and equipment and finite life intangible assets. The useful lives could change significantly as a result of technical innovations or some other event. The depreciation and amortisation charge will increase where the useful lives are less than previously estimated lives, or technically obsolete or non-strategic assets that have been abandoned or sold will be written off or written down. **Impairment of non-financial assets other than goodwill and other indefinite life intangible assets** - The Association assesses impairment of non-financial assets other than goodwill and other indefinite life intangible assets at each reporting date by evaluating conditions specific to the Association and to the particular asset that may lead to impairment. If an impairment trigger exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is determined. This involves fair value less costs of disposal or value-in-use calculations, which incorporate a number of key estimates and assumptions. **Employee benefits provision** - As discussed in Note 1, the liability for employee benefits expected to be settled more than 12 months from the reporting date are recognised and measured at the present value of the estimated future cash flows to be made in respect of all employees at the reporting date. In determining the present value of the liability, estimates of attrition rates and pay increases through promotion and inflation have been taken into account.

2025 (\$) 2024 (\$)

NOTE 2: STATE, COMMONWEALTH AND OTHER FUNDING

a) Grant Income - Other Projects

Total Grant Funding	6,210,174	4,858,001
Distribution of Integrated Services Fund	-4,109,475	(3,667,526)
	2,100,699	1,190,475

FCLC administered funding from Department of Justice and Community Safety and provided grants to 12 Community Legal Centres (2024: 12 CLC's) to support their work delivering services to disadvantaged people through integrated services partnerships.

NOTE 3: RECEIVABLES

Accounts Receivable	3,314,308	1,047,927
Accrued Bank Interest	7,854	8,014
GST Receivable	27,116	20,417
Prepayments	24,773	2,476
	3,374,051	1,078,834

NOTE 4: FINANCIAL ASSETS

Term deposits - maturity greater than 3 mths	1,533,059	1,477,342
	1,533,059	1,477,342

NOTE 5: FIXED ASSETS

Furniture & Fittings at Cost	129,908	129,908
Provision for Depreciation (Office F&F)	129,908	129,908

	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
NOTE 6: TRADE AND OTHER PAYABLES		
Accounts Payable	25,187	19,628
Accrued Expenses	99,992	94,301
Other Payables	14,437	9,602
PAYG Payable	26,612	28,084
Superannuation payable	73,304	61,480
	239,532	213,095

NOTE 7: AMOUNTS RECEIVED IN ADVANCE

Department of Justice and Community Safety	4,015,154	2,314,647
Victorian Legal Services Board	91,313	-
Other - minor projects	13,468	24,703
	4,119,935	2,339,350

NOTE 8: PROVISIONS

Current		
Annual Leave	193,890	142,052
Long Service Leave	22,527	19,730
	216,417	161,782

Non-Current

Provision for Long Service Leave	38,023	27,249
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NOTE 9: CASH FLOW INFORMATION

a) Reconciliation of Cash

Cash on Hand	88	241
Cash at Bank	1,504,895	2,064,166
	1,504,983	2,064,407

b) Reconciliation of Cash Flows from Operations

With Net Surplus/(Deficit)		
Operating Surplus / (Loss)	80,921	102,640
<i>Add/deduct non-cash items:</i>		
Depreciation	-	-
<i>Changes in assets and liabilities</i>		
(Increase)/Decrease in Receivables	2,295,217	868,668
(Increase)/Decrease in Other Assets	-	9,261
Increase/(Decrease) in Trade & Other Payables	26,437	85,673
Increase/(Decrease) in Grants in Advance	1,780,585	820,991
Increase/(Decrease) in Employee Provisions	65,409	54,851
Cash Flow From Operations	503,707	204,748

NOTE 10: RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The Committee Members act in an honorary capacity and are not paid for their services as Committee Members. There were no transactions with related parties during the 2025 year. (2024: None)

NOTE 11: EVENTS SUBSEQUENT TO BALANCE DATE

"No matter or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2025 that has significantly affected, or may significantly affect the Association's operations, the results of those operations, or the Association's state of affairs in future financial years."

"There have been no material non-adjusting events after the reporting date, nor has any information been received about conditions at reporting date that have not been included in this report."

NOTE 12: ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE

"The Association's ability to continue to carry out its current activities remains dependent upon future funding by the State and Commonwealth governments."

NOTE 13: ASSOCIATION DETAILS

The principal place of business is: "Level 3, 225 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000"

COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

In the Committee's opinion:

- > the Incorporated Association is not a reporting entity because there are no users dependent on general purpose financial statements. Accordingly, as described in note 1 to the financial statements, the attached special purpose financial statements have been prepared for the purposes of complying with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and associated regulations;
- > the attached financial statements and notes comply with the Accounting Standards as described in note 1 to the financial statements;
- > the attached financial statements and notes give a true and fair view of the Incorporated Association's financial position as at 30 June 2025 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
- > there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Incorporated Association will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

Bryanna Connell, Chairperson
Dated: 17/11/2025

Jo Bradley, Treasurer
Dated: 17/11/2025

AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION

In accordance with the requirements of section 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, as lead auditor for the audit of Federation of Community Legal Centres Vic Inc. for the year ended 30 June 2025, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

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

David A Szeplalusy. Director, Peninsula Audit Pty Ltd.

3/33 Milgate Drive Mornington 3931,
PO Box 293 Mt Martha Victoria 3934

Dated: 17/11/2025



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



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📍 FEDERATION STAFF AT THE TIM MCCOY DINNER

Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria

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