



FEDERATION
OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES VIC

DELIVERING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL VICTORIANS

SUBMISSION TO THE 2023 VICTORIAN BUDGET

February 2023

ABOUT THE FEDERATION

The Federation is the peak body for Victoria's 47 Community Legal Centres. Our members are at the forefront of helping those facing economic, cultural or social disadvantage and whose life circumstances are severely affected by their legal problem. For nearly 50 years, Community Legal Centres have been part of a powerful movement for social change, reshaping how people access justice, creating stronger more equitable laws, and more accountable government and democracy.

We pursue our vision of a fair, inclusive, thriving community through challenging injustice, defending rights and building the power of our members and communities. As an influential advocate, our voice is distinct and courageous: we are not afraid to challenge government, big business, or other powerful actors to ensure equality and fairness for all.

Read our strategic plan online
fclc.org.au/about

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

The Federation:

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

Our members lead collaboration and advocacy via several Working Groups, providing guidance and direction for the Federation's work, as well as opportunities for joint advocacy.

Together with our members and communities, we work to dismantle unjust systems that perpetuate racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, economic injustice and other inequalities. Our priority is to be fully accountable to the communities we represent.



THE FEDERATION ACKNOWLEDGES THE TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL OWNERS 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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Legal Centres provide a crucial safety net for people in our community who need it most. The help that Community Legal Centres provide is critical in many aspects of Victorians' daily lives, including for those facing eviction and homelessness, incarceration, family breakdown and violence, crippling debts and fines, discrimination, exploitation at work and unfair dismissal. Community Legal Centres are uniquely placed to assist Victorians who are experiencing hardship with pressing legal issues, and often do this by providing tailored wrap-around and holistic support.

Community Legal Centres support those most in need of assistance, who cannot afford private lawyers and do not have access to legal aid. On average, up to 70 per cent of people who access Community Legal Centres have an income of less than \$32,000 per year.¹ Community Legal Centres assist people who face additional barriers accessing legal help and support due to their mental health, racial or cultural background, age, disability, sexuality or gender identity, or geographical remoteness.

The high demand for legal assistance continues to significantly outstrip available resources. Without additional resourcing, thousands of people will not be able to get the support they need from Community Legal Centres. This unmet demand will continue to escalate as the impacts of the pandemic, disasters and widening inequality continue to be felt.

The impacts of unresolved, escalating legal problems on individuals, their communities and government are significant, but can be avoided through ensuring access to community legal assistance.

Cost benefit analysis has shown that Community Legal Centres have a cost benefit ratio of 1:18; that is, for every dollar spent by government on funding them, they return a benefit to society that is 18 times that cost.²

This year, we repeat our call on the Victorian Government to provide a significant investment in funding for Community Legal Centres in Victoria to meet existing need for legal assistance and to address the continued rise in demand brought about by the pandemic, disasters and widening inequality.

We also seek funding to:

- provide for adequate indexation that matches increases to national award wages (4.6 per cent in 2022-23) in funding contracts to Community Legal Centres, including a policy that ensures that the community legal sector receives indexation at the same rate as other community services.
- continue to enhance the community legal sector's ability to measure impact and ensure Victorians are getting the best possible access to legal services.

¹ Statistics from 2020/21 CLASS data from 31 Victorian Community Legal Centres.

² J Storer, J Stubbs and Colleen Lux (2012). *Economic Cost Benefit Analysis of Community Legal Centres*. National Association of Community Legal Centres Inc.

- embed community legal assistance as part of the roll-out of the Local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an acute impact on women and children experiencing family violence and has led to rising family violence rates in Victoria. In addition, there has been a significant increase in the volume of family violence matters being heard at Magistrates' Courts across Victoria arising from the pandemic. This has and will continue to correlate with an increase in demand for legal assistance for victim survivors of family violence, which was already high prior to the pandemic.

Community legal services form a critical part of the family violence support system and are essential to an integrated response to keep women and children safe from family violence and increase perpetrator accountability.

We welcome the investment the government has made to address family violence to date. However, further investment is required to ensure that Community Legal Centres can meet the high increase in legal need. Without this, many victim survivors will not be able to access critical legal support or representation at court. This will have a profound impact on the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors, who will be left to navigate high risk situations alone. The impacts of unresolved, escalating family violence-related legal issues on individuals, the community and government are considerable, but can be mitigated through ensuring access to Community Legal Centres.

This year, we repeat our call for the Victorian Government to provide significant investment in Community Legal Centres so they can meet the high demand for legal assistance for victim survivors of family violence.

We also seek funding to:

- expand access to legal services at the new Specialist Family Violence Courts.
- expand investment in the Early Resolution Service/Pre-Court Engagement model at Magistrates' Courts across Victoria.
- expand the legal services in the Orange Door pilot to ensure it can occur in both regional and metropolitan locations, and embed community legal services in the Orange Door network.

We also support Hume Riverina Community Legal Service's call for the establishment of a Specialist Family Violence Court in North-East Victoria.

MEETING DEMAND FOR LEGAL SERVICES

The demand for legal help from Community Legal Centres has grown significantly in the aftermath of the pandemic and due to ongoing disasters and widening inequality in Victoria. Last year, Community Legal Centres provided more than 100,000 legal services to Victorians and more than half a million people used online tools and self-help resources developed by our centres.

Nearly half of all Victorians will have a legal problem in the next 12 months, and nearly one-third will have more than one legal issue.³ The legal system is complex and hard to navigate. It is challenging for people to make informed choices without proper legal representation. People experiencing disadvantage are even more likely to have complex legal problems. However, even though greater support is required, often there is unequal access to legal resources and information. This can lead to poor outcomes for people who are most in need, resulting, for example, in homelessness, complex and protracted litigation, incarceration and crippling debts.

Community Legal Centres focus on intervening early, avoiding the escalation of legal problems and providing holistic support in partnership with other community service professionals. We know that helping people to resolve their legal problems early and effectively can reduce the devastating impact legal issues have on a person's life. This not only improves individual wellbeing outcomes, but can also avoid significant costs to government and pressure on other parts of the service system.

The community legal sector's capacity to meet the needs of the Victorian community has not kept up with increasing demand. This gap will only continue to grow due to factors including accelerating population growth, increased vulnerability resulting from disasters (which are predicted to become more frequent due to climate change) and the ongoing economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters.

While we welcome guaranteed core funding from government, the sector is still highly dependent on limited and short-term funding grants. Short-term funding cycles lead to service disruption, loss of key staff and reduces the critical reach of Community Legal Centres to their communities, resulting in Victorians being unable to rely on crucial services from year to year. It also undermines important long-term planning which is critical when engaging with communities and building trust.

Through sustainable and long-term resourcing, we can ensure all Victorians have access to the community legal assistance they need. This also requires increased investment in communities in regional, rural, and peri-urban areas, recognising reduced access to key services and higher delivery costs in these areas. Sustainable, viable, longer-term and properly indexed funding will allow for a strong and resilient community legal sector to serve the Victorian community into the future.

We are seeking an additional boost of funding over four years to strengthen the security of community legal sector funding in Victoria, and to enable the community legal sector to expand to meet increasing demand.

³ Department of Justice and Regulation Victoria (2016). *Access to Justice Review*, p 55.

ENSURE THE COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR CAN MEET RISING COSTS

Rising costs have increased pressures on the community legal sector which is already stretched. However, indexation on community legal sector funding has not kept pace with increasing costs and does not align with the national wage increase of 4.6 per cent on modern awards.

While the Victorian Government provided 4.6 per cent funding indexation for most community sector organisations to help these services meet rising costs, the community legal sector has been left out. As Community Legal Centres are funded through the Department of Justice and Community Safety rather than the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) or the Department of Health (DoH), Community Legal Centres were not included in the government's 4.6 per cent indexation increase for other community services which was announced in July 2022. Instead, Community Legal Centres have been advised of indexation between 0–2 per cent on their government funding contracts, even though they face the same cost drivers as community sector organisations funded by DFFH and DoH – including the national wage increase of 4.6 per cent on modern awards.

There is also significant disparity with other jurisdictions. Victoria has fallen behind NSW, where Community Legal Centres have received indexation of 5 per cent on their state funding this year, and Queensland, where Community Legal Centres have received indexation of 5.07 per cent.

Current indexation for the community legal sector funding is too low and does not reflect the real cost of delivering services. As a consequence, Victorian Community Legal Centres are reducing their staff numbers, as they try to stretch their existing resources to cover the wage increase and other increased operational costs related to inflation. When staff are cut, so are services.

Adjusting indexation for Community Legal Centres to the same rate as other community sector organisations is essential for continued quality service provision. Going forward there needs to be fair and predictable funding indexation to respond to the changing economic and social landscape and to ensure the community legal sector's continued viability.

It is inequitable and unsustainable to continue to exclude Community Legal Centres from indexation that has been acknowledged as essential for community services.

We are seeking adequate indexation that matches increases to national award wages (4.6 per cent in 2022-23) in funding contracts to Community Legal Centres, including a policy that ensures the community legal sector receives indexation at the same rate as other community services.

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

While the community legal sector has been helping communities for more than 50 years, showing our collective impact through data is an ongoing challenge. Effective data collection, monitoring and evaluation is critical in measuring the impact of our sector, but further investment and capacity building for the sector is essential.

Meaningful and effective data collection will assist Community Legal Centres to tell the story of the needs of their community, drive innovation and support advocacy for systemic change. That's the power of data. It helps organisations who do so much for the community with limited resources to achieve better outcomes for their communities.

Increasingly, government and other funders also require evidence-informed reporting to measure the effectiveness of services. This requires ongoing capacity building and investment in data systems, monitoring and evaluation for the community legal sector. This will ensure that Victorians, particularly those who are most at risk of injustice, are getting the best possible access to appropriate legal services.

With funding from the Department, the Federation has taken significant steps to assist Community Legal Centres to improve their systems for collecting and using client and case information. The Federation has supported Community Legal Centres to implement modern case management systems which has been instrumental in enhancing the sector's capability in data collection, monitoring and evaluation. However, this funding is ending and ongoing resourcing is required to continue to support the sector to enhance its data capability and to measure impact.

We are seeking funding to continue to enhance the community legal sector's ability to measure impact and ensure Victorians are getting the best possible access to legal services.

EMBEDDING LEGAL HELP IN THE NEW MENTAL HEALTH LANDSCAPE

It is essential that people living with mental illness have access to the legal support they need as part of a responsive and integrated system in Victoria. Legal problems are widespread for people living with mental illness. For example, 20 per cent of a sample of Community Legal Centre clients self-identified as living with mental ill health,⁴ but this is likely to be a substantial underestimation. A study of legal needs in Australia found that of the respondents who had at least six legal problems, over 60 per cent were living with a mental illness.⁵ This is consistent with research which suggests that people with mental ill-health are more likely to experience legal problems and a broader range of challenges that impact their lives.⁶ Good mental health is not just the absence of illness, but involves the ability to fully and effectively participate in society.⁷ As highlighted by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (the Royal Commission), health is not the only priority in promoting good mental health and wellbeing, but among other factors, involves social services, such as housing, education and justice.⁸

Despite this, many people living with mental illness are not able to access the legal help they need. The escalation and compounding of legal issues without legal support results in further harm and distress and places downstream pressures on other parts of the service system. There is evidence that people with mental ill-health will experience more significant consequences associated with their legal problem and higher levels of stress and stress-related illnesses.⁹ An Australian study identified a strong causal connection between having legal issues and long-term mental illness, with a deepening of this association over time without intervention.¹⁰

⁴ Note: this data is from a sample of 31 of Victoria's 47 Community Legal Centres.

⁵ Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, *Legal Australia-wide survey: Legal Need in Australia*, 2012, p.25.

⁶ Hayes, L., McDonald, M., Hudson, L., May, F. (2021) *Legally Minded: Understanding how legal intervention can improve the lives of people with mental ill-health*, final research report, Mind Australia, Melbourne, p.3.

⁷ State of Victoria, Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Final Report, Summary and recommendations, Parl Paper No. 202, Session 2018–21 (document 1 of 6).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Hayes, L., McDonald, M., Hudson, L., May, F. (2021) *Legally Minded: Understanding how legal intervention can improve the lives of people with mental ill-health*, final research report, Mind Australia, Melbourne, p.3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The Legally Minded project – Northern Community Legal Centre and Mind Australia

The Legally Minded Project explored the impact of legal intervention on the lives of people with mental health issues. The study identified a number of important benefits, including:

- Legal intervention was associated with a marked reduction in psychological distress with clients reporting increased self-efficacy and confidence.
- There were positive consequences from the stress reduction, such as improved relationships.
- Clients experienced good connections to the legal service providers and mental health supports with effective co-ordination being an important element.
- Clients had increased legal knowledge and felt empowered regarding their legal rights, leading to a greater sense of hope in their lives and for the future.¹¹

The study concluded that it is important that both legal and mental health staff work together to support clients to attain the best level of wellbeing.¹²

The Royal Commission found that people's interaction with the legal system often worsened, rather than improved, their mental health and wellbeing.¹³ The Royal Commission also recognised the importance of reducing the criminalisation of people living with mental illness. It is widely recognised that people experiencing mental health issues are overrepresented in the criminal legal system and in prisons, which do not have adequate mental health supports.

The Royal Commission documented the challenges faced by people living with mental illness in accessing services which were disconnected and emphasised the need for a responsive and integrated system in communities.¹⁴ The reforms flowing from the Royal Commission provide a crucial opportunity to increase access to timely place-based legal assistance and holistic support to people living with mental illness. This can be achieved through funding to embed community legal services into Victoria's 60 new Local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (the Local Services).

The systemic disadvantage facing people with mental health issues highlights the need to ensure health, equity and justice are better linked in our public systems.¹⁵ Integrated practice models provide an opportunity to do this. Taking many different forms,¹⁶ including health justice partnerships, these

¹¹ Hayes, L., McDonald, M., Hudson, L., May, F. (2021) Legally Minded: Understanding how legal intervention can improve the lives of people with mental ill-health, final research report, Mind Australia, Melbourne, p.13.

¹² Ibid, p.15.

¹³ State of Victoria, Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Final Report, Summary and recommendations, Parl Paper No. 202, Session 2018–21 (document 1 of 6).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ashley Schram et al, 'Advancing Action on Health Equity through a Sociolegal Model of Health' (2021) 0(0) *The Milbank Quarterly* 1.

¹⁶ Delwyn Goodrick and Emma Sampson, *Meeting People Where They Are: Delivering Integrated Community Legal Services* (Federation of Community Legal Centres, 2020)

models provide holistic and multidisciplinary support in the community and places where consumers feel safe. As recognised in the Access to Justice Review, the Victorian community legal sector is at the forefront of delivering integrated legal services and health justice partnerships to the community.¹⁷ Community Legal Centres have developed long-standing partnerships with local organisations to provide early intervention and wrap-around support to people in need. The community legal sector has developed a strong evidence base which demonstrates the effectiveness of integrated legal practice models in the health space and other areas. More information is available [here](#).

The community legal sector has developed an integrated legal practice model that supports the government's Early Intervention Investment Model. This model can be embedded in the roll-out of the Local Services across Victoria and is sufficiently flexible to be tailored to the local context. The model aims to deliver wrap-around, accessible, trauma-informed and respectful services that consumers want. It is a model that the sector developed *with* consumers, recognising the importance of consumer voices in service design, implementation, and evaluation.

We are seeking investment to embed community legal help in the roll-out of the Local Services over four years.

¹⁷ Department of Justice and Regulation Victoria, Access to Justice Review, 2016, p.188

MEETING DEMAND IN FAMILY VIOLENCE

In the aftermath of the pandemic, victim survivors of family violence are in critical need of access to community legal services to support them to remain safe and reduce the risk of ongoing violence. Community legal services play a pivotal role in providing legal assistance to families and children experiencing family violence.

Community Legal Centres provided more than 100,000 legal services to Victorians last year¹⁸ and 56 per cent of those assisted were victim survivors of family violence. The vast majority of Community Legal Centres provide legal assistance with family violence matters, often to Victorians who experience compounding layers of disadvantage across metro, regional and rural areas in Victoria.

Victim survivors of family violence have been found to be 10 times more likely to face legal problems compared with the general population.¹⁹ Family violence is a key driver of legal need and can result in victim survivors having multiple and compounding legal issues. A study shows that victim survivors experience on average 20 different legal problems compared with an average of two legal problems experienced by the general population.²⁰ These legal issues are often complex, distressing and have profound implications for the affected individual, their children and family.

Community Legal Centres provide the legal support needed by victim survivors to protect themselves from violent and abusive situations. This includes assistance in securing family violence intervention orders (FVIOs) and, in the family law context, helping to resolve parenting disputes to put in place safe arrangements for children. Community Legal Centres also assist with a range of related (and often compounding) legal issues, including assisting families where child protection authorities intervene, migration assistance for women on temporary visas, criminal law, housing and debt issues.

In addition, Community Legal Centres support victim survivors to restore their financial safety and independence, helping them recover from often long periods of economic abuse. Community Legal Centres have specialist services to support elderly people experiencing abuse and financial exploitation from family members and carers. The assistance Community Legal Centres provide is essential in restoring safety and helping victim survivors to recover from family violence.

Increasing legal need in family violence

There has been increasing demand for assistance from community legal services in family violence matters.

¹⁸ Note that the statistic of 100,000+ legal services is from the 31 Victorian Community Legal Centres that report using the CLASS system. The actual number is more from all 47 Community Legal Centres.

¹⁹ Coumarelos, Christine (2019). 'Quantifying the legal and broader life impacts of domestic and family violence' in *Justice Issues*, Paper 32, The Law and Justice Foundation NSW June 2019.

²⁰ Ibid.

There has been a remarkable increase in the number of FVIO applications per year with final FVIOs increasing by 44 per cent between 2011 and 2019.²¹ Crime Statistics Agency data indicates that from 2016-17 to 2020-21, family violence incidents recorded by the Victoria Police increased by 22 per cent.²² Behind every one of these statistics is a person left devastated and a family broken.

The combination of escalating numbers of FVIOs and reduced operational capacity arising from the pandemic has led to a significant increase in pending family violence cases in court and associated pressure on legal services, courts and police who already face demand pressures. As of March 2022, there were 20,550 pending FVIO and Personal Safety Intervention Order cases state-wide. Despite increasing FVIO applications, finalised FVIOs over the above four year period only increased by two per cent.²³

On the ground, this has translated into family violence matters remaining in court for a significantly longer duration and a sharp increase in the volume of family violence matters in court lists. At some courts, the number of family violence matters heard in a day has doubled and at other courts, there are additional FVIO lists running. This has and will continue to correlate with an increase in demand for legal assistance in family violence matters, which was already significant prior to the pandemic. Community legal services assisted with 52 per cent more FVIO matters in 2020–2021 compared with the previous year, up from 17,059 to 25,982.

The need for increased investment

Community Legal Centres are not sufficiently resourced to meet the sharp rise in legal need in family violence, particularly given the high family violence pending caseload in courts.

Without increased capacity, many victim survivors of family violence will not be able to access critical legal support with their family violence matters and related legal issues. This will have a profound impact on the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors, who will be left to navigate high risk situations alone.

The impact of unresolved, escalating family violence legal issues on individuals, the community and government are significant, but can be avoided through increasing access to community legal services in family violence matters.

We are seeking an additional boost of funding over four years to increase the capacity of Community Legal Centres to provide legal assistance to victim survivors of family violence, particularly given high family violence demand at Magistrates' Courts across Victoria.

New Specialist Family Violence Courts

The Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended the establishment of Specialist Family Violence Courts (SFVCs) at all major courts in Victoria with the overarching aim of improving safety outcomes and strengthening perpetrator accountability. To date, five SFVCs have been established,

²¹ Sentencing Advisory Council 2022. Sentencing Breaches of Family Violence Intervention Orders and Safety Notices: Third Monitoring Report.

²² Crime Statistics Agency Data on Victoria Police, available at: <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data-portal/family-violence-data-dashboard/victoria-police>

²³ Ibid.

with the roll-out of a further seven SFVCs in late 2022. While there was funding provided to legal services for the first five SFVCs recognising the critical role legal services play, no additional funding has been provided to legal services to support the new courts. Additional resourcing is required for legal services to provide a more intensive, specialist and therapeutic service to give effect to the Royal Commission's vision. This is critical in improving the court process for victim survivors and embedding trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approaches to help Victorians who have been affected by family violence.

We are seeking additional resourcing for legal services to provide legal assistance at the new SFVCs.

We also support Hume Riverina Community Legal Service's call for the establishment of a SFVC in North-East Victoria.

Pre-court engagement and early resolution model

The Early Resolution Service/Pre-Court Engagement model was rolled out in 2020 across a number of Magistrates' Courts in Victoria. The purpose of the model is to provide more support in family violence matters at an earlier stage of court proceedings to enable earlier risk assessments, increase safety for victim survivors and streamline court processes to better meet demand. Under this model, victim survivors and respondents can access legal advice and are assisted with negotiating and resolving family violence matters (where possible and safe to do so) at an earlier stage of the court process. This adopts a more victim-centered approach as it allows more time to understand the court process and available options, as well as identifying opportunities to safely resolve matters prior to the court hearing. This can reduce distress and trauma associated with the court process and enhances safety for victim survivors.

The evaluation found that there was high demand for this service and that the model was delivering significant benefits. However, current resourcing is insufficient to meet high demand and funding to legal services to deliver this model will end this financial year.

We are seeking ongoing funding for the Early Resolution Service/Pre-Court Engagement model at Magistrates' Courts in Victoria.

Renewing lapsing funding - CLC Family Violence Assistance Fund

The CLC Family Violence and Assistance Fund is due to lapse this financial year. If this lapsing funding is not renewed, this will result in substantially less capacity for the funded Community Legal Centres to provide family violence duty lawyer services at court and to deliver family violence and youth-focused projects.

We are seeking the continuation of the lapsing funding under the CLC Family Violence and Assistance Fund at the same level over four years.

INTEGRATE LEGAL SERVICES INTO THE FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT SYSTEM

An integrated family violence response is essential in keeping women and children safe from family violence and increasing perpetrator accountability. Community legal services form a critical part of the family violence support system. It is only through a whole of system approach that the various challenges faced by victim survivors can be addressed, including through access to safety planning, secure housing, counselling, financial support, legal assistance and help resolving parenting disputes to put in place safe arrangements for children.

The Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan (FVRAP) recognises the integral role of legal assistance in responding to family violence and enhancing the safety of women and children. The FVRAP recommends embedding legal services within health, community and education settings and increasing early access to legal support.²⁴ With increased investment, the integration of community legal services within the family violence support system can be achieved. As part of creating a more integrated system, it is critical that Community Legal Centres are supported to provide legal advice and casework to people accessing the Orange Door hubs.

We welcome the Government's funding for a pilot to deliver legal services in the Orange Door in the 2021–2022 budget. This funding has provided an important opportunity to design and deliver legal services at the pilot site in Frankston. Alongside this initial funding, we seek increased investment to expand the delivery of legal services in the Orange Door network to more hubs. This is a key priority of the FVRAP which recommends embedding legal services state-wide across the Orange Door network. This is also supported by the Access to Justice Review which recommended legal support be available in the hubs to allow for triage and for victim survivors to get the legal help they urgently need.²⁵

The integration of legal services in the Orange Door hubs provides an important opportunity for clients to access legal assistance at an early stage. Early legal intervention for victim survivors is not only key from a safety perspective, but can also have a positive impact on legal outcomes and victim survivors' overall social and emotional wellbeing. Early access to legal services can have a preventative effect in terms of reducing compounding harms for victim survivors and can reduce pressures on the justice system and other parts of the service system.

We are seeking additional investment to expand the legal services in the Orange Door pilot to ensure it can occur in both regional and metropolitan locations, and embed community legal services in the Orange Door network.

²⁴ Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan 2020-2023 – Legal Assistance Priorities, available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-reform-rolling-action-plan-2020-2023/priorities-for-2020-2023/legal-assistance>

²⁵ Ibid

KEY ASKS

Core funding

1. An additional boost of funding over four years to strengthen the security of community legal sector funding in Victoria, and to enable the community legal sector to expand to meet increasing demand.
2. Adequate indexation that matches increases to national award wages (4.6 per cent in 2022-23) in funding contracts to Community Legal Centres, including a policy that ensures the community legal sector receives indexation at the same rate as other community services.

Measuring impact

3. Funding to continue to enhance the community legal sector's ability to measure impact and ensure Victorians are getting the best possible access to legal services.

Mental health reforms

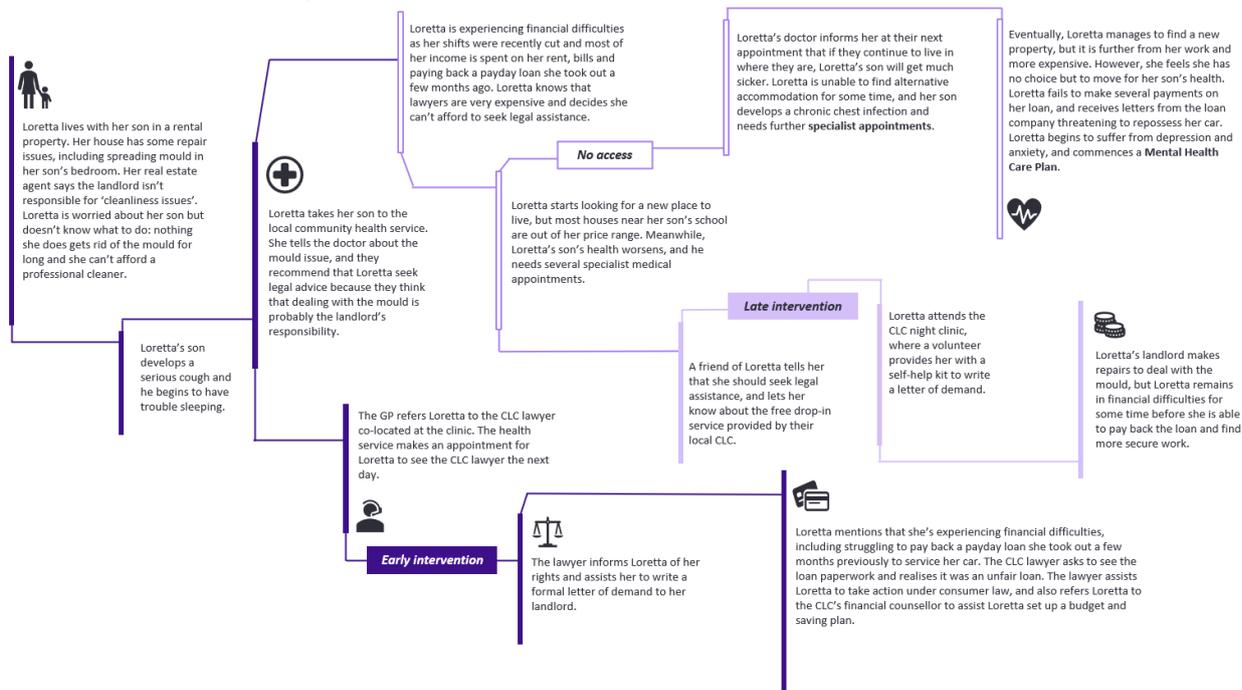
4. Investment to embed community legal help in the roll-out of the Local Services over four years.

Family violence

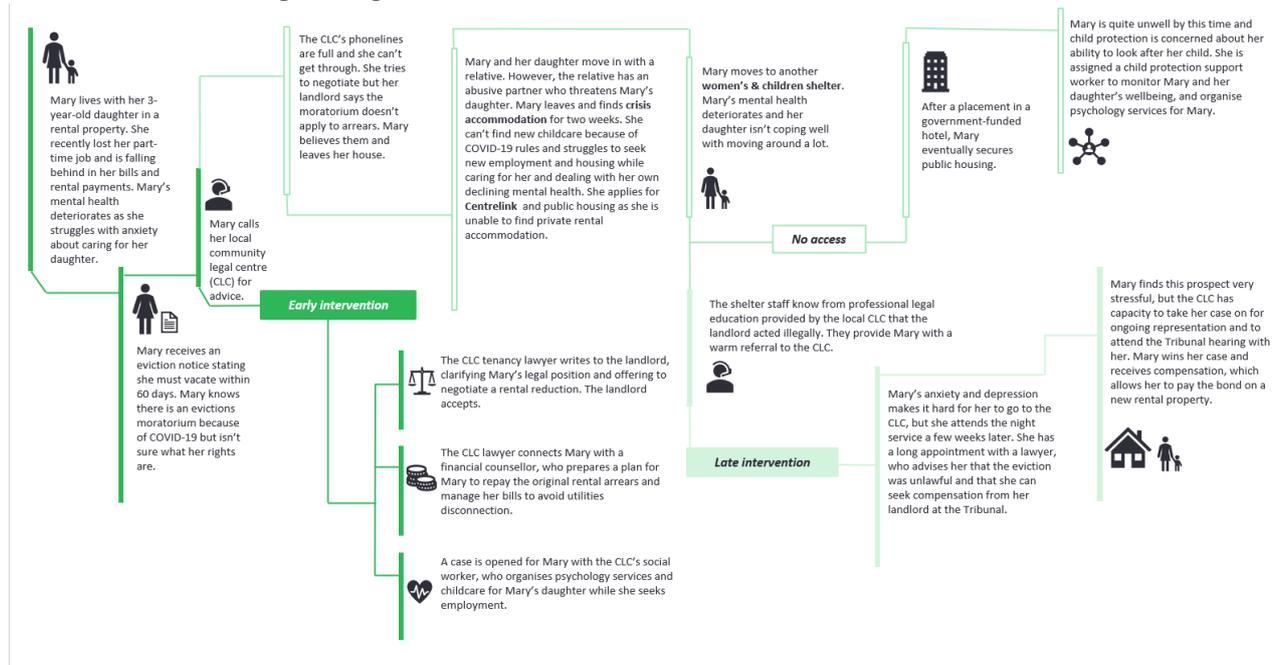
5. An additional boost of funding over four years to increase the capacity of Community Legal Centres to provide legal assistance to victim survivors of family violence, particularly given high family violence demand at Magistrates' Courts across Victoria.
6. Additional resourcing for legal services to provide legal assistance at the new Specialist Family Violence Courts.
7. Ongoing funding for the Early Resolution Service/Pre-Court Engagement model at Magistrates' Courts in Victoria.
8. Continuation of the lapsing funding under the CLC Family Violence and Assistance Fund at the same level over four years.
9. Additional investment to expand the legal services in the Orange Door pilot to ensure it can occur in both regional and metropolitan locations, and embed community legal services in the Orange Door network.

AVOIDED COST MODELLING EXAMPLES

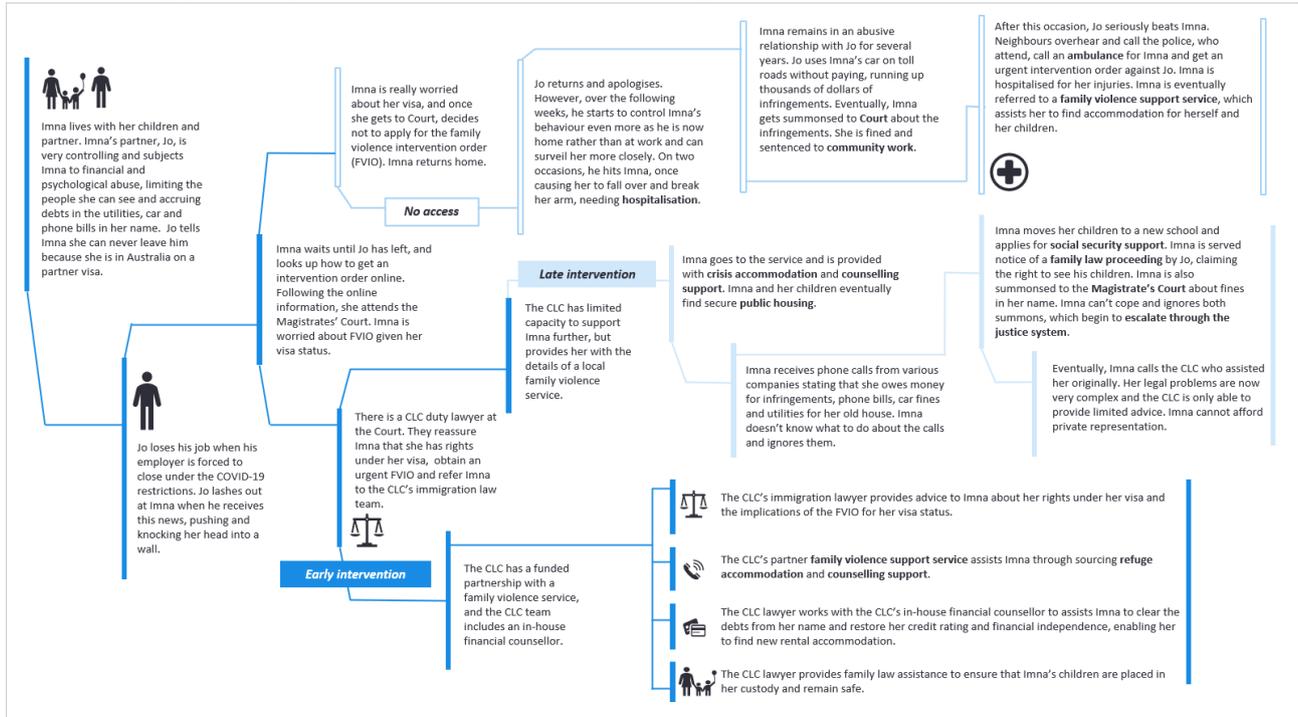
LORETTA – addressing financial difficulties



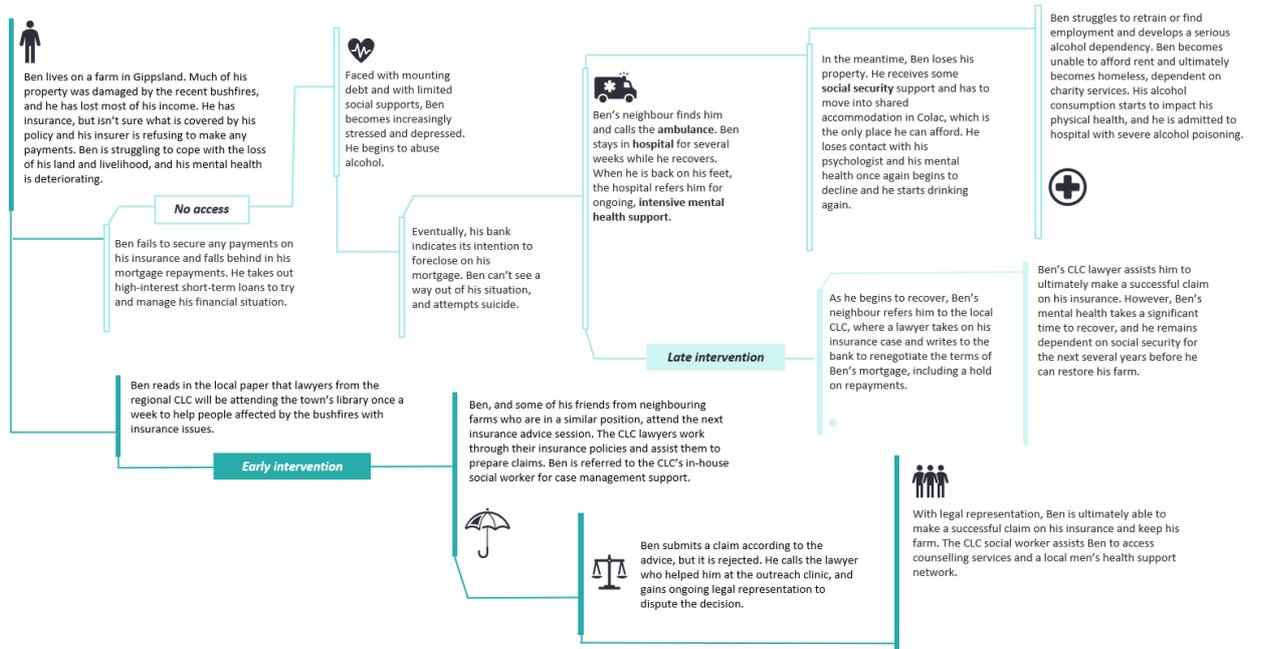
MARY – delivering integrated services



IMNA – supporting victim survivors of family violence



BEN – supporting mental wellness



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTEGRATED LEGAL SERVICES?

Sector-wide

- D Goodrick and E Sampson (2020). *Meeting People Where They Are, Delivering Integrated Legal Community Services*. Federation of Community Legal Centres (funded by the Department of Justice and Community Safety).
- V Lewis, L Adamson, and F Hawthorne (2018). *Health justice partnerships: a promising model for increasing access to justice in health services*. Australian Health Review.
- M Noone and K Digney (2010). *"It's Hard to Open Up to Strangers" Improving Access to Justice: The key features of an integrated legal services delivery model*. La Trobe University.

Health

- Inner Melbourne Community Legal and University of Melbourne (2018). *Partners in Care: The Benefits of Community Lawyers in a Hospital Setting*.
- Inner Melbourne Community Legal and Royal Melbourne (2018). *Health Justice Partnership Legal Clinics in the Hospital Evaluation Report*.
- E Curran (2016). *A Research and Evaluation Report for the Bendigo Health-Justice Partnership: A partnership between Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre and Bendigo Community Health Services*. Australian National University.
- Eastern Community Legal Centre (2018). *Mabels Changes Everything: How a Health Justice Partnership is quietly transforming legal and family violence support in Maternal and Child Health Services, Final Evaluation Report, Effective Change*.
- Eastern Community Legal Centre (2018). *It Couldn't Have Come At A Better Time: Early Intervention Family Violence Legal Assistance*.
- Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre and Maryborough District Health Service (2020). *Maryborough Therapeutic Justice Project*.
- M Camilleri, A Ollerenshaw, J Corbett, M Taylor and T Burrows (2018). *Central Highlands Health Justice Partnership: Evaluation Report*. Federation University.
- H Barclay, K Neophytou and A Garcia Negron (2021). *Women's Legal Service of Victoria – Together from the Start: a health justice partnership with Monash Health. Interim evaluation and progress report to funder (VLSB)*. Unpublished.
- S Price and B Millard (2018). *Improving housing and health outcomes: understanding and addressing barriers to VCAT attendance*. West Heidelberg Community Legal Service and Banyule Community Health.
- West Heidelberg Community Legal Service. *Equity, Health & Wellbeing Project Evaluation Report Model Summary and Implementation Lessons*.

Mental Health

- L Hayes, M McDonald, L Hudson and F May (2021). *Legally Minded: Understanding how legal intervention can improve the lives of people with mental ill-health, final research report*. Mind Australia and Northern Community Legal Centre.

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