

VICTORIAN SECTOR OUTCOMES PILOT 2022–23

A REPORT FROM THE VICTORIAN COLLABORATIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE (CPC)
OUTCOMES WORKING GROUP AND PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands where this report was prepared, the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung and Bunurong Peoples of the Kulin Nation. We extend this acknowledgement to all First Nations' Peoples of the lands on which the participating organisations work. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders past and present and acknowledge sovereignty has never been ceded.

Staff from participating Community Legal Centres at the Outcomes Pilot Project workshop in August 2023



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The sixteen participating organisations in the pilot prepared case studies documenting their approaches to measuring client outcomes:

- ARC Justice,
- Barwon Community Legal Service,
- Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre,
- Consumer Action Law Centre,
- Djirra,
- Eastern Community Legal Centre,
- Gippsland Community Legal Service,
- Hume Riverina Community Legal Service,
- Inner Melbourne Community Legal,
- Justice Connect,
- Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre,
- Northern Community Legal Centre,
- Southside Justice,
- Tenants Victoria,
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service,
- Victoria Legal Aid.

This report follows the submission made to the NLAP Review by the Victorian Collaborative Planning Committee on the 27 October 2023, entitled ‘Victorian Sector Outcomes Pilot 2022–23: Emerging lessons and recommendations.’

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CLASS	Community Legal Assistance Service System
CLC	Community Legal Centre
CLS	Community legal service
CPC	Collaborative Planning Committee
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
DMEL	Design, monitoring, evaluation, and learning
Federation	Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria
HJA	Health Justice Australia
ICDT	Information Communications Data Technology
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
NLA	National Legal Aid
NLAP	National Legal Assistance Partnership
VALS	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
VLA	Victoria Legal Aid
VLF	Victoria Law Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Victorian Collaborative Planning Committee¹ (CPC) Outcomes Working Group² conducted the Victorian Sector Outcomes Pilot, from May 2022–December 2023. The pilot was formed to gather lessons from outcomes approaches in the Victorian legal assistance sector to inform the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) Review; given the expressed ambition for the next national agreement to move toward outcomes measurement. Sixteen organisations³ participated in the pilot, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services: Djirra, and Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service,
- Community Legal Centres (CLCs): ARC Justice, Barwon Community Legal Service, Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre, Consumer Action Law Centre, Eastern Community Legal Centre, Gippsland Community Legal Service, Hume Riverina Community Legal Service, Inner Melbourne Community Legal, Justice Connect, Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre, Northern Community Legal Centre, Southside Justice, and Tenants Victoria,
- and the legal aid commission: Victoria Legal Aid (VLA).

The participating organisations either trialled approaches, or shared existing examples of their practice, to identify what works in measuring the outcomes of legal assistance services for clients. The pilot was not funded, and organisations used their existing resources to participate.

The findings of the pilot provide a practice-based lens on feasibility and resource issues that is pertinent to the NLAP Review's focus on data collection, performance monitoring and reporting. The lessons and recommendations are relevant to inform ongoing investments in outcomes-based practice in the legal assistance sector in Victoria and nationally.

Section 1 of the report provides background on outcome approaches in the Victorian sector. Section 2 outlines the approach and activities in the pilot. Section 3 summarises the lessons from the pilot. It highlights a vision of outcomes-based practice, where client-centred data collection and capability building for organisational learning improves services so they achieve meaningful and sustained access to justice outcomes. It demonstrates how the services in the pilot connect outcomes measurement to their commitment to client-centred, integrated service design that meets client needs and capabilities. Current resourcing in the sector limits the work that can be done toward this vision. Section 4 makes recommendations for resourcing outcomes-based practice across legal assistance services: from the service to the state and national level. The report includes case studies from each of the participating organisations (in Appendix A) that illustrate how legal services across Victoria are implementing outcomes-based practice.

¹ The Collaborative Planning Committee (CPC) is a forum for senior representatives across the Victorian legal assistance sector that promotes collaboration, transparency, and effectiveness within the sector. <https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/collaborative-planning-committee>

² CPC Outcomes Working Group members: Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria, Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) (secretariat), Djirra, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS), Victoria Law Foundation (VLF), Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS), and Health Justice Australia (HJA).

³ The public legal assistance sector in Victoria consists of two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, 47 community legal services, and the legal aid commission.

Approach to the pilot

The aims of the pilot were to:

- Learn together about how to best measure client outcomes in ways that are meaningful, useful, and feasible within current resources.
- Develop common questions, tools, and resources to use across the sector.
- Provide mentoring and tailored advice from CPC Outcomes Working Group members, along with peer support, to build capability and guide the outcomes work in organisations.
- Strengthen the evidence base of the outcomes of services for clients and the community.
- Inform outcomes approaches in the National Legal Assistance Partnership, and the investments needed to move to outcomes-based practice in the sector.

The pilot was planned by the working group in May 2022 and launched in November 2022 inviting all interested legal services in Victoria to join the pilot and choose their level of involvement. Pilot activities were conducted from November 2022–July 2023, with reflection workshops in August and November 2023 to develop the lessons and recommendations for the final report.

The pilot focused on how organisations either currently, or could, measure three main client outcomes:

- The service experience: Did it meet people's needs?
- The person (legal capability): Do people better understand their options and feel confident to seek help?
- The legal problem/s: Did the service help with addressing the legal problem/s?

The working group developed a set of common questions that organisations could use to ask clients about these outcomes if they had a suitable client feedback process planned during the pilot period. Five organisations tested or adapted some of the common questions, and two organisations tested or adapted the common questions in full. Nine of the participating organisations shared case studies of their existing outcomes practice, most because they already had their own similar questions in place, or some because they had other work in progress during the pilot period.

The working group facilitated shared learning across the pilot group. This took the form of working group members providing mentoring and reflection with participating organisations and supporting them to document their organisation's experiences in case studies. The working group coordinated a series of learning workshops where organisations shared examples, ideas, and challenges for implementing outcomes-based practice across services and the Victorian sector.

Lessons from the pilot

1. Measuring client outcomes

The pilot confirmed that client outcomes relating to service experience, legal capability⁴, and legal problem resolution are relevant across services in the Victorian pilot. Services in the pilot emphasised the importance of flexibility to adapt outcome questions and methods to suit their clients, their community, and their service. This ensures the information gathered is useful for learning and improving at the individual service level as well as across the sector.

Most participating organisations gather client feedback or conduct evaluations into service experience and legal capability outcomes, with some also gathering information about problem resolution. In addition to the three main outcomes considered in the pilot, several services also focus on outcomes relating to safety (for example, for clients experiencing family violence), cultural safety for First Nations clients, or wellbeing.

A key lesson in the pilot is the importance of each organisation tailoring outcome questions and methods to specific client groups, service types, and the context of how the services are delivered. This is of relevance in the First Nations context where principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance should underpin and inform outcomes measurement.

The findings of the pilot demonstrate the value of combining different forms of evidence about client outcomes and contexts to measure outcomes and guide learning and improvements. A meaningful next step towards gathering state or sector-wide evidence of legal assistance outcomes would be to synthesise outcomes and lessons across services from evaluations and research findings as well as client feedback or service level datasets, and to conduct strategic research and evaluation into specific client outcomes or cohorts.

2. Client- and lived experience-centred practice

A key lesson from the pilot is the importance of embedding client outcomes measurement in a client and lived experience-led approach to designing, delivering, and evaluating people-centred legal assistance services. This includes tailoring outcome measurement activities to client needs and contexts, making client engagement part of improving service delivery, and ensuring service design, delivery, and evaluations and research are developed and conducted with clients and/or lived experience experts.

3. Using appropriate, mixed methods to engage with clients and demonstrate outcomes

A range of methods and investment in client feedback, improved service data collection and use, and research and evaluations, will help organisations and the sector to better engage with diverse clients, understand the impact of services and make improvements that will better address people's legal needs. Selecting appropriate mixed methods is essential for conducting ethical, trauma-informed, and culturally safe outcomes measurement with clients of legal assistance services.

⁴ Legal capability is the capability to achieve fair outcomes to problems involving law. It comprises the knowledge, skills, attributes, and resources needed to deal with legal problems (every day and extraordinary) as people progress from recognising issues, to seeking advice or information, to resolving them. Victoria Law Foundation.

<https://www.victorialawfoundation.org.au/resources/understanding-legal-capability>

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4. Using outcomes frameworks

National outcomes approaches, including developing a national outcomes framework for legal assistance should be based on the existing work undertaken in the sector, such as the Victorian frameworks, and those developed in other states and territories.⁵ Sector outcomes frameworks have been developed collaboratively in Victoria⁶ and are useful for providing consistency, and for services to adapt and tailor for their own organisations and client groups.

Many of the services involved in the pilot either have, or are developing, their own organisational theories of change or outcomes frameworks as part of their strategic planning. Building these has taken investment of time and resources to ensure that the intended outcomes reflect client, staff, and partner perspectives. Services are using their outcomes frameworks to guide service design, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation that is relevant for them and their communities.

5. Building outcomes-based practice and learning organisations, not just reporting

Services in the pilot have highlighted the importance of building a learning culture within their organisations. This includes building capability of staff to value and use a range of sources of evidence (service data, expertise from clients and people with lived and living experience, and research and evaluations), not only for reporting and accountability purposes, but also to reflect and learn, and improve services to better meet client and community needs and capabilities.

Outcomes-based practice refers to services that are planned, designed, delivered, and evaluated in ways that focus on outcomes, and that support learning and improvement so that services achieve meaningful outcomes for clients and community. The reflections from organisations in the pilot highlight how the resources required for effective outcomes measurement extend beyond the resources required to design, implement, and analyse surveys or other forms of feedback from clients, but also to the resources needed for broader outcomes-based practice.

6. Sector collaboration

A key lesson in the Victorian sector has been the importance and value of taking a collaborative, and staged approach that builds on the existing skills and relationships across our sector, and that recognises the emergent practice and limited resourcing for outcomes-based services. The standout benefits of the pilot for participating organisations have included accelerated learning about how to tailor outcomes measurement in their organisations, access to others' experiences across the sector, exposure to ideas, taking time to reflect and document their organisational practices and lessons, and feeling more supported and confident to try new and challenging things.

Other collaborative learning initiatives in Victoria such as the CLC Impact and Evaluation Community of Practice (convened by Djirra and Eastern CLC) and CLC Data Community of Practice (convened by the Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria) are also facilitating shared learning that builds on existing practice and resources, and joint work to deal with challenges and identify feasible solutions.

⁵ For example, Community Legal Centres Queensland, 'Measuring the impacts of community legal centres': <http://www.communitylegalimpact.org/>

⁶ The Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria Outcome Measurement Framework was developed collaboratively in 2017 with 35 CLCs and Victoria Legal Aid: https://www.fclc.org.au/outcomes_measurement_framework. Victoria Legal Aid's Outcomes Framework 2022 – 2030 aligns with the CLC outcomes framework: <https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/outcomes-framework>.

Recommendations for resourcing outcomes-based practice

Resourcing is a limiting factor for outcomes-based practice in the legal assistance sector. Despite the best intentions and strong interest in outcome measurement, most of the participating organisations were not able to trial new outcome measurement activities for the pilot with their current resourcing, and instead have focused on existing practice lessons.

The National Legal Assistance Partnership has an opportunity to invest in outcomes-based practice across all levels; from the service level to sector coordination and capability building via state and territory peak bodies, to national level strategic investments that lift the capability of the sector.

It is important to distinguish between the work that is needed to drive service level improvement and outcomes, and the broader research and evaluation needed to answer questions about legal assistance outcomes in states and territories or build the national evidence base for NLAP outcomes. Service level investments must enable flexibility for services to adapt and learn as they improve outcomes for clients. Sector and national level investments can take a strategic view and fund research, evaluations and data analysis that answer sector-relevant questions about outcomes for client cohorts or legal problem types and services, demonstrate the contribution of legal assistance to social and economic wellbeing, and contribute to learning that individual services can draw upon.

1. Resource core functions and allocate funding at the service level to support outcomes-based practice

Core funding is required for service management functions, and project and service funding also needs to have budget allocated for the management costs required to plan, design, deliver, and evaluate services properly.⁷ Current service funding tends to cover service delivery costs and does not provide adequate budget for effective service management including service planning, design, reporting, or evaluations, which require funding, people, and time to conduct.

2. Resource sector level functions in peak bodies

Initiatives in Victoria have shown the value of sector level data and evaluation support functions, such as the role played by the Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria (Federation) and VLA to support multiple services and facilitate learning and connection across the sector. Similarly, Health Justice Australia provides research and evaluation support to health justice partnerships, and Victoria Law Foundation provides research and evaluation support to the wider Victorian legal assistance sector, including a Knowledge Grants program to develop understanding of legal need and improve capability to collect, analyse and use data.

Secure funding for peak bodies for sector support roles and projects in research, evaluation, and data collection systems and analysis, would improve coordination, support, and capability building across the sector. Such investments would facilitate peer learning and coordinate strategic research and evaluation projects or activities that are valuable for multiple organisations.

⁷ These recommendations have been made elsewhere, for example in McDonald, H.M., McRae, C., Balmer, N.J., Hagland, T., & Kennedy, C. (2020). Apples, oranges, and lemons: The use and utility of administrative data in the Victorian legal assistance sector. Melbourne: Victoria Law Foundation. <https://victorialawfoundation.org.au/research/research-reports/data-mapping-project-apples-oranges-and-lemons>

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3. Resource better data systems for data collection, analysis, and use

The sector has well-documented limitations in administrative data systems.⁸ The sector requires substantial, long-term commitment to funding for fit-for-purpose and customisable data systems that services can tailor and adapt to their needs. Investment in and tailoring of data systems needs to adhere to the latest guidance on Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance, and this investment should start with and be led by First Nations legal services.

4. Resource a staged and collaborative national approach to outcomes

Outcomes approaches to legal assistance are more than reporting. Investment across all stages of the service management cycle is required to effectively move the sector towards outcomes-based practice. The lessons from the Victorian pilot support the sector resourcing recommendations made in the National Legal Aid (NLA) statement on 'Building the Evidence Base'.

National investments should be scheduled and developed over the life of the next NLAP agreement, building a national and strategic evidence base, and outcomes-based practice across the legal assistance sector over time and with appropriate supports and funding. This includes a recommendation for funding over the life of the next NLAP agreement for:

- National legal needs analysis.
- Development and resourcing of a national outcomes framework, supported by a program and resourcing for building capacity and capability across service providers and the sector.
- Development and resourcing of an evaluation framework and strategic national evaluations.
- Development and resourcing of a research agenda and strategic national research.
- Further development and implementation of a national data strategy and data systems and analysis.
- Investment in lived experience led approaches and practice across the sector.
- Investment in and development of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Data Governance, and data systems across the sector, with support for First Nations organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services to lead this practice.

Next steps for sector collaboration

The participating organisations in the pilot will continue to work together in 2024, to reflect further and share the lessons from the pilot with other CLCs across Victoria and take forward initiatives via the Collaborative Planning Committee as well as the CLC Impact and Evaluation Community of Practice and CLC Data Community of Practice.

⁸ For example, as documented in the Victoria Law Foundation's Data Mapping Project: <https://victorialawfoundation.org.au/research/research-reports/data-mapping-project-apples-oranges-and-lemons>

1. BACKGROUND: OUTCOMES APPROACHES IN VICTORIA

Outcomes-based practice is developing in the Victorian legal assistance sector, with strong interest and areas of existing good practice, despite limited resourcing. The Federation, CLCs across the state, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, and VLA have worked extensively over the last seven years to define outcomes that are meaningful for clients and services and develop approaches to outcomes-based practice that enable client-centred services and learning and improvement.

The pilot built on existing foundations and frameworks for defining and measuring outcomes across the Victorian legal assistance sector.

Outcomes-based practice

Outcomes-based practice refers to services that are planned, designed, delivered, and evaluated in ways that focus on outcomes, and that support learning and improvement so that services achieve meaningful change for clients and communities.

Commitment to outcomes-based practice requires community and government organisations to focus on meaningful public outcomes to drive coordinated investment and integrated and connected services that achieve change for communities. This way of working is expressed in sector specific guidelines, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) principles for people-centred justice⁹ as well as community and public sector literature and guidance in Australia and internationally. In Victoria, the Victorian Government's approach to outcomes and evidence reform¹⁰ is also a strong foundation for the sector to use.

Client- and lived experience-centred practice

Legal assistance services are increasingly co-designing service models and defining intended outcomes with clients and/or lived experience experts and advisory groups, to ensure services are shaped by people who need legal assistance and contribute to meaningful outcomes for client groups. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services are determining outcomes and service models that are meaningful for their clients, communities, and services, to shape how services are funded and delivered in ways that support self-determination.

Approaches to measure outcomes must also be shaped by client and lived experience. This means working with lived experience experts and advisors to design and implement client feedback processes. It means seeing data collection as an opportunity to engage with clients about where their legal problems are up to,

⁹ OECD 2021. 'OECD Framework and Good Practice Principles for People-Centred Justice'. <https://www.oecd.org/governance/global-roundtables-access-to-justice/good-practice-principles-for-people-centred-justice.pdf>

¹⁰ Victorian Government Evidence Reform. Available at: [Evidence reform in Victoria | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au/evidence-reform)

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and what further supports they may need. In the First Nations context, approaches need to situate client outcomes and feedback in the context of contributing to self-determination and ensuring data collection processes are culturally safe and not contrary to Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

Outcomes frameworks

The Victorian Community Legal Sector Outcomes Measurement Framework¹¹ was published in December 2017, following 18 months of development with 35 CLCs, the Federation, and Lirata Consulting, with support from VLA. The outcomes in the framework include:

1. Access to justice for all: People experiencing disadvantage have increased access to justice.
2. Empowered communities: Community members have increased capability to understand and address their legal issues.
3. Holistic responses to needs: CLCs and stakeholders have increased capability to provide integrated responses to the needs of people experiencing disadvantage.
4. Fair laws and systems: Decision makers address systemic injustices.
5. Effective CLCs: CLCs are capable, sustainable, and able to respond to the legal needs of people experiencing disadvantage.

The Federation's 10 Year Plan for Community Legal Centres in Victoria¹² includes Strategic Direction 3: Focus on Impact. The sector will build and share the evidence base of what works, invest in data capability, and tell the story of CLC impact.

Many of the services involved in the pilot either have, or are developing, their own organisational theories of change or outcomes frameworks as part of their strategic planning. Building these has taken investment of time and resources to ensure that the intended outcomes reflect client, staff, and partner perspectives, and are useful for organisations to guide service design, monitoring, reporting, and evaluations that are relevant for them and their communities. For example, Justice Connect used their theory of change and outcomes framework, which evolved over more than a decade, to anchor their current Annual Impact Report to the identified changes and long-term impact they want to see.¹³

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services in Victoria are developing outcome frameworks that not only support self-determined approaches to service delivery and organisational learning, but also drive improved coordination and funding from government. Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) developed an organisation wide theory of change and an Outcomes Framework that includes 12 recommendations (four for legal practices, five for Community Justice programs and three for Policy and Advocacy) to collect and report data for the two key beneficiaries, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria and legal systems and institutions. Over the last five years, Djirra has focused on building internal capability in Aboriginal-led design, monitoring and evaluation across its services and programs. Their

¹¹ Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria and Lirata Consulting, in consultation with 35 Victorian CLCs. Available at: [Outcomes Measurement Framework - Federation of Community Legal Centres \(fclc.org.au\)](https://fclc.org.au/outcomes-measurement-framework)

¹² Federation of Community Legal Centres, 2023, A 10 Year Plan for CLCs in Victoria. Available at: [A 10-Year Plan for Community Legal Centres in Victoria - Federation of Community Legal Centres \(fclc.org.au\)](https://fclc.org.au/10-year-plan)

¹³ Justice Connect, 2023, [Annual Impact Report 2022 – 2023](https://justiceconnect.org.au/annual-impact-report-2022-2023)

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organisation-wide Outcomes Framework has also been used to drive funding reform with government departments and link funding to self-determined outcomes and measures of success.

VLA's Outcomes Framework 2022–30¹⁴ was developed in consultation with staff and sector partners and approved by the Board in February 2022. The VLA outcomes are:

1. Clients: Clients have increased access to justice.
2. Community: Improved legal understanding in the community.
3. Legal assistance sector: Collaborative legal assistance sector.
4. Laws and systems: Fairer laws and systems.
5. VLA: Effective and sustainable VLA.

VLA measures outcomes¹⁵ against its four-year strategic plan¹⁶, and has an Outcomes and Evidence Agenda 2022–26¹⁷ with priorities for legal needs analysis, service design, data science, and research and evaluations. VLA's client outcomes focus on service accessibility, service experience, legal capability, addressing legal problems, and wellbeing, as well as a specific outcome for First Nations clients' access to justice.

¹⁴ Victoria Legal Aid 2022, VLA Outcomes Framework 2022-2030 [Outcomes framework | Victoria Legal Aid](#)

¹⁵ Victoria Legal Aid, 2023, Outcome measures for Strategy 26. [vla-strategy-26-outcomes-measures.docx \(live.com\)](#)

¹⁶ Victoria Legal Aid, 2022, Strategy 26. [Strategy 26](#)

¹⁷ Victoria Legal Aid, 2023, Outcomes and Evidence Agenda 2022-26 [vla-outcomes-evidence-agenda-2022-26.docx \(live.com\)](#)

2. OVERVIEW OF THE SECTOR OUTCOMES PILOT

In August 2021, the Victorian Collaborative Planning Committee (CPC) discussed a legal assistance sector approach to defining and measuring client and community outcomes. Acknowledging the existing outcomes frameworks and practices across the Victorian sector, the CPC formed an Outcomes Working Group¹⁸ to undertake a pilot project to develop and test shared definitions and measurement of core outcomes in the Victorian legal assistance sector.

The Victorian Sector Outcomes Pilot (the pilot) was planned in May 2022, and launched in November 2022. All interested legal services in Victoria were invited to join and choose their level of involvement. Pilot activities took place over 10 months from November 2022–August 2023, with case studies, two reflection workshops to develop and refine the lessons and recommendations, and reports completed by December 2023.

The pilot was designed to document and share learnings across the Victorian sector, and to inform development of outcome approaches in the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP).

Aims

The aims of the pilot were to:

- Learn together about how to best measure client outcomes in ways that are meaningful, useful, and feasible with our resources.
- Develop common questions, tools, and resources to use across our sector.
- Provide mentoring and tailored advice to build capability and guide the outcomes work we are doing in our organisations.
- Strengthen the evidence base of the outcomes of our services for clients and the community.
- Inform outcomes approaches in the NLAP, and the investments needed to move to outcomes-focused practice in the sector.

The principles guiding the pilot were:

- Do not need it to be perfect.
- Balance between rigour and practicality – err on the practicality side.
- Be realistic about where we are starting from and the resources organisations have to do this.
- Be willing to fail.
- Start small.
- Focus is on lessons learnt – and how these should be applied moving forward.

¹⁸ The Collaborative Planning Committee Outcomes Working Group has representative members from: Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) (secretariat), Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria (the Federation), Victoria Law Foundation (VLF), Djirra, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS), Health Justice Australia (HJA), and the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) Victoria.

OVERVIEW OF THE SECTOR OUTCOMES PILOT

- Just try something – need to move beyond the frameworks and theory and have a dip.

Participants

Sixteen organisations participated in the pilot, including two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, 13 community legal services, and VLA.

There were three ways of participating:

- Tier 1 – Share a case study of existing client outcomes work.
- Tier 2 – Adapt and trial some of the common outcome questions developed by the pilot.
- Tier 3 – Trial the full set of common questions developed by the pilot and share results.

Each organisation chose the tier that best suited their current work and their capacity to be involved in the pilot. Seven organisations used the common outcome questions developed for the pilot in part or in full (Tiers 2 and 3 respectively) and nine shared their existing work (Tier 1). Among the nine organisations who shared a case study of their existing work, many were already using questions similar to the common client questions.

Table 1: Participating organisations and participation tier

TIER 1 – Share an example of existing practice	TIER 2 – Trial or adapt some of the common questions	TIER 3 – Trial or adapt most or all the common questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ARC Justice• Consumer Action Law Centre• Djirra• Eastern Community Legal Centre• Inner Melbourne Community Legal• Justice Connect• Southside Justice• Tenants Victoria• Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barwon Community Legal Service• Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre• Hume Riverina Community Legal Service• Mallee Family Care• Northern Community Legal Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gippsland Community Legal Service• Victoria Legal Aid

OVERVIEW OF THE SECTOR OUTCOMES PILOT

Pilot approach

Pilot design

The CPC outcomes working group planned the pilot in May 2022, with a series of meetings and a workshop to co-design a set of common outcomes measures drawing on service provision, policy and research experience of the members and their organisations. The working group canvassed a wide set of possible outcomes, before identifying a shared interest in client legal outcomes relating to service experience, legal capability, and legal problem resolution. Focusing the pilot on client outcomes had the added benefit of minimising resource and data collection demands, which created opportunities for smaller CLCs, which do not have dedicated evaluation resources, to participate in the pilot.

The original plan for the pilot developed by the working group focused on testing common outcome measures. However, when the pilot was launched with interested organisations in November 2022, fewer participants opted to test the common outcome questions and more opted to provide case study examples of outcomes practices. The working group recognised that whatever the result of the pilot, it would generate valuable insights into the practicalities and challenges of implementing common measures and outcomes-based services. It acknowledged that should a narrow set of measures prove difficult to implement, then the chances of success with a broader set would face even greater hurdles, without substantial resourcing and leadership at all levels.

The participating organisations implemented a range of approaches to gathering and using information about outcomes for their clients, over the period November 2022–August 2023. The working group provided support and advice to each organisation during the pilot period, guidance, and templates, and facilitated a series of workshops to reflect and share lessons across the pilot group. This included:

- Six learning workshops on key topics relating to client outcomes measurement, and to share and learn from practice examples, as well as jointly develop the pilot and lessons and recommendations with the participating organisations (see Table 2. Learning workshops held in the pilot).
- Tailored support and advice from working group members to assist participating organisations with pilot activities, for example, building common questions into existing tools and processes, analysing and reporting outcome data.
- Guidance to document case studies from each organisation, and coordination of the reports from the pilot. The working group provided templates and held follow up reflections with participating organisations to document their approach to outcomes measurement as a case study. This included questions about what their overall approach is to outcomes measurement, and a specific example for the pilot; including which client groups they focused on, methods, what worked well and what did not work well, how they used the findings, what resources they used, and what resources they would need to make outcomes measurement a sustainable and ongoing practice (see Appendix B. How we documented the pilot).

OVERVIEW OF THE SECTOR OUTCOMES PILOT

Table 2. Learning workshops held in the pilot

DATE	TOPIC
November 2022	Introductory workshop to launch the pilot with all interested organisations
March 2023	Learning workshop: Sharing practice examples, and guidance for case studies
May 2023	Designing client feedback methods that are meaningful, useful, and integrated with your services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What methods are most suitable for the questions you want to answer, and your client groups? • Considering a range of methods beyond surveys, e.g. stories, interviews, focus groups • Considering ethics and ways of engaging with clients • Balancing effort with the resources you have • Using the findings in how you design, deliver, and improve services
June 2023	Combining different forms of data to tell your outcomes story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we use our service data together with what clients tell us about their experiences and outcomes? • What are the practical ways we can use our data collection platforms (e.g., CLASS, Actionstep, MS Forms) to store and analyse our data in useful ways for reporting, learning and improvement?
August 2023	Learning workshop: Sharing our case studies and identifying lessons
November 2023	Pilot report: Finalising the lessons and recommendations

Focus on client outcomes

By client outcomes, we mean the differences our services make for clients.

The pilot focused on client outcomes relating to:

- The service: Clients' experiences of the legal assistance services provided.
- The person and their legal capability: The difference the service made to clients' legal capabilities¹⁹.
- The legal problem/s: The difference the service made to clients' legal problems.

These outcomes are defined in the Victorian Community Legal Centre Outcomes Measurement Framework, and Victoria Legal Aid Outcomes Framework. Many organisations have also further defined these outcomes in their organisational strategic plan, theory of change and/or outcomes frameworks, along with additional outcomes that are important for their contexts such as outcomes relating to cultural safety or culture as a protective factor for clients. All these client outcomes are important intermediate steps toward longer term outcomes such as well-being or safety from violence.

The pilot considered only the outcomes of legal assistance services for individual clients (information, advice, duty lawyer, or case work). It did not include examples of how organisations measure the difference

¹⁹ See footnote 4.




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that community services make, for example the contribution of community legal education to legal capability.

Based on the existing literature on the outcomes of legal assistance services, the Outcomes Working Group developed seven questions for the participating organisations to trial (Figure 1). The small set of common questions were designed to be used in conjunction with other client service and satisfaction data. The utility of the common measures depended on the availability and use of other routinely collected data. For example, it was envisaged that client unit service data would be used in combination with service follow-up outcomes measures; and be used together with existing client surveys.

Recognising the range of resources and existing practices amongst potential participants, the pilot was deliberately flexible regarding the means of operationalising the measures, and the times at which they were implemented. The pilot sought to gather insights and draw lessons from the diverse ways in which participants chose to use the common measures. A longer set of questions that organisations could also choose from and use as best met their needs and capacity was also included (see Appendix C. Common question tool).

Figure 1. Common questions about client outcomes

	The service: Did it meet people's needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I was able to get all the legal help I needed [*today, the last time I got help] from [insert service name] (Yes, Partially, No)
	The person: Do they better understand their options and feel confident to seek help?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I understand how to deal with my legal problemI feel confident to seek help if I have another legal issue (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree)
	The problem/s: Did the service help with addressing the problem?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is the legal problem you got help with [*time element] resolved or ended? (Yes/Partially/No) <i>If yes:</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">I am satisfied with the outcome of my legal problemThe outcome of my legal problem was fairThe lawyer* helped me fix my legal problem<i>If no or partially:</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">I am satisfied with how my legal problem is goingI am confident I will achieve a fair outcomeThe lawyer* is helping me fix my legal problem (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree)

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Pilot activities

Methods

Organisations in the pilot took a range of approaches to gathering feedback from clients, either using or adapting the common questions, or using their own existing questions, tools, and approaches, to measure the outcomes of services for clients.

Most organisations shared examples of some form of client survey or structured interviews, either conducted online, by phone, SMS, interactive voice response, computer assisted telephone interview, in person, or in paper forms in person or via mail (Table 3). Some organisations used interpreters to conduct surveys, while others translated their survey instruments into the common primary languages of their clients. Services use a range of platforms for collecting and analysing client feedback and outcomes data (

Table 4).

Several organisations also gathered client stories or case studies (Table 5). Clients' stories were sometimes written through collaboration and discussion between the client and a staff member, or at a few organisations, clients could write up their own story. Four services highlighted the value of building in collection and use of staff observations on client outcomes (Table 6), to complement clients' feedback.

Five organisations also shared that they used a mixed methods approach, employing combinations of the methods above and qualitative and quantitative methods to understand client outcomes across their programs and services; for example conducting client surveys, documenting staff observations, preparing case studies and using service data (see case study summaries from: Inner Melbourne Community Legal, Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre, Tenants Victoria, Northern Community Legal Centre, and VLA).

Table 3. Summary of client survey methods used by participating organisations during the pilot

ORGANISATION	CLIENT SURVEY METHODS
ARC Justice	Online survey for all service users developed but not yet trialled.
Barwon CLS	Phone survey of health justice partnership clients, several months after their legal service. Of eight clients eligible to participate, one responded.
Brimbank Melton CLC	Anonymous online survey, link sent to clients of the generalist and family law units, usually within seven days of legal service: 22 responses.
Consumer Action Law Centre	Online surveys of clients who use online chat bot to access templates addressing specific credit/debit issues; first survey administered immediately after access and follow-up survey three-months later; not yet implemented.
Eastern CLC	Interactive voice response phone survey of people triaged by the intake team, available in numerous languages; 76% completion rate, with a minimal 24% abandonment.
Gippsland CLS	Online and printable survey. 389 clients across six programs advised of feedback options via Actionstep Client Portal, template letter or during service call; six responses.

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ORGANISATION	CLIENT SURVEY METHODS
Hume Riverina CLS	Phone survey of health justice partnership clients; an experienced medical receptionist skilled in trauma informed engagement with clients conducted phone interviews.
Inner Melbourne Community Legal	Telephone, in person and online survey of housing justice partnership clients, within a few weeks of legal service; 28 invited and 15 responses.
Justice Connect	Phone, online, paper and short Hotjar pop ups, depending on respondent type (includes lawyers and help seekers); work in progress to develop more standardised organisation-wide feedback mechanisms. During the pilot period, 1,203 responses were collected across all programs, through a range of outcomes surveys.
Southside Justice	Phone and in-person survey, clients contacted Friday of the week of their appointment or directly after their appointment; 20 clients contacted, seven responses.
Northern CLC	Phone survey within two weeks of final file closing, plus phone or email (TBC) survey within first 12 months of opening for ongoing files; clients of program assisting victim-survivors of family violence on temporary visas; none surveyed to date.
Mallee Family Care CLC	Online, phone and paper survey options, clients who consent to provide feedback contacted at the end of the month their legal service concluded; 85 consented to participate (81 phone), 52 responses.
Tenants Victoria	Phone survey and online survey of clients after service close, conducted six monthly.
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service	Phone survey, three-phase (intake, out-take and six-months post-closure). Between January 2022 and July 2023, 346 intake survey responses, 47 out-take survey responses and eight post-closure responses. Phone Survey, (satisfaction). Between July 2022 and July 2023, 128 survey responses.
Victoria Legal Aid	Online and phone survey. The 2023 survey was sent to over 16,000 clients whose service had closed in the period July–December 2023, including clients who received criminal, civil, or family law advice, duty lawyer or case work services; 926 responses.

Table 4. Client feedback data collection and analysis platforms used by participating organisations

PLATFORM	ORGANISATION
Microsoft Forms	Barwon Community Legal Service; Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre; Northern Community Legal Centre; Consumer Action Law Centre; Southside Justice; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
Actionstep	Barwon Community Legal Service; Gippsland Community Legal Service; Inner Melbourne Community Legal; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
Lime Survey, and consultant platform	Victoria Legal Aid

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PLATFORM	ORGANISATION
Microsoft Dynamics 365 Customer Voice	Justice Connect
Frevvo	Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre
Genesys ²⁰	Eastern Community Legal Centre, Victoria Legal Aid
Hotjar	Justice Connect
Qualtrics	Gippsland Community Legal Service
Spark Chart	Inner Melbourne Community Legal
Survey Monkey	Hume Riverina Community Legal Service; ARC Justice; Justice Connect (limited; transitioning to Customer Voice); Tenants Victoria
Paper survey	Gippsland Community Legal Service; Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre; Djirra; Justice Connect

Table 5. Summary of case study methods used by participating organisations during pilot

ORGANISATION	CLIENT CASE STUDY METHODS
Djirra	Frontline staff identify and seek consent from clients to write up experiences as case studies for funding reports, policy submissions and comms purposes. Lawyers or paralegal support workers prepare the case studies.
Gippsland CLS	Case studies are written either by the client or by Gippsland CLS, as per the client's preference, and information provided to clients through Actionstep Client Portal.
Justice Connect	Throughout the year program staff from all areas of the organisation identify clients who can provide feedback. Staff contact those clients to seek consent to write a story. Where written consent is obtained, program staff gather the "facts", and the Engagement Team crafts a cohesive story and anonymises client details. The client is contacted again for final review and approval. Twenty or more client stories are prepared each year.
Northern CLC	Lawyers identify appropriate clients, who are invited to work with NCLC's Family Violence Integration Worker to develop a client-centred case study that tells the story of their experience and outcome in the client's words.

Table 6. Summary of staff observation methods used by participating organisations during the pilot

ORGANISATION	STAFF OBSERVATION METHODS
Inner Melbourne Community Legal	Lawyers record their observations of changes experienced by clients in Actionstep at file closure.
Justice Connect	Automated surveys for pro bono lawyers are used to collect information about the lawyer's perspective of the outcome achieved for the client, whether problems were

²⁰ Contact centre software's interactive voice recognition survey capacity.

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	prevented or resolved and the quality of the outcome. Observational data is analysed alongside self-reported outcomes data from clients, to triangulate similarities and differences.
Mallee Family CLC	Lawyers, Social Workers, and Financial Counsellors (all CLC staff) complete Practitioner Observations forms to reflect on and record client experiences and outcomes (including empowerment, capability, and wellbeing). The data is analysed with the self-reported outcomes data captured through the client reflection form.
Northern CLC	Lawyers record their observations of each client's current level of fear when their file is opened and again when closed.

Analysis and reporting

Across participating organisations there was considerable variability in the resources and capabilities available for analysing the outcomes data collected. At one end, some larger organisations have the resources to employ dedicated data analysts and evaluators on staff or to engage external consultants where cost was built into a project budget, while at the other end, this work was completed at some organisations by project managers, lawyers and administrative staff, as part of their broader roles.

At a minimum, data from client management systems (e.g. Actionstep or CLASS) was exported to Microsoft Excel for basic analysis of service delivery data (e.g. number of clients receiving different types of assistance, disaggregated by age group and gender). Where qualitative data was collected it was typically analysed and coded for themes manually (see for example [Tenants Victoria](#)).

Where online survey platforms were used to collect client feedback, automatically generated summary statistics were helpful for understanding the data collected; noting however that where response rates were low, usefulness of summary statistics was limited.

Organisations that were able to collect sufficient data *and* had more resources (e.g. dedicated data analyst or support from external consultants) were able to do more with their data; they could:

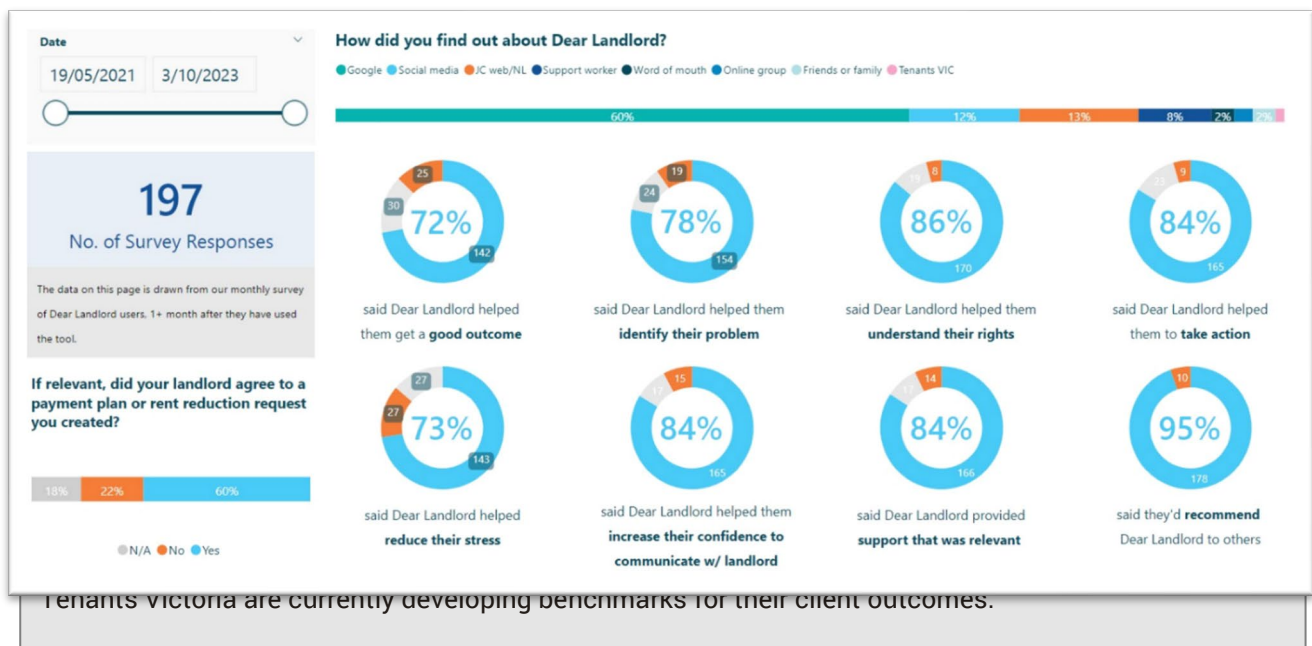
- Prepare data visualisations, such as live dashboards, graphs and maps, to aid communication of results (e.g. [Eastern Community Legal Centre](#), [Justice Connect](#)²¹, [Mallee Family Care CLC](#)²²)
- Use publicly available data from the ABS to contextualise and deepen their understanding of their own data (e.g. [Tenants Victoria](#)).
- Prepare reports for external publication.
- Conduct regular discussion and reflection about data to inform decision making (see pages 22-22).

²¹ See Figure 2. See also Justice Connect [Annual Impact Report 2024](#), accompanied by a series of online and interactive visuals, found on the [landing page](#).

²² See Figure 3.

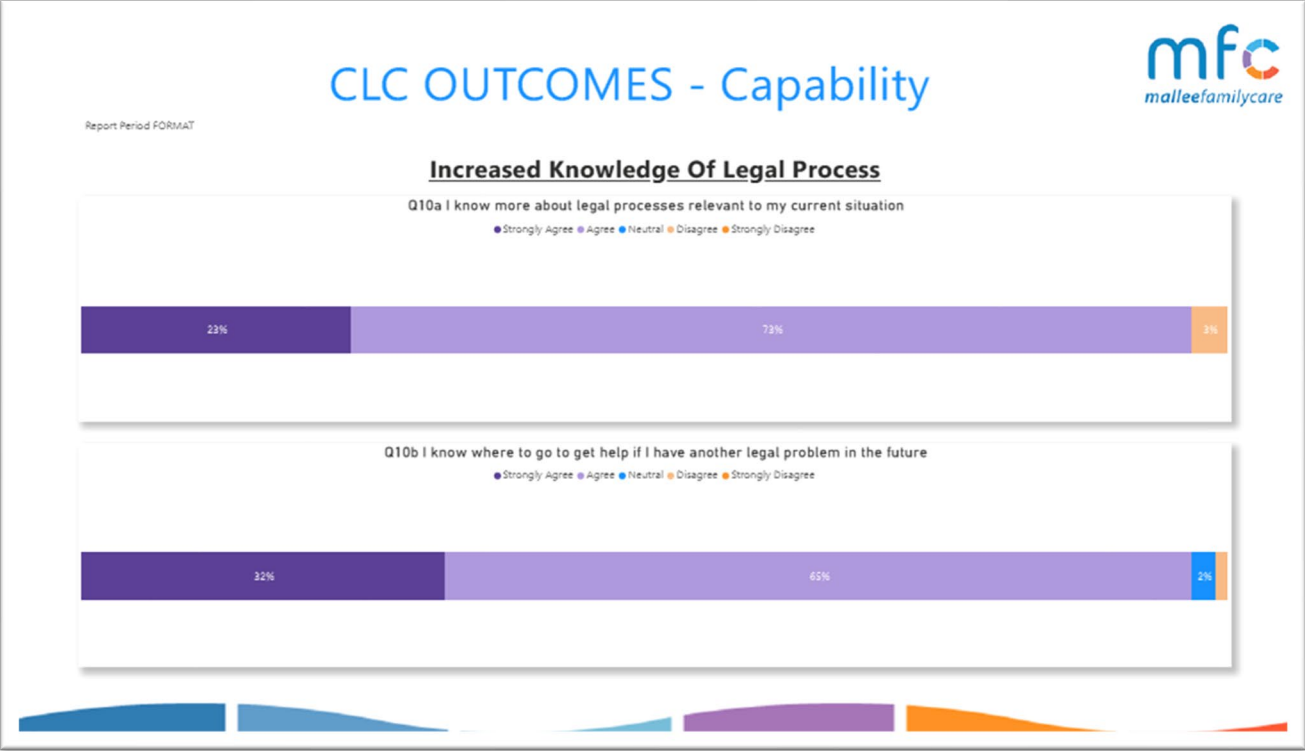
OVERVIEW OF THE SECTOR OUTCOMES PILOT

Figure 2. Justice Connect Dear Landlord dashboard²³



²³ Dear Landlord feedback dashboard. Dear Landlord, is a self-help tool created by Justice Connect's Homeless Law Program, for renters in Victoria. See also [Annual Impact Report 2024](#), accompanied by a series of online and interactive visuals, found on the [landing page](#).

Figure 3. Mallee Family Care, client feedback survey results (legal capability)



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Using findings to improve services

The purpose of measuring client outcomes is to make evidence-based and client-led decisions that improve services to meet client needs and in turn achieve improved outcomes. Examples from the pilot demonstrate that with relevant outcomes data, resources, and capabilities, and building trust and a learning culture, evidence of client outcomes is being used to improve services.

Pilot participants used outcomes data for:

- **Learning and improvement:** Insights about clients' outcomes (and access) gained from data collected were used to review and inform improvements at the levels of processes, services and/or programs. For example, VALS took action to ensure legal teams offer assistance from Client Support Officers to clients with low literacy, after learning through client feedback that a client did not seek needed support, because they had not understood the documents sent to them; Mallee Family Care CLC, client feedback showed that clients were unclear about how to re-engage with the service and unclear about the different roles of lawyer and social worker, leading to practice changes at the centre. See case study summaries from: Barwon Community Legal Service, Consumer Action Legal Centre, Eastern Community Legal Centre, Justice Connect, Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre, Tenants Victoria, and Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.
- **Supporting staff learning and reflection:** Sharing findings with staff to provide a feedback loop showing how client voices were being centred to make service design and improvements, helped make outcome measurement useful and valuable for staff. Client feedback was also used for affirming, encouraging and inspiring staff – positive client feedback was shared with staff, which affirmed the value of their work and boosted morale. See case study summaries from: Inner Melbourne Community Legal, Justice Connect, Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre.
- **Reports, submissions, and funding applications:** Both summary statistics and quotes from clients about their experience were used (or going to be used) in board reports, annual reports, funding applications and policy and law reform submissions. See case study summaries from: Eastern Community Legal Centre, Justice Connect, Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre, and Tenants Victoria.
- **Supporting client empowerment:** Some clients experience a sense of validation and empowerment from sharing their experiences with others, such as policy makers, or other members of the community. Supporting this experience has been among the reasons organisations have prepared case studies (with clients' informed consent).

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service's Client Feedback Program administers the organisation's Legal Matter Questionnaire at intake, at matter closure and approximately 6-months post-closure. Where clients suggest a specific improvement to the service it is escalated to the relevant department heads for consideration. On one occasion a client reported that they received their documentation but were unable to read and understand it, so did not seek further support. Escalating this feedback has raised awareness within our legal teams of the need to offer assistance from our Client Support Officers to clients with low literacy.

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Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre surveyed 81 clients by phone over a five-month period, collecting feedback which led to a range of improvements including actions to ensure clients:

- know how to re-engage with the service (not necessarily the solicitor).
- understand the different roles of solicitor and social worker.
- are aware if the Social Worker is going to be present.

Some participating organisations were unable to use the data they collected to inform service improvements to the extent they had hoped. The main **challenges** were:

- Insufficient data, particularly for surveys, organisations found it challenging to obtain enough responses to confidently draw conclusions about the experiences of their broader client base and changes needed.
- High level data that speaks to all clients across an organisation often lacks the specificity needed to inform individual program improvements, particularly where outcomes data cannot be combined with other service data for analysis.
- Insufficient capacity/resources to analyse and use all the data collected.

Eastern Community Legal Centre's analysis of key problem areas identified that scams were a growing issue for which people were seeking legal assistance. Mapping this against demographics, the Centre was able to understand barriers to access and identify key focus areas for community legal education. This led to tailored community legal education sessions and bilingual resources being developed to assist culturally and linguistically diverse and newly arrived communities to better understand the law, individual legal rights, available support services and overcome barriers relating to scams.

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It is important to note that even when response rates were too low to generalise findings, the process itself and/or qualitative data collected through open questions, could still provide valuable information and give rise to further investigation and service considerations.

Victoria Legal Aid staff reflected on the organisation's large scale Client Experience Survey: *"Because it is organisation-wide it is often not 'granular' enough for specific services, but it does speak to the broader areas of focus for improving client services overall – the importance of access and engagement with clients, the high number of people with mental health concerns, the importance for clients of resolving their legal matter and being treated with respect. It creates conversations with projects and programs about what this might mean for them and how it might link, validate, or contradict other data that they have from reviews and evaluations for example."*

Since aligning the Client Experience Survey with VLA's Outcome Framework in 2022, VLA has used the findings of the last two annual surveys to guide actions and improvements in:

- Service accessibility for people who have support needs (relating to disability, mental health or health concerns, and experiences of trauma and violence, which will be implemented through improvements in client services, intake and triage, and VLA's Disability Action Plan)
- Tailoring service models and intensity to better help clients resolve legal problems.

Barwon Community Legal Service identified eight Health Justice Partnership clients as eligible to be surveyed during their data collection period – six clients did not answer or return the call; one client returned the call but due to complex health needs opted out of participating; and one client answered and participated. The service reflected that *"the little data collected did highlight the complexity of this cohort and a number of things we hadn't considered particularly in regard to the complexities associated with clients who receive legal assistance for themselves or associated with an illness or"*

3. LESSONS

This section presents key lessons from the pilot.

Measuring client outcomes

Outcomes that relate to the individual client's service experience, legal capability, and legal problem resolution are relevant across all services that participated in the Victorian pilot.

The organisations who used the common questions tool developed by the Outcomes Working Group found the common measures helpful, along with support to adapt and tailor them to ensure relevance across diverse organisations. Using the common questions to measure client outcomes highlighted:

- It is essential to tailor both the questions we ask and the methods we use to measure outcomes, according to the specific client groups we work with, the types of services we provide, and the context of how our services are delivered.
- Involving staff in the process of tailoring the common questions helped create buy-in for their use.
- The short and long list of questions provided a helpful starting point and prompted discussion about which questions were most relevant to individual services and their communities. The questions were short and succinct which helped 'demystify' outcomes measurement.
- The most used common questions were those about the person and their legal capability relating to understanding their problems and how to address them, as well as confidence to seek legal help. Organisations often adapted these questions to test whether the service created an improvement, e.g. "I have a better understanding of how to deal with my legal problems", "I now feel more confident in accessing legal help if I have another legal issue in the future".
- Participating organisations noted the importance of tailoring questions about problem resolution to reflect the service intensity, legal problem type, and the timing of follow up. For some service types (e.g. advice only) and areas of law (e.g. family violence, elder abuse) it does not make sense to ask if a legal problem has 'resolved' or 'ended'. In these cases, alternative suggestions for low intensity information or advice services would be to ask how the problem is progressing from the client's perspective. e.g., "Overall, how satisfied are you with the outcomes of your legal problems?", and for different problem types, to tailor questions to ask about the outcomes sought that are relevant to the problem type (e.g., improved safety for family violence clients).
- The least used common question was about whether the service met client needs. The services who considered this question noted that they already ask about this using a range of more specific questions (rather than one overall question) to measure service delivery experience, such as service accessibility, respectful experience, meeting support needs (cultural, personal, health or disability), and satisfaction.

Looking ahead to how we might move toward some common outcomes measurement across the legal assistance sector, the pilot demonstrated that broad common outcomes make sense, but it is important for

organisations to adapt questions and methods to ensure the information gathered is useful for learning and improving at the individual service level. Continued supports to do this would be beneficial, including sharing and adapting the simple guides and tools developed in the pilot with further input from the sector, as well as the service-specific and sector-wide resourcing required to implement outcomes-based services (see 4. Recommendations).

Client- and lived experience-centred practice

Client-centred data collection means using approaches that are flexible, easy, and convenient for clients to participate in, and consider clients' culture, language, context, and any support needs. It means using approaches that are trauma-informed, culturally safe and responsive and do no harm (see also next section below). It means giving people choices about how they provide feedback and to whom.

"The lesson we'd like to share is that outcomes measurement can be done in a client-centred way. Data collection is an opportunity to hear the client's voice, providing data to shape project design and understand impact, and also a way to support individual clients."

- Hume Riverina Community Legal Service.

Key considerations and insights from the organisations in the pilot include:

- Following up with clients about their experiences of services should also be a deliberate inquiry into their current needs. This is a key opportunity to identify and re-engage or refer clients who need further support.

Hume Riverina Community Legal Service collected feedback from Health Justice Partnership clients through telephone surveys, conducted by a medical receptionist experienced in trauma-informed engagement with clients. These led to several clients being connected back to services, either to the legal service because there was ongoing legal need, or to Gateway Health services for mental health support. This demonstrated that the surveys were not only a point of data collection, but also an opportunity to check on client progress.

- To support clients to safely share feedback about their service experience and their current needs, the staff they speak to need to be appropriately trained, empathetic, and skilled at active listening, trauma-informed interviewing and working effectively with interpreters. (See [Hume Riverina Community Legal Service](#) above.)
- Many clients of legal assistance services have histories of trauma, and our approaches to outcomes measurement need to be appropriate for them. This means being trauma-informed at every step in the process.
- Informed consent to participate in feedback processes is best sought from clients early in their service, and then confirmed/updated at the conclusion of the service (where ongoing services were provided), with those details clearly documented on service systems. This requires organisations to clearly explain how any data collected will be used and how privacy and confidentiality will be ensured.

LESSONS

- In consideration for client's time, it is important to limit the number of questions and collect only critical information that services do not already have, wherever possible by linking different data sources. For example, **Barwon Community Legal Service**, **Southside Justice**, **Tenants Victoria** and **Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service** linked survey results (e.g. collected through Microsoft Forms or Survey Monkey) to client data stored in Actionstep (with client consent).
- Consulting with people with lived experience, for example to inform the design of feedback tools and processes, is valuable but should only be done if it can be done well. This means having the resources to pay people with lived experience for their time and expertise and provide supports they may need to participate, such as childcare and transport. There is much to be learnt from the health sector, and health justice partnerships are helping to grow this expertise. We also need to consider ways of enabling staff with lived experience to safely share that expertise where they wish to do so.

Eastern Community Legal Centre developed a short post-call interaction survey, administered immediately following a person's initial contact with the Centre. It comprises just three questions – overall satisfaction, Net Promoter Score, and a general feedback question – about the person's experience with the information service. These were designed to provide data specifically to inform service improvement and to be quick and easy for callers to complete.

Justice Connect is moving to more standardised and, where feasible, automated, organisation-wide feedback mechanisms, prompting reflection on how current feedback mechanisms serve the diverse audiences/clients they are engaging with (e.g. paper-based surveys for Seniors Law clients, phone based interviews with a social worker for Homeless Law clients, Not For Profit Law's training and subscriber surveys, the use of Google Analytics, HotJar pop ups and 'like' buttons for online self-help tools) and to ensure their feedback approaches mirror service intensity and meet client needs.

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service have a three-phase survey that collects feedback from clients at intake, at matter closure and approximately six-months post-closure. The surveys are conducted by volunteers in the Client Feedback Program using a scripted yet informal approach, that has assisted in identifying when clients need further assistance or referrals to other services. VALS developed a catalogue of suitable internal departments and external organisations to enable immediate referrals when further needs are identified. The three-phase process provides follow-up for engaging participants; VALS reach out to clients needing further support or in response to specific questions they

Appropriate mixed methods to engage with clients and demonstrate outcomes

This section outlines key lessons from designing and trialling different methods to gathering data about client outcomes.

LESSONS

Key principles for choosing methods

- Approaches to collecting data about client outcomes should not be extractive but instead support better follow up and relationships with clients.
- Data collection that is integrated with client-centred service delivery processes helps ensure our clients are supported appropriately, and that data collection is streamlined within useful service record keeping and workflows. This requires resourcing and/or consideration of the extra administrative load this may place on busy teams delivering legal services.

Gippsland Community Legal Service trialed a new, organisation-wide approach to gathering client feedback that integrated the provision of survey information into existing processes used by lawyers, such as by including standard paragraphs about feedback in opening and closing letters. Recipients of discrete services (i.e., legal advice and legal task services) were advised of the feedback process during their initial client call as well as through the Actionstep Client Portal, with the 'How to Provide Feedback' form added to the client portal from the beginning of the matter.

- Outcomes measurement must be trauma-informed with questions and data collection methods tailored as needed to ensure the safety of clients. Client safety requires careful consideration of how we collect feedback post-service (e.g., 3 months later); we may be asking people to re-visit trauma and need to ensure proper consent and support for this (see **ARC Justice** case study).
- Client outcomes are more fully understood through a combination of different data and information sources, including client feedback and service delivery data, as well as practitioner feedback, practice knowledge, evaluation findings and research findings.

Northern Community Legal Centre developed an evaluation framework for Safe Landing, a project delivered together with South-East Monash Legal Service, that supports victim-survivors of family violence who are on temporary visas. Client outcomes are understood using client feedback (using some of the Pilot's common questions), lawyer's observations, case studies and annual learning and reflection workshops, where the two legal services, both separately and jointly, use a set of structured questions to reflect on and discuss the Project's progress, challenges and achievements. Consideration was needed for the timing of the client survey, which if scheduled at file closure may result in multiple surveys being sent as clients typically have multiple files across different areas of law (migration, IVO, family law, VOCAT, etc). The project opted for an annual progress survey and another survey to be sent at the closure of the last file.

- Participating organisations highlighted that meaningful measurement of client outcomes can involve collecting rich, qualitative data from small sample sizes; valuable insights about clients' service experiences and outcomes do not necessarily require large representative samples, which can be difficult and costly to achieve.
- The timing of client feedback processes needs to be carefully considered according to what is being measured. Following up at different points in a client's service journey and asking targeted questions relevant to the point in time is most effective (though can be resource intensive).

LESSONS

- Surveys are a common data collection method across the sector for gathering client feedback. Survey methods can provide valuable information for helping understand client outcomes, especially when they are part of a broader, mixed methods approach, and their resourcing requirements and limitations are recognised. Key lessons about surveys, highlighted by participating organisations include:
 - Questions need to be tailored to the client cohort they are being asked of.
 - Response rates can be improved through follow-up phone calls and offering clients different ways to complete a survey. Many organisations found that sending an online survey link as the only option typically results in very low response rates.
- There is sometimes a need to educate and/or advocate to funders, as well as within services, about the types of evidence and the range of methods for gathering data and evidence, that can and should inform program planning, design, delivery, and improvement.

Engaging with priority client groups

This section describes the key elements of a client-centred approach to data collection that our experiences showed are important for specific client groups.

Clients experiencing or who have experienced domestic and family violence

Data collection tools and processes should be carefully designed with 'do no harm' at the forefront and risk should be assessed through a trauma-informed lens. Clients should be offered a range of ways for providing feedback from which they can choose. Processes should be used that enable staff to check and know if it is safe to contact clients to provide feedback. Seeking feedback at the end of the service delivery event (e.g., at the end of a phone advice) where possible, supports safe participation. It should not be assumed that having experienced trauma means clients will not want to provide feedback. See case study summaries from: [Barwon Community Legal Service](#), [Djirra](#), [Eastern Community Legal Centre](#), [Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre](#), and [Northern Community Legal Centre](#).

Clients living with disability (e.g., mental health issues, physical disability)

Data collection tools and processes must be designed with understanding of clients' abilities, in collaboration or informed by consultation with, people living with disability. See case study summary from: [Gippsland Community Legal Service](#).

Culturally and linguistically diverse clients

Data collection tools and processes must be designed with understanding of clients' culture, in collaboration or informed by consultation with, culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and/or community organisations. Translation services should be used to ensure language is not a barrier to clients participating in feedback processes. See case study summaries: [Eastern Community Legal Centre](#), [Northern Community Legal Centre](#), and [Victoria Legal Aid](#).

First Nations clients

LESSONS

Data collection tools and processes must be designed to be culturally safe and underpinned by principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Data Governance. This should be done in collaboration with First Nations individuals and/or community organisations and with reference to existing cultural safety frameworks.²⁴ See case study summaries from: [Djirra](#) and [Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service](#).

[Djirra's](#) recent shift to outcomes-based reporting requires new ways of collecting, analysing, and using data. This pilot provided an opportunity to critically reflect on how client outcomes are currently measured in the legal service – predominantly via an irregularly administered client satisfaction survey.

The [Community Engagement \(CE\) program](#) introduced 'deep dive' semi structured interviews with a sample of clients, staff and stakeholders every 3 months, using a very carefully designed and managed, culturally safe process (e.g., the Program Development and Effectiveness team conducted the analysis, followed by sense-making with CE team). This is showing to be a much more culturally appropriate way to get First Nations women's feedback, and teams are valuing this evidence for different purposes.

Using outcomes frameworks

The existing outcomes frameworks in the Victorian sector provide consistency and existing definitions and measures for client outcomes (along with community, sector, systems change, and service improvement outcomes). These existing definitions and measures are being used and adapted by legal services across the state and provide a strong foundation for outcomes-based practice.

Building on the sector-wide outcomes frameworks, participating organisations in the pilot emphasise that within their own organisations, developing an organisational level theory of change and outcomes measurement framework helps embed and frame outcomes-focused practice, enables staff to see the links between their work, service data and continuous improvement, and guides reporting on achievement of intended outcomes. See case study summaries from: [ARC Justice](#), [Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre](#), [Consumer Action Legal Centre](#), [Djirra](#), [Eastern Community Legal Centre](#), [Justice Connect](#), [Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre](#), [Tenants Victoria](#), [Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service](#) and [VLA](#).

Building outcomes-based practice and learning organisations, not just reporting

This section describes key lessons relating to building outcomes-focused practice in legal assistance organisations. Though organisations in Victoria are at varying stages in this journey, and taking different approaches, participants in the pilot identified common factors for success.

²⁴ E.g., Gollan, S & Stacey, K 2021, Australian Evaluation Society First Nations Cultural Safety Framework, Australian Evaluation Society, Melbourne.

- Building a strong culture of evaluation in organisations supports outcomes-focused practice²⁵, and takes time and requires specific planning and resourcing. The support of leadership and senior staff is crucial to growing a learning culture, as is buy-in from frontline staff who will be collecting the data. It is important to resource support for organisational change (e.g., through an internal MEL role or external consultants). See case study summaries from: [Justice Connect](#) and [Tenants Victoria](#).
- Data systems can help or hinder outcomes-focused practice. Organisations that use multiple systems that do not communicate (at all or easily), or systems that are not user-friendly, are less able to use their data to understand and improve client outcomes. Good data systems enable efficient outcomes measurement that is embedded in service delivery (see point below).
- Data collection is easier and occurs more seamlessly – for services and for clients – when embedded in existing workflows and integrated with client-centred service delivery processes. See case study summaries from: [Eastern Community Legal Centre](#), [Gippsland Community Legal Service](#)
- Data and findings about client outcomes are used and valued more when shared in ways that are relevant, accessible, and digestible for staff and stakeholders, such as dashboards, maps, infographics, thematic reports. (See Figures 2 and 3, pages 18 and 19)
- Reporting to funders is typically focused on outputs and acquittal more than impact and outcomes. Outcomes measurement is much more powerful however when it is part of continuous improvement and reflective practice. The focus on learning can be lost when services are burdened by inappropriate reporting requirements, rather than being supported to improve. We can focus better on understanding our client's outcomes when the evaluation and reporting expectations and requirements of our funders align with the outcomes measurement and reporting approaches we develop and use to support our learning and improvement.
- Peer learning and support opportunities can accelerate learning and practices around outcomes measurement beyond what is otherwise possible within organisations' own resources.

"Embedding an evaluation approach within an organisation isn't easy and in order to keep up the momentum requires agility, patience and frequent communication with colleagues and decision makers about the challenges, opportunities and benefits of deepening our evaluation and outcomes approach."

- Tenants Victoria

"Culturally, a mindset of genuine curiosity, learning, and innovation has been important for anyone involved in MEL work, from the board and leadership, through to staff at all levels. This has been crucial to challenge ideas of evaluation purely for retrospective analysis, or

²⁵ "An evaluative culture denotes an organisational culture that deliberately seeks out information on its performance to use that information to learn how to better manage and deliver its programmes and services, and thereby improve its performance. Such an organisation values empirical evidence on the results – outputs and outcomes – it is seeking to achieve." Mayne, J. (2008). *Building an evaluative culture for effective evaluation and results management*. ILAC Brief 20.

LESSONS

for funder-driven purposes, rather than a chance to continuously learn, grow, and improve services and outcomes."

- Justice Connect

Justice Connect is moving to trial a practice of "impact deep dives" that will sit alongside its Annual Impact Report. This is done with the Justice Connect Board on a quarterly basis already; the plan is to prepare public facing versions. "Impact deep dive" reports have multiple benefits: they are a vehicle for collaboration and working out details of measurement, they help drive cross-organisation understanding, they help identify gaps in processes, promote data consistency, reflection, and change, and are a useful artefact in recording MEL practices.

Sector collaboration

The connections and collaboration among participating organisations that were supported through this pilot project accelerated learning, increased confidence, and deepened commitment to client outcomes measurement. Participating organisations agreed that the support, advice, and opportunities to share their outcomes measurement materials and experiences, provided by the pilot, helped them to progress their understanding and/or practices around client outcomes measurement faster and more efficiently than would otherwise have been possible. This was enabled by the coordination role of the Outcomes Working Group and by the trusting and collegial relationships that developed through the pilot.

The participating organisations also highlighted the value of the other sector collaboration initiatives in place in Victoria, including the CLC Impact and Evaluation Community of Practice, CLC Data Community of Practice, and the Federation's project and dedicated role for supporting case management and data systems implementation (explained in the box below).

In Victoria, the **Federation** has funded an Implementation Analyst and a sector project to support CLCs transitioning to case management systems. Through the project funding and this dedicated role, the Federation:

- Convenes a sector data community of practice to enable shared learning and collaboration.
- Provides consulting services to CLCs around system and practice analysis and design (including the operationalising of outcomes measurement).
- Provides hands on configuration support in relevant systems and advice about integrations.
- Develops shared resources and tools.
- Collates information about reporting obligations then advocates for harmonisation with departments and funders where opportunities exist.
- Provides training, resources, and support to enhance data and practice consistency and quality.

The commitment to collaboration demonstrated by organisations in this unfunded pilot points to great potential for further development of outcomes measurement with resourcing for such an initiative.

LESSONS

"The pilot group's willingness to share and support each other is a way of resolving the tension between 'one size fits all' and 'not reinventing the wheel'. It's been great to have the reassurance and support of a community, which has really accelerated progress."

- Participant, Report Feedback Workshop

"Learning together has resulted in a much higher level of understanding of the client experience and what value we can add through evaluation."

- Participant, Report Feedback Workshop

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section describes four key areas where we would like to see change. We see these as the main supports and resources that would enable our sector to move to more outcomes-focused practice.

The recommendations distinguish between the funding required at the service level, sector level (either at the state and territory or national levels via sector peak bodies), and national level resourcing and strategic investments. Careful consideration needs to be given in sector-wide approaches to what can be resourced and conducted most effectively at the sector-level, and what needs to be resourced and conducted by individual services.

- At the service level, core resourcing needs to be secure and ongoing as well as included in service or project funding streams, to build tailored organisational systems and practices that drive improved, outcomes-focused services and achieve locally relevant outcomes for clients and communities.
- Sector level resourcing, at the state, territory, and national level via sector peak bodies, needs to focus on strategic resourcing for data systems, sector projects such as thematic research, evaluations, and data analysis projects, and fund ongoing roles to provide coordination and foster peer learning and collaboration. Resourcing at this level supports state and territory strategic learning about services and outcomes across a state or territory population and contexts.
- National level resourcing, and a staged, collaborative approach should gradually build the capability of the sector nationally to demonstrate the impact of legal assistance at a high level, or to answer questions about the effectiveness of NLAP funding. This can be achieved by investing in collaborative, sector-led agendas for research, evaluation, and data, that have relevance and use for services and jurisdictions to draw from, rather than expecting service-level reporting to answer national-level impact questions.

Service level resourcing, to build organisational capacity

Core funding is required for service management functions, and project and service funding also needs to have budget allocated for the management costs required to plan, design, deliver, and evaluate services properly. Service funding tends to cover service delivery costs and does not provide adequate budget for effective service management including service planning, design, reporting, or evaluations, which require funding, people, and time to conduct.

This would enable organisations to:

- Employ and train staff with requisite skills, including interviewing, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and evaluation and research.
- Plan for and implement organisational culture change activities, such as embedding reflective practice, and regular use of evidence to inform organisational and service decision making.
- Develop systems, practices and processes that support an evaluation culture.

Recommendations

- Make effective use of external consultants so that their engagement contributes to building evaluation capacity within the organisation or supplying specialist skills that organisations cannot realistically employ in-house.
- Participate in peer learning opportunities with other organisations in the sector.

Sector level resourcing, coordinated by peak bodies

Funding for sector capability building staff and projects within state and territory sector peak bodies would improve coordination, support, and capacity building across the sector, facilitate peer learning, and enable strategic research and evaluation projects or activities that are valuable for multiple organisations.

Initiatives in Victoria have shown the value of sector-level data and evaluation support functions, such as the role played by staff in the Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria (see paragraph and points below) and Victoria Legal Aid in providing support across multiple services and facilitating learning and connection across the sector. Health Justice Australia is also building its data and evaluation services, to support health justice partnerships around Australia. Victoria Law Foundation provides research and evaluation support to the wider Victorian legal assistance sector, including a Knowledge Grants program to develop understanding of legal need and improve capability to collect, analyse and use data. The Victorian CLC Impact and Evaluation Community of Practice hosted by volunteers meets quarterly to share resources, ideas and support sector-wide capability building. However, these resources are limited, and further resourcing is needed to provide hands-on support to services across the state, as well as connect and facilitate shared learning across the sector.

Funding for peak bodies would support sector level coordination, strategic projects, and capability development, including:

- Funding for sector-wide roles to be hosted in peak bodies, with staff who have expertise in data collection and systems, analysis, and evaluation who could provide and coordinate mentoring and training, sector learning and collaboration, and identify or lead strategic projects and investments
- Undertaking discrete, outsourced pieces of work for legal assistance services (e.g., analysis of service data, or designing and analysing client feedback and engagement processes).
- Building evaluation capacity of services through activities such as short-term secondments, hosting sector learning events and sharing and promotion of legal assistance sector lessons and insights.
- Building the evidence base; for example, by contributing funding and coordinating shared research and evaluation projects across several organisations.
- Facilitating peer learning opportunities across the sector, such as facilitating communities of practice.
- Developing common tools such as question guides that can be adapted by organisations.

Resourcing better systems for data collection, analysis, and use

The sector requires substantial, long-term commitment to funding for fit-for-purpose and customisable data systems that services can tailor and adapt to their needs. Investment in and tailoring of data systems needs to adhere to the latest guidance on Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance, and this investment should start with and be led by First Nations legal services.

Moving to a greater focus on service outcomes requires investment in systems for service data collection and use, especially as the sector has well-documented limitations in administrative data systems.²⁶ Such investments would enable services to manage service data easily, before moving to the next stage of managing more complex forms of outcomes data from client feedback. Ongoing funding for improving data systems would enable:

- Easy and consistent input of relevant client and service data.
- Automated analysis of quantitative data.
- Access to real time results.
- Interoperability between the systems used by legal assistance services and funders²⁷ to give them each timely and ready access to quality information for data informed decision making.

National resourcing for strategic, staged, and collaborative approaches to outcomes

Outcomes approaches to legal assistance are more than reporting. Investment across all stages of the service management cycle is required to effectively move the sector towards outcomes-based practice. National investments in legal needs analysis, outcomes, evaluation, research, data analysis, lived experience led practice, and Indigenous Data Sovereignty should be scheduled and developed over the life of the next NLAP agreement, building a national and strategic evidence base over time and with appropriate supports and funding.

Outcomes-based practice that aligns with sector commitments such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) guidelines for people-centred justice²⁸, requires legal assistance services to invest in First Nations led approaches, lived experience led approaches and expertise, improve client engagement in service design, delivery, and evaluation, and use learning to change and adapt services to achieve joint outcomes across the sector and with other public services. Building these capabilities in the sector is a required first stage before any move to outcomes-based reporting.

²⁶ For example, as documented in the Victoria Law Foundation's Data Mapping Project:

<https://victorialawfoundation.org.au/research/research-reports/data-mapping-project-apples-oranges-and-lemons>

²⁷ Interoperable systems communicate with each other automatically and securely share data. There are likely helpful lessons from other sectors, such as health (e.g., Australian Digital Health Agency's National Healthcare Interoperability Plan):

<https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/healthcare-providers/initiatives-and-programs/interoperability-and-digital-health-standards>

²⁸ OECD 2021. 'OECD Framework and Good Practice Principles for People-Centred Justice'. <https://www.oecd.org/governance/global-roundtables-access-to-justice/good-practice-principles-for-people-centred-justice.pdf>

Recommendations

The lessons to date from the Victorian pilot support the sector resourcing recommendations made in the National Legal Aid (NLA) statement on 'Building the Evidence Base'. This includes a recommendation for funding over the life of the next NLAP agreement for:

- National legal needs analysis.
- Development and resourcing of a national outcomes framework, supported by a programme and resourcing for building capacity and capability across service providers and the sector.
- Development and resourcing of an evaluation framework and strategic national evaluations.
- Development and resourcing of a research agenda and strategic national research.
- Further development and implementation of a national data strategy and data systems and analysis.
- Investment in lived experience led approaches and practice across the sector.
- Investment in and development of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Data Governance, and data systems across the sector, with support for First Nations organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services to lead this practice.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Case studies

Refer to the Victorian Community Legal Sector Outcomes Pilot 2022-23 – [Appendix A. case studies](#).

Appendix B. How we documented the pilot

Each participating organisation completed a case study documenting how their organisation measures client outcomes, and any activities they trialled in the pilot. Outcomes working group members then followed up with each organisation to reflect and summarise the lessons using summary questions. The final report on the pilot was developed via discussion with participating organisations in a case studies workshop in August 2023, and a lessons and recommendations workshop in November 2023.

Case study template

Tier 1 - Participants to share a case study of current practice. Tiers 2 & 3 – Participants to share a case study of their pilot experience. **Note:** include copies or links to related resources and/or supporting documents if helpful

Background about how your centre measures client outcomes
Centre Name
Overview of the services your centre provides
Overview of your centre's overall outcomes measurement approach (e.g., Do you have an outcomes measurement strategy or framework, or similar?)
What resources does your centre currently have available for measuring your outcomes? e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # FTE personnel with responsibility for outcomes measurement data collection and analysis tools, market research, benchmarking access to consultants/experts for guidance or review other
Your example to share in this pilot
For Tier 1: An example evaluation, survey, or client feedback process from your existing practice. Tier 2 and 3: Explain what you did as part of this pilot to measure client outcomes
Brief outline of the program, services, and client groups you focused on
Time needed to complete surveys/evaluation/feedback (Overall; including analysis and reporting if possible)
Resources you used for this evaluation, survey, or client feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # FTE of staff Consultants

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget
Method/s of collection (e.g., telephone interview, online survey)
Data or survey collection details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions asked (attach) At what point in time did you contact clients? (At the conclusion of their service, weeks later, months later...) Number of clients contacted, and number who responded Did you link the survey or data collection with clients to any other service data you already have for them?
Ethical considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you tailor the methods and questions to the client groups? Did you exclude any client groups due to ethical concerns? How did you address safety (cultural, family violence etc) in your methods and questions?
How were responses recorded?
How do you share responses within your organisation or with external partners?
How was the data analysed or validated?
Did you do any follow up activity with clients?
Reflections
What worked well?
What was tried but didn't work?
What, if anything, did you do differently while participating in this pilot project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> altered method of collection changed who we surveyed changed our questions/measures other
Lessons learned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> resources required logistics/implementation survey or data collection design analysis the role of client feedback in your services
What adaptations have you made in your services as a result of the responses from clients? What was the value of collecting and using this information about clients' experiences and outcomes?
How else have you used the information collected?
Any other reflections that may be helpful to the group?

Case study summary questions

- What does your centre do to measure client outcomes? For this pilot, did you test out anything different?
- What worked well, and why?
- What didn't work well, and why?
- What resources did you use? What would you need to continue this work in a meaningful way?
- What is the main story or lesson you would like to share from your centre?

Pilot reports

The CPC Outcomes Working Group commissioned evaluation consultant Emma Pritchard, to coordinate the reports on the pilot together with the working group and inputs from participants.

Emerging Findings Report:

- Learning workshop on case studies, August 2023.
- Draft Emerging Findings Report was reviewed by the Outcomes Working Group; feedback was incorporated into the Emerging Findings Report.
- Emerging Findings Report shared with participating organisations, September 2023.

Submission to the NLAP Review:

- The Outcomes working group members prepared the 'Victorian Sector Outcomes Pilot 2022-23 Emerging lessons and recommendations' submission to the NLAP Review, October 2023.

Final report

- Consultant analysed the full case studies from participating organisations using NVivo qualitative data analysis software.
- Consultant analysed case study summaries developed (with support from Outcomes Working Group members) by participating organisations.
- Draft Report was provided to the Outcomes Working Group; feedback was incorporated into a second draft.
- Second Draft Report was prepared (with support from Outcomes Working Group members) and provided to the Outcomes Working Group and participating organisations to review.
- Online workshop to finalise the lessons and recommendations with participating organisations, November 2023.
- Feedback incorporated into Final Report, December 2023.

Appendix C. Common question tool

The common question tool was developed by the Outcomes Working Group members in a workshop in May 2022. The client outcomes and measures are based on existing definitions, measures, and data collection questions used in the sector, including the Victorian Outcomes Measurement Framework (2017), Victoria Legal Aid Outcomes Framework (2022), some funding sources (for example CLCs and VLA who receive funds under the Victorian Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIIF) use measures relating to legal capability and problem resolution), and previous survey tools such as those used in the Legal Australia-Wide Survey (2008, published 2012) and Public Understanding of Law Survey (2022–2023).

The questions focus on three client outcome areas: service experience, legal capability, and problem resolution. They are generic questions that could apply to any type of legal matter, and to any service level: advice, duty lawyer, or case work services. As noted in the pilot it is important to tailor the question wording, length, and number of questions to different client groups, and to the service intensity level.

The questions in this tool are most suited to post-service data collection, as standalone client feedback surveys, or as part of a broader evaluation or research project with clients. The questions have response options to allow for quantitative analysis and are likely to have greater utility where they can be combined with routinely collected service data. Where organisations have capacity for analysis, open ended questions could also be used. The questions can be adapted to be used in interviews, focus groups and other methods.

Core questions

	The service: Did it meet people's needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was able to get all the legal help I needed [*today, the last time I got help] from [insert service name] (Yes, Partially, No)
	The person: Do they better understand their options and feel confident to seek help?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand how to deal with my legal problem I feel confident to seek help if I have another legal issue (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, strongly agree)
	The problem/s: Did the service help with addressing the problem?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the legal problem you got help with [*time element] resolved or ended? (Yes / Partially / No) <i>If yes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am satisfied with the outcome of my legal problem The outcome of my legal problem was fair The lawyer* helped me fix my legal problem <i>If no or partially:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am satisfied with how my legal problem is going I am confident I will achieve a fair outcome The lawyer* is helping me fix my legal problem <p>(Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, strongly agree)</p>

Additional questions

Service – “Did the service meet people’s needs?”

Short-list

- I was able to get all the legal help I needed [time element, i.e., today, the last time I got help] from [insert service name] (Yes, Partially, No)

Long-list

- I found it easy to explain my problem to the lawyer*
- The information I got from the lawyer* was easy to understand
- I felt comfortable to ask questions
- I was treated with respect
- The lawyer* listened to me
- The lawyer made me feel safe
- I felt confident in what the lawyer* said to do about my legal problem
- The lawyer* wanted the best outcome for me
- The lawyer helped me understand my options

Person – “Did the service help people with their legal capability?”

Short-list

- I understand how to deal with my legal problem²⁹
- I feel confident to seek help if I have another legal issue³⁰

Long-list

- I was less stressed after talking to the lawyer
- I understand what to do next
- I better understand my options
- I could help a friend take the first step with a similar problem.
- Did the service help you identify any other legal problems (yes/ no)
- If yes, are you getting help with these? (yes/ no/ partially)

Long-list – Did the service help people with wider impacts on their wellbeing?

- The help I got made my financial situation better
- The help I got made me safer
- The help I got made my housing situation better
- The help I got improved my overall well-being

²⁹ Victorian Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIF) measure - % of clients who understand how to deal with their legal problem

³⁰ EIIF measure - % of clients who feel confident to seek help if they have another legal issue

Problem – Where’s the problem at from the client perspective?

Short-list

- Is the legal problem you got help with [insert time element] resolved or ended (Yes, Partially, No) ³¹
If yes
 - I am satisfied with the outcome of my legal problem
 - The outcome of my legal problem was fair
 - The lawyer* helped me fix my legal problem³²
- If no/partially
 - I am satisfied with how my legal problem is going
 - I am confident I will achieve a fair outcome
 - The lawyer* is helping me fix my legal problem

Long-list

- How happy were you with the outcome of your problem? (1-very unhappy; 2-unhappy; 3-happy; 4-very happy)
- What did your lawyer do, if anything, that impacted how your problem resolved or ended? (free text)
- What did your lawyer do, if anything, that impacted the progress of your legal problem (free text)
- The lawyer* made a positive difference in fixing my legal problem/ is making a positive difference in fixing my legal problem
- The help from the lawyer* got me to the next step in my legal problem
- How long has this problem been going on for?
- Have you tried to get help for the issue before? Yes/ No
If yes – checklist of options (Family/ friends, not lawyers; This organisation; Another lawyer you did not have to pay for; Private lawyer that you paid; At a library; A court or help service based at court; Any type of website; Other - please list)
- Overall, how big an impact does the problem have on your life? (Scale: Slight; Mod; Severe)

Do you have a disability, health condition or injury that has lasted, or is likely to last, 6 months or more which restricts your everyday activities (yes, no, prefer not to say).

³¹ EIIF measure - % of clients reporting that their legal problem is resolved

³² EIIF measure - % of clients reporting that having a lawyer made a positive difference to their legal problem