



Legal help is just the beginning.



L|A|C|W
LAW & ADVOCACY
CENTRE FOR WOMEN

THE LAW AND ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR WOMEN LTD

Annual Report 2018-19

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LACW Annual Report

A word from our Chair

In our last annual report I spoke of the growth that LACW had seen over the previous 12 months. These past 12 months have been no different. The organisation has continued on a rapid growth trajectory, gaining several new staff members and growing in terms of client and matter numbers as we strive to meet the previously untapped needs of vulnerable women in Victoria's criminal justice system.

Our growth has been supported by our ongoing partnership with the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT University, who have provided additional office space to us to meet our changing needs. We have benefited immensely from the legal and social work students that have been placed with us during this period. In addition, our partnership has evolved so as to now include the delivery of services as part of an integrated practice model, where we have a seconded Social Worker from CIJ placed with us three days per week to work alongside our lawyers in supporting clients who are facing criminal charges.

The evolution and growth of this partnership in many ways mirrors that of our organisation more widely – an idea that began as a conversation about how we could do things better, cultivated through research and planning, and launching as a small pilot program that has now grown in reach and reputation to be a major provider of legal and support services for women in Victoria.

Having cemented our place in the community legal sector, we look forward to consolidating our position in the coming months and years, with a focus on improvement, sustainability and continuing to provide the best possible legal advice, representation and holistic support possible to our clients.



Diane McDonald
Chair

About Us

The Law and Advocacy Centre for Women Ltd (LACW) is a not-for-profit, Community Legal Centre for women. It was established in February 2016 in response to the rising incarceration rate for females in Victoria. LACW is the only legal service in Victoria that provides a gender-specific response to assisting women in the criminal justice system. Its vision is to combine excellence in legal advice and representation for women with a commitment to holistic and preventative case management and engagement with therapeutic services, with the goal of reducing women's entrenchment in the justice system and their eventual imprisonment. It provides advice and representation in the following areas of law:

1. Criminal defence advocacy;
2. Infringements;
3. Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) Applications; and
4. Intervention orders (in some circumstances).

Alongside the legal advice and representation offered, LACW provides case-management and social work services that support women to access the services they need, targeting a range of issues including family violence, homelessness, drug and alcohol use and mental health issues.

Funding

LACW is not funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance. Instead, it relies on a combination of case-by-case funding for eligible clients/matters under Victoria Legal Aid's summary and indictable panels, fixed-term grants from government, statutory and peak bodies, donations from philanthropic trusts, corporations and individuals, VOCAT case-by-case funding and a small number of fee-for-service matters.

Staffing

LACW comprises 6 lawyers (5.2 EFT) (including the Principal Legal Officer and the Practice Manager), one case manager (0.8EFT), one social worker (0.6EFT) (on secondment from the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT University), one paralegal (0.8 EFT) and a number of volunteers and student placements.

LACW services all metropolitan courts and also provides services in regional courts where matters are legally aided and resources otherwise permit.

Our clients

A vast majority of LACW's clients are victims/survivors of family violence (approx. 70%), and around 40% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women.

LACW fills current gaps in the availability of specialist legal support to women in two ways: in addition to our legally aided work, we also act for women who do not qualify for legal aid due to the nature of their offending or lack of prior criminal history; and we apply a nuanced means test that takes into consideration particular vulnerabilities that women may be experiencing – such as housing instability due to family violence – as well as an assessment of income. From July 2018-June 2019, in approximately 164 of our criminal matters, our clients would not have qualified for assistance through legal aid, but were not in a position to fund a private solicitor. Without LACW's assistance, they would have otherwise been unrepresented.

We act for clients across the entire range of criminal matters – from simple summary matters to complex indictable trials. This means that the service we can provide to clients is seamless if their needs should cut across these different areas.

Our work

Snapshot: our clients and matters

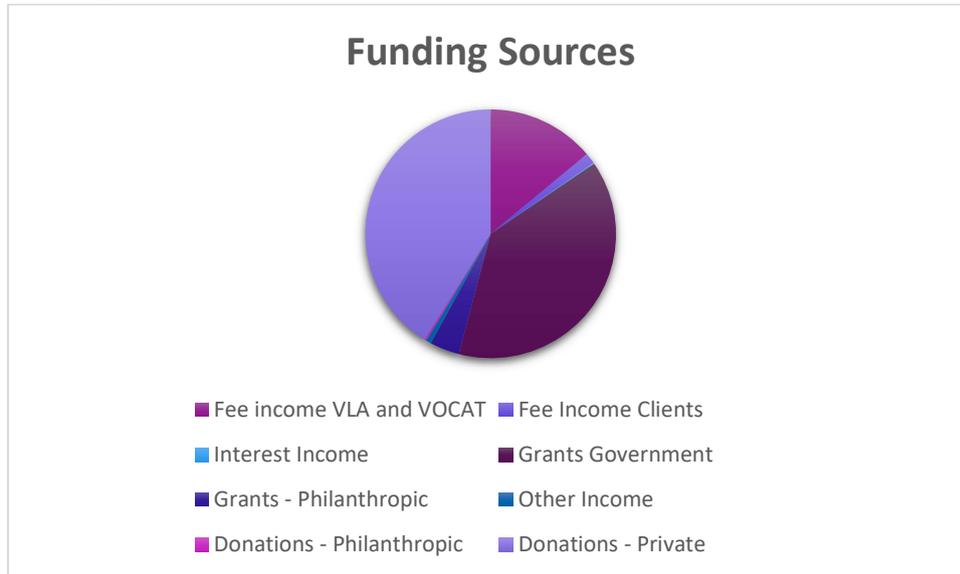
New matters FY2018-19:

853

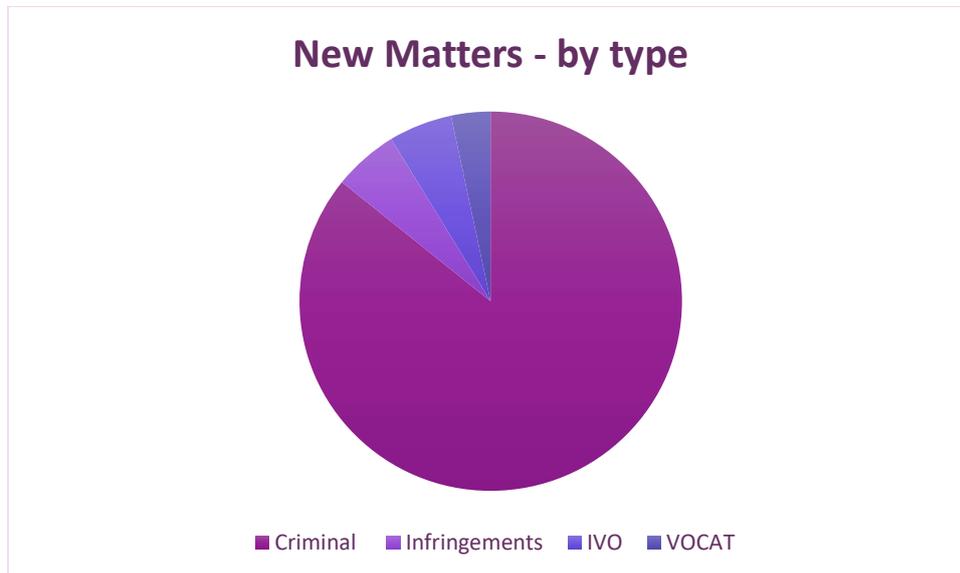
New clients FY2018-19:

235

Funding Sources



Matter types



Criminal matters

This past year has seen a steady increase in the number of clients referred to our service for criminal matters, and in the number of matters we have taken on. We have opened approximately 750 new criminal matters this year, ranging from minor offences to the most serious indictable charges. We have appeared in multiple jurisdictions, including the Magistrates, County and Supreme courts, as well as in the specialist Koori and Assessment and Referral Courts. This has been across all metropolitan courts as well as a number of regional locations. There has been a noticeable rise in

our bail application work stemming from legislative changes which have seen a huge increase in the numbers of women being remanded in custody whilst awaiting finalisation of their criminal charges. We anticipate this will continue to form a significant part of our work both in our general practice and as part of the Women Transforming Justice project.

We have been extremely fortunate to recruit Linh Cao as a Senior Lawyer in our legal team, an accredited criminal law specialist with extensive prior experience in private practice and with Victoria Legal Aid. We continue to be ably assisted by Ingrid Giles, who joined our team as a lawyer in May 2018 and has greatly increased the capacity of our criminal practice.

Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal Applications (VOCAT)

Our VOCAT work has remained steady thanks to new referral pathways we have established with victim support services. We have opened an additional 29 VOCAT matters in the 2018-19 financial year. We have benefitted from the addition of Carmendy Cooper to our legal team, who brings with her a wealth of experience in VOCAT matters, and Asha Zomer who joined with us as a graduate lawyer after having worked as a paralegal with us previously. Both have been working to expand our VOCAT practice, alongside their work in our infringements clinic and general criminal practice. We are extremely grateful to Hall and Wilcox lawyers, who provide us with a pro-bono graduate solicitor for one day per week to assist with VOCAT matters.

Infringements Matters

Our infringements work has also remained steady, with 48 new infringements matters opened in the past financial year. Our infringements work has benefitted immensely from a grant received from the Victoria Law Foundation to establish and run a fortnightly infringements clinic. Through the clinic, women are assisted in applying to have their fines/infringements waived on the basis of special circumstances and/or family violence, pursuant to a new family violence scheme established by Fines Victoria. The clinic is funded until the end of 2019, and we intend to draw on the support of volunteers and legal placement students from RMIT to continue the clinic into 2020.

Intervention Orders

Intervention orders continue to be a developing area of our practice, with 47 new matters opened in 2018-2019. Our primary focus is on matters where our client is the respondent in an application, and/or where criminal charges are also involved. To this end, we have been working as one of a number of project partners with the Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre on their *Policing Family Violence: Changing the Story* project, which drives collaborative, sector-based advocacy for family violence law reform and police accountability. In particular, it looks to combat the growing numbers of women who are being incorrectly identified as the primary aggressor in family violence incidents, and addressing the consequences that flow from this mis-identification.

Pathways out of the Justice System– in-house Case Management and early intervention legal support

A large proportion of the work we do is delivered through our 'Pathways out of the Justice System' project. This project has two elements:

- The provision of early intervention legal advice and representation to women who do not qualify for legal aid due to the nature of their offending or lack of prior criminal history (ie they do not fit VLA's guideline that a conviction is 'likely to result in imprisonment'); and
- The provision of in-house case-management to target interlinked issues specific to female offenders including family violence trauma, victimisation, mental health issues, homelessness and alcohol and other drug addiction. Clients are supported in engaging with relevant services assisting in these areas through on-going, intensive case management which includes regular

case planning, checking-in, reviewing support service needs and reporting this engagement back to the court where relevant in relation to bail and sentencing hearings. This is provided to women both in an early intervention capacity and to those who are remanded in custody or facing a sentence of imprisonment.

In-house Case Management: Our Impact

Over a 12 month period, our Case Management program provided the following:

- 65 women were provided with case management support by LACW's in house case manager
- Of these, 22 were referred for intensive support while in custody. 17 of these women were granted bail with case management support at their first attempt.
- 2 women did not apply for bail but were released into the community with time served and a Community Corrections Order respectively.

These results indicate that LACW's case management services, in combination with the gender-responsive legal representation provided by LACW's lawyers, are having a real and immediate impact on reducing the number of women on remand in Victoria's prison system. Of the 16 case-management clients whose matters had finalised as a June 2019, only one received a sentence of further imprisonment. Six received a good behaviour bond and five received a community corrections order, evidencing the positive role of LACW's case management program in diverting women away from further criminalisation and imprisonment.

Client story:

Sandra is a 27-year-old Aboriginal woman. She entered the adult prison system at the age of 20, and has served two previous custodial sentences. Sandra has a history of trauma, family violence, mental illness and substance use. She was referred to LACW's Pathways out of the Justice System program for case management support while she was on remand. While there, LACW's case manager met with Sandra several times and completed housing applications, engaged in family violence safety planning, liaised with Sandra's previous family violence worker, and discussed harm minimisation strategies in relation to her substance use. Sandra had previously struggled to engage in drug and alcohol support due to her transient nature, but the case manager found a more appropriate outreach worker for her that could meet her in the community and at places that she felt comfortable to attend.*

Supported by her LACW lawyer and case manager, Sandra was ultimately granted bail on a deferral of sentence. This allowed Sandra an opportunity to engage in community supports. She was accepted into a supported accommodation property and has reduced her substance use. Since obtaining housing, Sandra states that she is in a better position to begin the process of reunification with her son. Sandra returned before the same Magistrate on several occasions during the deferral period. The case manager provided reports to the court outlining Sandra's progress since her release from custody. Sandra received positive feedback from the court about her progress, and ultimately received a non-custodial sentence.

Principal Legal Officer's report

In May 2019, client number 500 was entered into LACW's database. Like many of our clients, she was referred to us by Legal Aid while she was in the cells at court, having been remanded in custody. She faced minor charges, but had nowhere to go and a range of complex care needs. We put in place a range of supports – from material aid to medical referrals – and she was granted bail. Eventually, with our ongoing advocacy, her matters progressed in a way that saw her linked in with structured support in the community to address the underlying issues that had brought her into contact with the justice system in the first place. Ultimately, she avoided further imprisonment.

While her individual story is of course unique, her circumstances are is not uncommon. For our organisation, she represents somewhat of a mile-stone - 500 women that LACW has represented since we opened our doors in February 2016. 500 women who have turned to us for client-focused, gender-specific legal advice and representation. 500 women who, without us, would not have found the help that they needed.

It is a figure that leaves me with mixed feelings – on the one hand, I'm proud that we have identified and addressed a huge unmet need for services directed to criminalised women, and I am humbled that so many women have placed their faith in us to represent and support them. On the other hand, it demonstrates the ongoing, systemic failures of our justice system – failures in addressing the increasing numbers of women on remand; failures to invest in community-based solutions and alternatives to imprisonment; and failures to provide gender-informed solutions that take account of the pathways to offending that women experience.

And of course, that number tells us nothing of the personal journeys of each of these women, with all their challenges and setbacks; triumphs and strengths.

The past year has brought immense challenges to us working as practitioners in the criminal justice space. The increase in the number of women in Victoria's prisons, which had initially prompted us to launch LACW three years ago, was a mere trickle compared to the deluge we are now presented with. Harsh bail laws, enacted in response to grossly violent acts perpetrated by men who were on parole or bail at the time, have cast the net so wide that literally hundreds of women who pose no threat of violence to the community are being locked up in unprecedented numbers while awaiting finalisation of their court matters. Many are being denied bail in circumstances where their offending would not have warranted a prison sentence. Worse still, many are being sentenced to very short terms of imprisonment as 'time served' – junk sentences that not only distort sentencing principals around gravity, but do nothing to rehabilitate or assist women to get their lives back on track in the community once they are released.

And yet we have also had some incredible wins. Thanks to a number of successful grant applications, we have added three new lawyers to our team, retaining our paralegal and gained a seconded Social Worker, bringing our total number of staff to 9.

We continue to punch above our weight in terms of our advocacy and reach, servicing all metropolitan courts and increasing our presence in regional Victoria as well. We have had incredible support from individual donors, including our Justice Dinner hosts and their guests, as well as a number of philanthropic organisations. And we have been blessed with the most dedicated and hard-working staff and volunteers. We cannot thank them enough for the contribution they have made to LACW.



Jill Prior
Principal Legal Officer and Co-Founder

Practice Manager/Treasurer's Report

The 2018-2019 financial year has seen a steady increase in LACW's revenue in each of our major revenue streams – Victoria Legal Aid grants (through our membership of the summary and indictable panels); philanthropic and government grants; and individual donors.

The bulk of the grants we received were applied to our 'Pathways out of the Justice System' program, which provides case management to our clients to address the causes of their offending, and early intervention legal support for women who are ineligible for legal aid grants. Specifically:

- We received funding from the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Services Integrated Services Fund 2018-19, administered by the Federation of the Community Legal Centres, to provide specialist, gender-informed legal and social work assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged women in greater Melbourne. This enabled the employment by LACW of an additional lawyer, and the secondment of a Social Worker, Kat Ogilvie, from the Centre for Innovative Justice to provide clients with structured case management to address the causes of their offending and disadvantage.
- Our in-house Case Management program continued to be funded through generous philanthropic grants from the RE Ross Trust, Phyllis Connor Memorial Trust (administered by Equity Trustees) and the Collier Charitable Fund; and
- We continued to receive funding under the Attorney-General's Community Legal Centres' General and Family Violence funds to represent and support women who, because of their lack of offending history or the type of offending, are not eligible for a grant of legal assistance through Victoria Legal Aid, and to provide holistic legal assistance to victims / survivors of family violence.

In addition, we received a 12 month grant from the Victoria Law Foundation to establish a fines and infringements clinic, with a particular focus on assisting clients make applications to have their fines reviewed under Fines Victoria's family violence scheme.

We are indebted to Andrew Stott from Hall and Wilcox who has provided us with extensive support in relation to our IT needs on a pro bono basis.

In December 2018, the second phase of the Women Transforming Justice project commenced. Through this project, funded by the Legal Services Board and managed by the Darebin Community Legal Centre (which has now merged with Fitzroy Legal Service), LACW has provided integrated, holistic and women-specific legal advice and representation to women remanded in custody and seeking bail, alongside case management provided by assertive outreach workers at Flat Out Inc.

Our Justice Dinners, held in June 2019, were again a huge success, with dinner party hosts helping to raise additional funds to support our case management program. In addition, we are grateful to the many other individual donors who donated to our organisation throughout the year. Altogether, these funding sources have enabled us to grow in size and reach, and meet the challenges of servicing the cohort of women identified as requiring the greatest assistance in forging pathways out of the justice system.



Elena Pappas
Practice Manager and Co-Founder

Financial Reports

Profit and Loss Statement

Profit and loss

Law And Advocacy Centre For Women LTD
106-108 Victoria Street, Carlton VIC 3053, Australia

Cash mode
01 Jul 2018 - 30 Jun 2019
ABN: 84602365542
Generated 17 Oct 2019

		Total
Income		
4-1200	Fee income VLA and VOCAT	145,478.43
4-1600	Fee Income Clients	14,530.01
4-4000	Interest Income	1,361.31
4-4005	Grants Government	403,779.71
4-4010	Grants - Philanthropic	40,000.00
Total Income		605,149.46
Less Cost of Sales		
Total Cost of Sales		0.00
Gross Profit		605,149.46
Less Expense		
6-1000	Accounting fees	2,246.10
6-1200	Advertising	280.00
6-1300	Write-offs	275.00
6-2600	Insurance	66.57
6-3000	Internet	1,685.39
6-3800	IT expenses	3,877.81
6-3900	Memberships	4,204.55
6-4000	Postage & courier	1,270.91
6-4200	Printing & stationery	4,616.12
6-4600	Rent	71.73
6-5000	Sub contractors	43,002.15
6-5200	Sundry expenses	3,633.61
6-5400	Superannuation expense	32,426.48
6-5600	Telephone	4,080.14
6-5800	Travel & accommodation	21,426.38
6-6200	Wages & salaries	342,471.81
6-6600	Work cover insurance	362.08
Total Expense		465,996.83
Operating Profit		139,152.63
Plus Other Income		
8-1000	Other Income	6,642.44
8-1200	Donations - Philanthropic	2,500.00
8-1400	Donations - Private	429,976.91
Total Other Income		439,119.35
Less Other Expense		
9-1000	Other expenses	59,113.01
Total Other Expense		59,113.01
Net Profit		519,158.97

Balance Sheet



Balance Sheet

Law And Advocacy Centre For Women LTD
106-108 Victoria Street, Carlton VIC 3053, Australia

Accrual mode
30 Jun 2019
ABN: 84602365542
Generated 17 Oct 2019

		Total
Asset		
Banking		
1-1000	Cheque account	30,259.30
1-1400	Savings account	694,971.16
Total Banking		725,230.46
Current Assets		
1-1800	Accounts receivable	3,127.46
Total Current Assets		3,127.46
Fixed Assets		
Total Fixed Assets		0.00
Total Asset		728,357.92
Liability		
Credit Card		
Total Credit Card		0.00
Current Liabilities		
2-2200	GST collected	23,709.63
2-2400	GST paid	-18,957.56
2-2600	PAYG withholdings payable	18,026.00
2-2800	Payroll deductions	1.00
Total Current Liabilities		22,779.07
Long Term Liabilities		
Total Long Term Liabilities		0.00
Total Liability		22,779.07
Net Assets		705,578.85
Equity		
Current Earnings		
3-1800	Current year earnings	510,836.62
Total Current Earnings		510,836.62
Retained Earnings		
3-1600	Retained earnings	194,742.23
Total Retained Earnings		194,742.23
Total Equity		705,578.85



Independent Review Report

To the Members of Law and Advocacy Centre for Women Limited

We have reviewed the accompanying 30 June 2019 financial report of Law and Advocacy Centre for Women Limited, which comprises the balance sheet as at that date, and the profit or loss for the year then ended.

The Director's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Directors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the annual financial report in accordance with the *Corporations Act 2001* and for such internal control as the Directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of the annual financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express a conclusion on the June 2019 financial report based on our review. We conducted our review in accordance with Auditing Standard on Review Engagements ASRE 2410 Review of a Financial Report Performed by the Independent Auditor of the Entity, in order to state whether, on the basis of the procedures described, anything has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the financial report is not presented fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with *Corporations Act 2001*. As the auditor, ASRE 2410 requires that we comply with the ethical requirements relevant to the audit of the annual financial report.

A review of an annual financial report consists of making enquiries, primarily of persons responsible for financial and accounting matters, and applying analytical and other review procedures. A review is substantially less in scope than an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards and consequently does not enable us to obtain assurance that we would become aware of all significant matters that might be identified in an audit. Accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting our review, we have complied with the independence requirements of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand.

Conclusion

Based on our review, which is not an audit, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the annual financial report of Law and Advocacy Centre for Women Limited does not present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the entity as at 30 June 2019, and of its financial performance for the year ended on that date, in accordance with the requirements of the *Corporations Act 2001*.

Stannards Accountants and Advisors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Shulman", is written over a light blue background.

Michael Shulman

Partner

Date: 07/11/2019

Stannards Accountants and Advisors Pty Ltd
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Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation

Partners

Marino Angelini, CA
Michael Shulman, CA
Nello Traficante, CPA
Jason Wall, CA
Peter Angelini, CA
Nick Jeans, CPA

Acknowledgements and thank you

Staff

A huge thank you to our wonderful staff who have worked tirelessly and fearlessly in their support and advocacy for our clients:

Jill Prior – Principal Legal Officer

Elena Pappas – Practice Manager

Linh Cao – Senior Lawyer

Ingrid Giles – Lawyer

Carmendy Cooper – Lawyer

Asha Zomer – Paralegal and Graduate Lawyer

Rafaella Lawrie – Case Manager

Kat Ogilvie – Social Worker (on secondment from RMIT Centre for Innovative Justice)

Ashlee McPhail – Volunteer and Paralegal

Volunteers and Student Placements

LACW could not function without the support of our amazing volunteers and student placements. In 2018-19 we were fortunate to have the following people work with us and we extend our sincere thanks to all of them for their time and energy:

<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>RMIT Student placements</i>	<i>Hall and Wilcox</i>
Ashlee McPhail Anna McBean Alice Meredith Elisabeth Buchan Sarah Abell Robyn Wall Melis Rutherford Eleanor Ryan Zoe Dixon Stephanie Davis Gemma Smith June Yoolee Corey Sacchero Georgia Kaye-Helmut Monisha Sudersanan Christine Boulous Mary Zaky Eliza Stanley Pooja Dewan (PLT) Carol Shi (PLT)	Heidi Phillips Jamal Hakim Helen Metzger Louise Grant Jordan Smyth Angela Schirripa	Declan McAleese Sarah Wade Alex Berry Maia Joseph

Donors

We would like to thank all the donors who have contributed to our work, including those who have donated via our Give Now website. Thank you in particular to all those who participated in our second annual Justice Dinners fundraiser in June 2019, especially our wonderful dinner hosts who made the event such a huge success.

Providers of in-kind support

We would like to acknowledge the following organisations and individuals who have provided us with free or discounted products and services: Michael Shulman – Stannards Accountants and Advisors; Native Technology; DF IT Solutions; Hall and Wilcox (for secondee graduate lawyers and in-kind IT support and equipment).

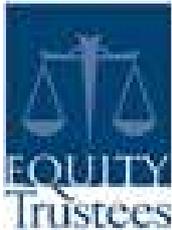
Community

We would like to acknowledge the following community organisations who have worked closely with us to provide referrals and support to clients: Djirra; Safe Steps; Elizabeth Morgan House; Launch Housing; Uniting Care ReGen; Berry Street; the Mental Health Legal Centre; Women's Legal Service; Victoria Legal Aid; Flat Out Inc; Fitzroy Legal Service Inc.

Our supporters and partners

Arnold Bloch Leibler
Lawyers and Advisers

Hall&Wilcox
smarter law



The Collier Charitable Fund



RMIT UNIVERSITY | Centre for
Innovative Justice



Funded by
VictoriaLaw
Foundation

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www.lacw.org.au

[ABN: 84 602 365 542](https://abn.gov.au/abn/84602365542)

LACW acknowledges that it operates on Aboriginal country and that sovereignty over this land was never ceded. We pay our respect to the traditional owners, in particular, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations, and their elders past, present and emerging,

