

Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc.



Chairperson and Executive Officer's report



Our objectives at the Federation of Community Legal Centres are clear: we set out to work together with others – our member centres, government, legal sector partners, other community agencies and funders – to achieve positive change and improve access to justice. In 2014–15 this work saw significant achievement and change for the community legal sector and the communities we work with.

CLCs meeting the changing needs in our communities



Nick Hudson, Chairperson of the Federation's Committee of Management.

Victorian community legal centres (CLCs) helped over 150,000 people this year with serious legal problems related to their housing, debts, infringements, safety, relationship breakdown and much, much more. As always, CLCs adapted their work to meet new or growing areas of need. Some examples of this need are localised. Others, such as family violence, reflect growing demand across the state. The number of new family violence cases initiated this year increased by 17 per cent over the previous year, with family violence cases now comprising over 40 per cent of new CLC cases in Victoria.

As community-based, independent services, CLCs have often been at the forefront of finding new ways to provide legal help to people facing disadvantage, hardship and discrimination. We know people with legal problems often have a number of other, connected non-legal problems and we know many of the people most in need of legal help are in no position to seek out a lawyer. In an effort to assist these people, 84 per cent of CLCs provide outreach services and 80 per cent work in partnership with non-legal services like hospitals, community health services and financial counsellors. A growing number of CLCs are trialling innovative, multi-disciplinary service models including health–justice partnerships.

Advocating for better capacity to meet growing need for CLC services

As always, the need for legal help far outstripped the sector's capacity. This undersupply was compounded during 2014–15 by the threat of Federal funding cuts due to affect 14 centres from 1 July 2015, the prospect of a new Commonwealth-state funding agreement for legal assistance services and uncertainty about future funding for both the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.

This meant advocating for CLCs and those who need their services was a major focus for the Federation this year. We focused on making sure politicians, the media and the broader community understood the vital role CLCs perform and the extent of need for these services. Working with member CLCs and other CLC peaks we secured:

- » reversal of two years' Federal funding cuts between 2015 and 2017;
- » recognition from the Productivity Commission that the legal assistance sector is severely under-resourced and a recommendation of \$200 million urgent investment; and
- » \$3.2 million in short-term grant funding from the new Victorian Government, including stop-gap funding to meet urgent demand for family violence help pending the outcome of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.



Liana Buchanan,
Executive Officer

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Working to influence the new National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services was another major focus and, while the final agreement contains a number of problematic features including the Federal Government's plans to cut funds by 30 per cent in 2017, we were able to mitigate some of the worst restrictions and largely maintain CLCs' ability to work flexibly and effectively.

Supporting a changing and adaptive sector

Another of the Federation's roles, of course, is to support a strong and adaptive community legal sector.

This year we completed round one of the National CLC Accreditation Scheme. While the accreditation process involved substantial work for most centres, it enabled CLCs to identify areas of strength and areas needing attention. Victorian CLCs' constructive engagement with the scheme confirmed the sector's commitment to quality and continuous improvement.

Victorian CLCs are using increasingly sophisticated means to grapple with age-old questions about who should receive their services and how best to provide these services. This year we supported CLCs to learn and share information about legal needs analysis, measuring their impact and different ways of working together to strengthen services.

During the year we also established new ways for CLC staff and board members to share ideas and best practice, with a number of new networks and social media platforms, a state CLC symposium, and the first in a new series of events for CLC board and committee members.

We also continued to develop capacity in the sector through training and professional development for CLC staff and volunteers, including offering a fifth course of the CLC Adaptive Leadership Program.

Advocating for change to unfair or flawed laws

The Federation works with CLCs and other partners to change laws, policies and practices that negatively affect clients. Besides supporting member centres' systemic work through Federation working groups and by producing a new online resource, *The Change Toolkit*, we focused this year on policy areas that our member centres are not able to tackle or that particularly benefit from a coordinated CLC voice.

This was a watershed year in terms of government and community understanding of family violence. The Federation played a key role in this shift through our work advocating for safer family violence laws, supporting Rosie Batty and collaborating with other family violence agencies in the *No More Deaths* campaign. With many member CLCs, we have also made sure the expertise of CLC specialist family violence lawyers has informed the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

In a number of areas, including family violence and coronial reform, our policy advocacy resulted in Bills before Parliament being improved or amendments withdrawn. Meanwhile, our work in Smart Justice contributed to the changing conversation about the costs of ineffective, prison-based policies and the need for a smarter approach to criminal justice. We also completed a three-year Protective Safety Officer monitoring project and made recommendations to improve safety, prevent the use of excessive force and minimise unfair targeting of vulnerable or minority commuters.

Achieving change – together

If 2014–15 was a year of working with others to achieve positive change, we owe a great deal to those we work with – our members, partners, collaborators, funders and supporters. And despite the changes achieved, despite our various successes, we are in no doubt that much remains to be done to deliver access to justice and a fair justice system.

About the Federation of Community Legal Centres



The Federation is the peak body for Victoria's 50 community legal centres (CLCs). The Federation leads and supports excellence in the community legal sector to make justice accessible for all.

The Federation:

- » provides services and support for CLCs, working to maintain and develop a strong and effective CLC sector;
- » conducts law reform and policy work to advance social justice and a fair legal system;
- » provides information and referrals to people seeking legal assistance; and
- » promotes the purpose, services, value and accessibility of community legal centres.

The Federation assists its membership to collaborate for justice. CLC workers come together through working groups and other networks to exchange ideas and improve CLC services. The Federation regularly works in partnership with government, legal aid, the private legal profession and community partners. The Federation is an incorporated association.

About community legal centres

CLCs are independent, community organisations that provide free legal services to the public. CLCs provide free legal advice, information and representation to more than 150,000 Victorians each year.

Generalist CLCs provide services on a range of legal issues to people in their local geographic area. There are generalist community legal centres in metropolitan Melbourne and in rural and regional Victoria.

Specialist CLCs focus on groups of people with special needs or particular areas of law such as mental health, tenancy, consumer law, employment law, refugee law and the environment.

CLCs receive funds and resources from a range of sources including state, Federal and local government, philanthropic foundations, pro bono contributions and donations. Centres also harness the energy and expertise of thousands of volunteers across Victoria.

CLCs provide effective and innovative solutions to legal problems based on their experience within their community. It is CLCs' community relationship that distinguishes them from other legal services and allows them to respond effectively to the needs of our communities as they arise and change.

CLCs integrate legal assistance for individual clients with community legal education, community development and law reform projects that are based on client need and preventative in outcome.

CLCs are committed to collaboration with government, legal aid, the private legal profession and community partners to ensure the best outcomes for our clients and the justice system in Australia.



PHOTO: LILLIE THOMPSON

Federation Management Committee

Chair

Nick Hudson
(Barwon Community Legal Service)

Treasurer

James Ferguson (KPMG)

Secretary

Kristen Wallwork
(Springvale Monash Legal Service)

General Members

Zana Bytheway (Job Watch)
Jackie Galloway
(Peninsula Community Legal Centre)
Belinda Lo
(Eastern Community Legal Centre)
Ben Zika (Consumer Action Law Centre)

Victorian Members of the NACLCL

Advisory Council

Jackie Galloway
Liana Buchanan

Federation staff

Executive Officer

Liana Buchanan

Sector Development Managers

Cate Edwards
Katie Fraser

Communications Manager

Darren Lewin-Hill

Accreditation Coordinator

Jen Missing
Lucy Barrow (to April 2015)

Senior Policy Advisers

Dr Chris Atmore
Michelle McDonnell
Lucy Larkins (to January 2015)

Project Officer

Nicole Smith (June 2015)

Office Coordinator

Philip Marshall
Patrick Sloyan
Sophie Vasiliadis

Training & Events Coordinator

Patrick Sloyan

Finance Officer

Lakmini Welaratne

Community Law Australia

Spokesperson

Carolyn Bond (to December 2014)

CLC Law Graduates

Amy Frew
Kathleen O'Callaghan

Federation interns and volunteers

Claire Alexander
Ashleigh Trimmer
Anna Thwaites
Jess McIntosh
Evie Isaac

Funding and support

The Federation's core ongoing funding is provided by the Victorian Government and Victoria Legal Aid. The Federation thanks them for their ongoing support. We would also like to thank the following organisations for their support:

Funders

Australian Communities Foundation
Legal Services Board
Myer Foundation
Portland House
Reichstein Foundation
Victoria Law Foundation
Victoria Legal Aid (Innovation and Transformation Grant)

In kind and pro bono

Innovative Knowledge Development (IKD) & Jil Toovey
Allens Linklaters
City of Melbourne
Baker McKenzie
Russell Kennedy
Lander & Rogers
Herbert Smith Freehills

Sponsorship/Donations

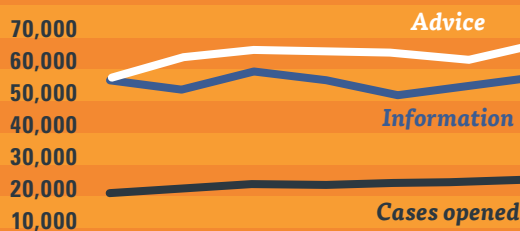
DLA Piper
Herbert Smith Freehills

Victorian CLC services

TOP 5 LEGAL PROBLEM TYPES

CLC information, advice and casework for individuals

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Information	59,094	56,605	51,841	54,688	57,853
Advice	65,945	65,506	64,937	62,725	68,093
Casework	23,998	23,439	24,283	24,694	25,282



Volunteer contributions

1,906 volunteers

contributed 4,671 hours of work per week

Partnerships

80% of CLCs

have partnerships with non-legal community organisations to deliver legal services

67% of CLCs

have ongoing pro bono partnerships

Outreach

84% of CLCs

provided legal services at a location other than their main offices

Accreditation

46 Victorian CLCs

are now certified under the National CLC Accreditation Scheme

Family violence

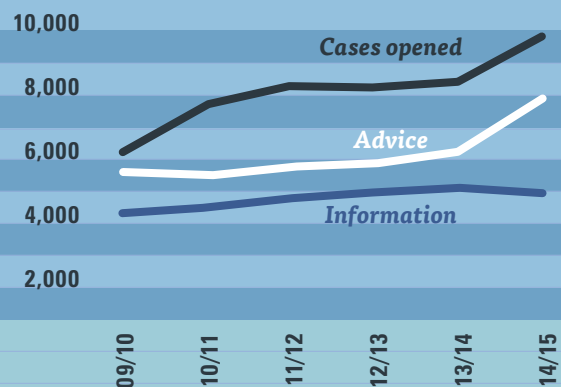
27% spike

in advice compared to the previous year

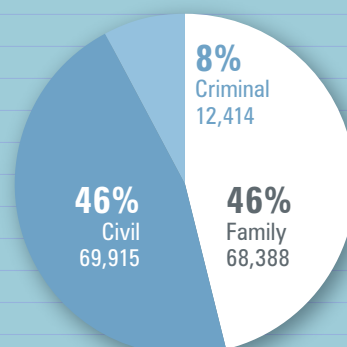
17% increase

in cases opened compared to the previous year

	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Information	4,310	4,492	4,801	4,964	5,101	4,938
Advice	5,605	5,497	5,723	5,875	6,218	7,893
Cases opened	6,219	7,718	8,353	8,274	8,431	9,857



Broad law type

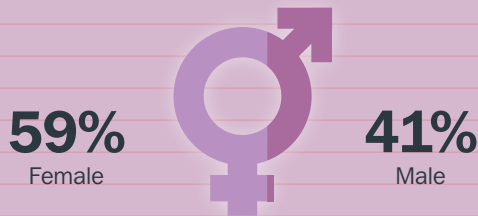




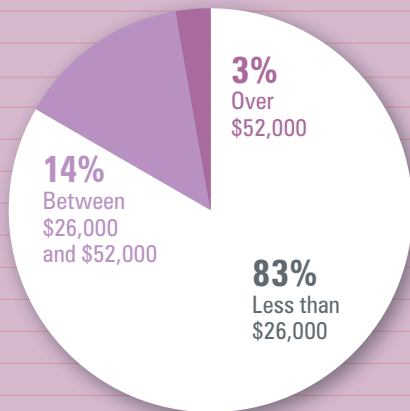
Client demographics

20%
of CLC clients identified as having a disability

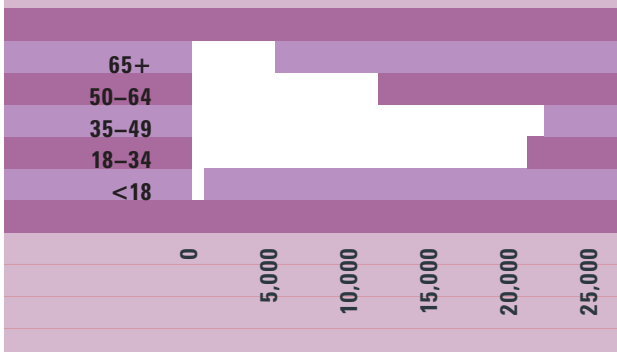
Gender



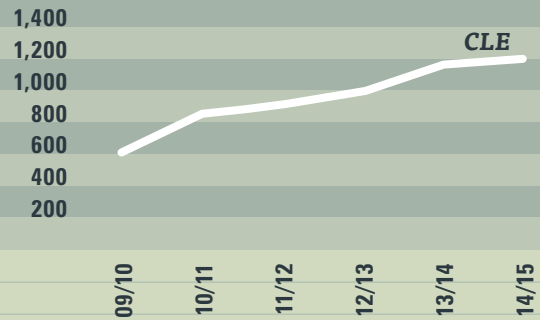
Client income



Client age



Community legal education activities



Systemic advocacy & policy reform

86.5% of CLCs

reported undertaking policy work and systemic advocacy including

- preparing submissions to inquiries (96.9%)
- meeting with MPs (62.5%), and
- consulting with and appearing before inquiries and reviews (59.4%)

Federation information & referral service



We assisted

1,372 Victorians

in 2014/15

Top 5 Federation referrals

- Employment law
- Traffic and motor vehicle offences
- Consumer issues
- Family law
- Domestic violence orders



Elsie Stokie from Barwon Community Legal Service and Antoinette Braybrook from Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Victoria) receive their LIV Awards from President, Katie Miller.

Outstanding CLC leaders recognised

Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre (FKCLC) won the prestigious 2014 Tim McCoy Award amidst a strong field of nominees at the 27th Annual Tim McCoy Dinner, held at the Richmond Town Hall on Friday 7 November 2014.

FKCLC was nominated for its work redressing police violence, in particular its work representing Corinna Horvath all the way to the United Nations. "It's a great honour, not only to be in the fine company of such nominees, but to be recognised by the Tim McCoy trustees for our work. These awards essentially recognise the collective impact of the community legal sector and we thank our many supporters, our brave clients, partners and allies who have walked alongside us," said Anthony Kelly, Executive Officer of Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre, in responding to the Award.

Other nominees were:

- » Anna Brown, of the Human Rights Law Centre, for her work to promote and protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Victoria, Australia and worldwide;
- » Eastern Community Legal Centre for its innovative partnerships through the Family Violence Integration Project;
- » Meghan Fitzgerald, of the Fitzroy Legal Service, for her work on the East West Link Challenge; and
- » Knowmore, for its independent service giving free legal advice to people considering telling their story

- or providing information to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse; and
- » Inner Melbourne Community Legal for its innovative health-justice partnerships with, in particular, the Royal Women's Hospital for the *Acting on the Warning Signs* project.

In May, the Law Institute of Victoria's 2015 Community Lawyer or Organisation of the Year Award was won by Elsie Stokie from the Barwon Community Legal Service. Elsie established the Geelong Community Legal Service (now Barwon Community Legal Service) in 1986. The LIV noted Elsie's work on the *Family Law Booklet* and her work on a number of group actions including her role as the lead litigator on behalf of consumers against the credit practices of Waltons Stores in the 1980s and 1990s.

Also recognised was Antoinette Braybrook, CEO of the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Victoria) who won the Access to Justice/Pro Bono Award. Since its founding in 2002, Antoinette has grown the FVPLS from one staff member to more than 30 people statewide and expanded the organisation to four office locations. Antoinette is a passionate advocate for access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, particularly women facing family violence.

Glen Ludbrook, principal lawyer at the Central Highlands Community Legal Centre, was awarded a LIV Certificate of Service.

Victoria Law Foundation Community Legal Centre Fellowship

The 2014–15 CLC Fellowship was awarded to Agata Wierzbowski, a lawyer at the Consumer Action Law Centre and a graduate of the Federation's Adaptive Leadership Program. Through the Fellowship project, titled *'Keeping Them Honest'*, Agata undertook a review of Victorian, and selected national and international, strategic legal practices carried out by CLCs. The aims of the review were to reflect on what strategic lawyering is, the reasons for doing it, and to draw on the experiences of lawyers to propose a best practice framework for this work.

Through this project, Agata spoke to close to 100 lawyers and leaders in this area, and travelled to Johannesburg, London, Vancouver, New York and Los Angeles.

The report from this project will set out seven best practice principles of strategic lawyering, and is due to be launched in November 2015. This work will start a conversation in the sector about how we can run strategic cases better and the Federation will work with Agata on a series of activities to encourage CLCs to focus on strategic lawyering. Some of Agata's findings are also set out in the project blog – keepingthemhonestblog.com

Over the past decade, the Victoria Law Foundation CLC Fellowship has supported research and development of new ideas among community legal sector practitioners. Each Fellowship has added new areas of CLC expertise. Sadly, the Victoria Law Foundation has announced that the CLC Fellowship will not be funded in 2015–16.

Federation members



Federation members

The Animal Law Institute joined the Federation in May 2015. The Animal Law Institute is a community legal centre (CLC) dedicated to protecting animals and advocating for their interests through the legal system. Muslim Legal Services Victoria ceased membership at the end of the 2014–15 financial year and three CLCs – Western Suburbs Legal Service, Footscray Community Legal Centre, and Wyndham Legal Service – amalgamated to form Western Community Legal Centre.

Generalist centre members

ARC Justice (incorporating Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre and Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre); Barwon Community Legal Service; Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre; Broadmeadows Community (CLC) Legal Service; Casey Cardinia Community Legal Service; Central Highlands Community Legal Centre; Darebin Community Legal Centre; Eastern Community Legal Centre (incorporating Yarra Ranges Community Legal Centre); Fitzroy Legal Service; Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre; Footscray Community Legal Centre; Gippsland Community Legal Service; Hume Riverina Community Legal Service; Inner Melbourne Community Legal; Monash Oakleigh Legal Service; Moonee Valley Legal Service; Moreland Community Legal Centre; Murray Mallee Community Legal Service; Peninsula Community Legal Centre;

Southport Community Legal Service; Springvale Monash Legal Service; St Kilda Legal Service; West Heidelberg Community Legal Service; Western Suburbs Legal Service; Whittlesea Community Legal Service; and Wyndham Legal Service.

Specialist centre members

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Victoria); Animal Law Institute; Association of Employees with Disability Legal Centre; Asylum Seeker Resource Centre; Consumer Action Law Centre; Disability Discrimination Legal Service; Emma House Domestic Violence Services; Environmental Justice Australia; Family Law Legal Service; First Step Legal Service; Human Rights Law Centre; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence; Job Watch; Justice Connect; Melbourne University Student Union Legal Service; Mental Health Legal Centre; Muslim Legal Services Victoria; Refugee & Immigration Legal Centre; Seniors Rights Victoria; Social Security Rights Victoria; Tenants Union of Victoria; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service; Women's Legal Service Victoria; and Youthlaw.

Associate member

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.

Federation member benefits

In 2014–15 members paid an annual membership fee of \$440 to the Federation plus a contribution to the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) which is normally 0.5 per cent of the CLC's annual income.

Supported by Victoria Legal Aid, the Federation provides its members with a range of services and benefits, including:

- » representation of the sector's interests to stakeholders and advocacy around funding and sector change;
- » accreditation, including access to best practice templates for organisational policies and procedures;
- » facilitation of networking and collaboration across the sector through working groups and networks;
- » support for CLCs' client-informed law reform and policy work, and advocacy on law reform and policy issues relevant to CLC clients;
- » free telephone industrial relations advice;
- » free counselling services through the employee assistance program for all CLC employees and their families;
- » free management support services for CLC managers through a manager hotline;
- » free or low-cost professional development; and
- » online legal resources and low-cost insurance organised by the NACLC.

Leading and supporting excellence in the CLC sector



Guided by the Sector Development Standing Group, the Federation works to support excellence in the community legal sector. The strategic priorities for the sector development team are outlined below.

Leading and facilitating collaboration, coordination and information sharing between CLCs

In October 2014, the Federation held a state symposium, to bring the sector together and share information about some of the challenges facing the sector, and the innovative approaches community legal centres (CLCs) are taking to address them, including consideration of mergers, measuring outcomes, and communicating with media and the community.

Held at the Melbourne Town Hall, the event attracted around 160 people from the state's community legal centres and from stakeholder organisations.

On the theme of courage, change and commitment to community, the symposium featured a strong line-up of plenaries, panellists, and presenters, including Mind Australia Chair Julian Gardner, ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie, then Attorney-General, the Hon. Robert Clark MP, and then Shadow Attorney-General, the Hon. Martin Pakula MP.

Julian Gardner spoke to CLCs about the history of the sector and its features in the 1970s, and Dr Cassandra Goldie spoke about some of the transformations in the broader community sector that will affect CLCs.

Speaking on the role of centres, Attorney-General Clark noted that half of the \$1.6 million per year for family violence provided by the State Government was to help CLCs meet massive demand. Shadow Attorney-General Pakula



Julian Gardner, Michael Smith, Bevan Warner, Carolyn Bond AO, and Nicole Bieske discussed the past and future of CLCs at the 2014 Victorian CLCs Symposium.

pledged \$2 million of new funding for a CLC assistance fund if a Labor Government were elected at the November state election.

The symposium focus on supporting collaboration has led to the establishment of four new networks to enable

workers in similar positions to meet regularly, share ideas and best practice, and build professional networks. The networks have brought together CLC managers, CLC principal lawyers, CLC administrators and new lawyers at CLCs, including recent graduates and lawyers who have moved from other sectors into CLCs. We have set up Yammer chat rooms for these networks so people can share information, ask each other questions, and build relationships.

Audio from the symposium is available at the Federation's *Community Law Blog*.

And *Sector News* – formerly known as *Sector Development Update* – was sent to more than 400 CLC workers every week, communicating information about relevant grants, training, job opportunities, as well as profiles of new CLC staff.

Working with CLC boards and committees

The focus on collaboration and information sharing also prompted the first event in recent years for CLC board and committee members, at a CLC Boards Networking event in May. CLC board members had an opportunity to hear about some of the changes affecting the sector and about centres exploring how to work differently together, including Inner Melbourne, Flemington & Kensington, Broadmeadows and Darebin CLCs.

The event gave the Federation a good roadmap for future work with boards and committees, which will start with governance training and ongoing networking opportunities.



Federation executive officer Liana Buchanan (at right) with CLC committee and board members at a networking event in May.

Developing the CLC workforce

The Federation continues to work on developing the sector workforce. In March an intensive CPD Day was held – with the support of the Professional Standards Working Group – enabling CLC lawyers to access five CPD points in a single day. The CPD presentations were also made available online so those who were unable to attend could view online and gain the necessary points. A RRR Network Day was also supported by the Federation, and more than 40 lawyers from across Victoria attended. We are continuing to work with Victoria Legal Aid to ensure that relevant training offered to VLA staff can also be accessed by CLCs.

The most significant professional development opportunity offered is the Adaptive Leadership Program, a five-day program offered to CLC staff (lawyers and non-lawyers) by Jil Toovey of Innovative Knowledge Development (IKD). The program brought together 16 CLC staff over five days at the Abbotsford Convent, and enabled lawyers to reflect on their current working practices, try new strategies for working on complex adaptive problems, and establish a fantastic network of mid-career lawyers in CLCs across Victoria.

Other training and development sessions offered for CLC staff in 2014–15 included:

- » 'Dealing with challenging phone calls' for administrative and front line CLC workers;
- » an 'Access to Justice Forum' with Warren Mundy, commissioner with the Productivity Commission;



More than 40 CLC lawyers came from across Victoria to attend the Federation's RRR Networking Day.

- » a workshop on meeting legal need among Aboriginal communities;
- » Cultural Awareness Training;
- » a Community Legal Education Lunch with former Attorney-General Rob Hulls; and
- » a series of workshops on the 2015 Review of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights.

Participants in the Federation's 2014-15 Adaptive Leadership Program stay in touch over dinner to share their stories.



Accreditation to ensure consistent quality CLC services

Accreditation

The National Accreditation Scheme (NAS) is a sector-led initiative, introduced in 2011 following consultation with community legal centres. The purpose of the scheme is to support effective management systems that demonstrate a robust, efficient sector and maximise positive outcomes for centre users. The Standards and Requirements for Community Legal Centres were developed in consultation with the sector and complement the NACLCL Risk Management Guide. Accreditation is a requirement of full membership of the Federation.

46 Victorian CLCs have successfully completed Phase 1 of the NAS and are currently working to complete tasks outlined in work plans generated during self-assessment and on-site visits. An analysis of the results of Phase 1 in Victoria highlighted the strength of CLCs, particularly in relation to systems for service delivery, advocacy and law reform.

An independent review undertaken during the year indicated that the majority of survey respondents saw the NAS as recognising the good quality of the work CLCs undertake. Participation in accreditation has prompted deliberate reflection and review that centres may not otherwise prioritise. Most centres have found the accreditation process gives an accurate summary of strengths and areas for improvement, providing a clear focus and impetus for further development.

“Accreditation has been an extremely helpful process for the ASRC’s Human Rights Law Program. The accreditation process has helped the program to feel more connected to the sector and we have benefited from the wisdom of other CLCs.”

Jess Williamson, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Human Rights Law Program.

Continuous Quality Improvement

All CLCs have access to Management Support Online (MSO), designed to support effective governance, management and operational systems. Available resources include sample policies, procedures and checklists, good practice guides and links to external resources. The Federation is committed to helping centres to share examples of good practice and to providing support and resources linked to the standards. Training sessions and information updates will address common issues identified through the accreditation process.

NAS Phase 2

The National Accreditation Scheme is currently being revised in preparation for Phase 2, due to commence in early 2016. Some processes will be streamlined, and changes to the standards are likely to include specific requirements to support cultural safety and access to services for people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability. Phase 2 will support centres to consolidate work to date and refine their continuous improvement processes.

CLC Law Graduate Scheme



The CLC Law Graduate Scheme has been funded by two grants from the Legal Services Board since 2010. Two CLC law graduates, Gemma Cafarella and Bethany King, completed the scheme in August 2014. Gemma went

on to work in a tenancy role at Footscray CLC, and Beth subsequently started work as a migration agent and lawyer at Eastern CLC. The fact that both law graduates were able to find positions in the sector is testament to the fact that the scheme has provided a pathway into CLCs, hopefully the beginning of a long CLC career for both Gemma and Beth. Other CLC law graduates still in the sector are Parvathi Suriyakumaran (Footscray CLC), Lee Carnie (Youthlaw), and Bonnie Renou (Loddon Campaspe CLC). More than 80 per cent of law graduates who have completed the scheme have remained in the CLC sector in Victoria since their graduate year.

In August 2014, Amy Frew started the scheme with a placement at Goulburn Valley CLC, and went on to work at Inner Melbourne Community Legal and Human Rights Law Centre, where she has since been appointed as a lawyer.

The final grant from the Legal Services Board is almost expended. However, the Board agreed to allow expenditure of the remaining grant funds on a last, truncated eight-month scheme. Kathleen O'Callaghan was the successful applicant, and began her Practical Legal Training program at Leo Cussens in January. She will do placements at Eastern CLC and Consumer Action Law Centre.

From Amy Frew, CLC Law Graduate 2014–15

My year as a Federation of CLCs Graduate was a great way to start my career as a community lawyer. A real strength of the scheme was the opportunity to gain experience in very diverse areas of the law. For example, in my first placement at Goulburn Valley CLC in Shepparton I was a family violence duty lawyer in regional Victorian courts. At Inner Melbourne Community Legal, I was able to participate in their innovative *Acting on the Warning Signs* program run in partnership with the Royal Women's Hospital, and finally at the Human Rights Law Centre I was able to assist on a High Court challenge to Australia's offshore detention regime. I was also fortunate to be able to participate in Victoria Legal Aid's New Lawyer Program training during the year.

Thanks to all the CLCs that hosted me, and the Federation for their support. It was an amazing year, and I'm looking forward to everything that lies ahead.



Amy Frew (at left) with Sara Molenaar and Kaz Gurney at Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre.

Change toolkit

In February, the Federation launched a guide supporting CLC law reform and policy work, showing centres how they can advocate effectively to change unfair laws, policies and practices.

“People who can't afford a private lawyer need access to free legal help, but they also need a fairer system in which legal problems are not needlessly repeated because unfair laws, policies and practices are allowed to stand,” said Federation Executive Officer, Liana Buchanan, commenting at the launch.

While advocacy restrictions introduced into funding agreements in July 2014 by the Federal Attorney-General prevent the use of Federal funds for policy advocacy and law reform, Victoria's CLCs are still permitted to use state funding for this work and many also undertake systemic advocacy and change projects with important support from philanthropic organisations.

“Daily contact with clients means community lawyers are often the only ones to see how a law, or a part of



the system, is affecting people's lives. Community legal centres have a responsibility to make sure that information gets through to government, and to work to change the policies or practices affecting our clients. *The Change Toolkit* shows how to do it through stories of community legal centres creating change that has direct benefits for frontline services," Buchanan said.

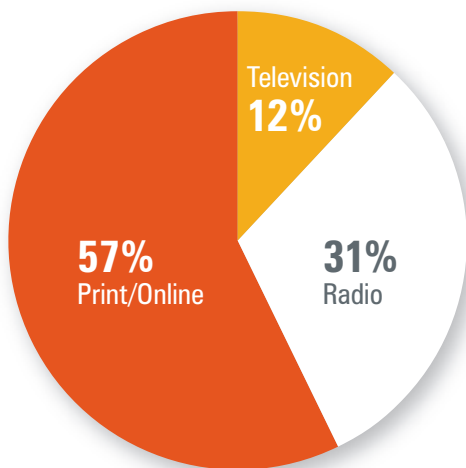
The toolkit can be accessed at www.thechange toolkit.org.au

Communications

This was another active year of media engagement for the Federation, which saw more than 140 stories in print, online, radio and television, including coverage of community legal centre funding, family violence, coronial reform, Protective Services Officers, police accountability, and criminal justice issues through our Smart Justice project.

As well as maintaining a strong media presence through our executive officer and senior policy advisers, the Federation builds the sector capacity to engage the media through advice, training and presentations at key events, such as the 2014 Victorian CLCs Symposium, as well as directly assisting our member centres with media management.

The Federation media split



Federation media spanned a wide range of issues and media platforms, with coverage increasing in 2014-15.

Helping the community access legal assistance

Working to end 'the justice gap'

The Federation continued to work with politicians and the media throughout the year to build awareness of the vital work done by community legal centres, the difference this work makes to people's lives, and the number of people who still cannot access assistance due to limited resources.

After contributions by the Federation, many CLCs and other CLC and legal assistance bodies, the Productivity Commission's Access to Justice Inquiry findings were tabled in December 2014. These findings confirmed that many, many people who need free legal help cannot get it, and that the legal assistance sector is severely underfunded. The Productivity Commission recommended an urgent, interim investment into the legal assistance sector of \$200 million per year.

Meanwhile fourteen Victorian centres faced Federal funding cuts in July 2015. After advocacy by the centres, the Federation and other CLC peaks, and with support from Australian of the Year Rosie Batty, the Federal Government reversed those cuts in March 2015. This leaves CLC Federal funds stable for the next two years.

Also during the year the value of CLCs was recognised in a number of CLC election commitments, with the new Victorian Government announcing \$3.2 million in grant funds to support CLCs to meet urgent demand pressures, including for CLCs' specialist family violence legal help.

The Federation's efforts to ensure Victorians can access the legal help they need continue, as we work to prevent 30 per cent Federal funding cuts scheduled to take effect in July 2017, and to work with all centres to diversify and secure sustainable funding.



In 2014–15, making justice accessible for all was a major focus through our work on a new National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services.

Shaping the National Partnership Agreement

Recognising that a new National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services from 2015–16 onwards has significant implications for most Victorian CLCs, the Federation worked to coordinate CLCs' perspectives and advocate for CLCs and their clients throughout NPA consultations and negotiations. Influencing the outcome of NPA negotiations was a major focus for the year.

The NPA, finally signed by the Prime Minister and other first ministers in July 2015, contains a number of changes to the administration of CLC funding and the terms on which Federal funding to CLCs is provided.

Some of these changes were welcome, such as the provision of Federal funds to the state, allowing local decisions about how funds should be allocated. However, some changes in the NPA had potential to severely limit CLCs' flexibility, effectiveness and capacity to respond to

the needs of their particular community.

Through our advocacy to the Federal Government, the Victorian Government and the media, and through the combined efforts of a number of CLC peaks across the country, we were successful in ameliorating some of the worst effects of these changes. A number of concerns remain, including a restriction preventing CLCs from using Federal Government funds for public campaigns such as Consumer Action Law Centre's high impact 'Do Not Knock' campaign. The NPA also includes clear plans to cut Federal CLC funding from 2017–18 onwards.

In 2014–15, the Federation engaged in nearly 40 media stories focusing on funding cuts to CLCs and restrictions on the use of Federal funding for advocacy, with many of our member centres also working well to raise these issues publicly.

Federation information and referral services

The Federation provides a direct information and referral service for the public via telephone and our website communitylaw.org.au. Our contact details are widely listed as a referral point for CLCs and we assist around 1,500 callers each year, helping them to obtain the right legal assistance for a range of legal issues. Employment law was the most common issue callers were seeking help with in 2014–15. Other common issues included fines and traffic

offences, family law, family violence and consumer issues.

Our website hosts and provides links to CLC websites and information on finding legal assistance and information. Over the year, the site, excluding the CLC sub-webs, received nearly 120,000 visits.

Improving the justice system through law reform and policy work



A watershed year for family violence work _____

Victims of family violence have continued to seek legal help in increasing numbers, especially through the specialist family violence duty lawyer services offered by many of our member centres at Magistrates' Courts. In the first half of 2014–15, more than 40 per cent of new Victorian cases initiated by community legal centres (CLCs) related to family violence. This work provides the Federation with a unique understanding of the needs and experiences of victims encountering the justice system. The Federation worked on a range of practice, policy and law reform issues with our member centres, particularly specialists – Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Victoria), Women's Legal Service Victoria, and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria – and larger generalist CLCs, as well as collaborating with external family violence peaks and specialist bodies.

What we want

Women who have experienced family violence must be able to be confident they can access effective help that addresses all their legal needs, so that they and their

children are safe and supported to rebuild their lives, and the perpetrators of the violence are held accountable and prevented from committing further violence. At present the quality of the Victorian family violence response varies

considerably depending on where the victim is located – and often on who she is, with Aboriginal women and women with disabilities frequently not receiving culturally appropriate or tailored support. Legal assistance needs to be better joined up so that victims are at the centre of the process instead of being expected to negotiate a range of complicated and time-consuming legal avenues and forums, often without sufficient legal advice.

What we have done

Because 2014 was a state election year, we worked with our partner organisations to launch the *No More Deaths* campaign on the steps of State Parliament, and produced a series of election “key asks” and a family violence election report card. We also attended regular meetings with Government and Opposition MPs, continued our systemic advocacy work with Rosie Batty (more below) and addressed election forums on family violence and the annual *White Ribbon Day* rally.

The Federation initiated or contributed to 11 related submissions, including four to the Royal Commission into Family Violence – two as part of the *No More Deaths* alliance, one as member of the Chief Magistrate’s Family Violence Taskforce, and our own submission including 63 recommendations to improve the integrated response to family violence in Victoria. Drawing on interviews and case studies from member centres, our submission highlights statewide gaps in the system and recommends action to address a lack of sustainable funding for free legal help and support services, variable accessibility to the family violence system across the state, including through the courts, and the need to better study and learn from each family violence death to prevent avoidable deaths in the future.

We also led the *No More Deaths* campaign in continuing advocacy about draft legislation on family violence finalisation conditions. The legislation would mean that a temporary intervention order could become final if the perpetrator of the violence does not object. We raised concerns that these changes would reduce perpetrator

accountability and that victims of violence would be unable to access legal help at the stage they’d need it under the proposed process.

We continued to contribute to various family violence project steering groups in the sector and regularly consulted our member centres around the state about the growing demand on their family violence duty lawyer services and areas of unmet legal need. We used this knowledge to inform our advocacy to the Victorian Government, the Opposition, the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Access to Justice Arrangements, the Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence, and our submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Our impact

The campaign achieved prominent media attention, with around 70 media engagements for the Federation. For the first time, family violence was a key issue in the election, and resulted in commitments from the new Victorian Government to hold the Royal Commission into Family Violence, conduct a safety audit of the courts, and provide further funding to CLCs for family violence legal assistance.

As a result of our communication with the former Attorney-General and the Department of Justice, the previous government made substantial amendments before the finalisation conditions legislation was passed. These changes included stronger safeguards related to when finalisation conditions might be used, and a commitment to evaluate the impact of such conditions on women and children’s safety and perpetrator accountability.

Following the election, we encouraged the new government to defer commencement of the legislation in light of the Royal Commission. The Federation has continued to advocate to the Attorney-General that any changes risk impacting perpetrator accountability and will need to be supported by additional funded legal help to victims so that women can consider the implications in deciding whether to consent to finalisation conditions.

Wendy Phillips (centre) has worked with the Federation and the *No More Deaths* campaign advocating change in how families are supported in the coronial system.



Working with families to stop preventable deaths

Bereaved family members regularly contact community legal centres (CLCs) or the Federation seeking help with the coronial process, or after an inquest has concluded because they do not feel that they have obtained sufficient answers about why their loved one died and want to try to prevent future similar deaths.

CLCs have a long tradition of assisting families bereaved by deaths in varying circumstances including psychiatric care, police operations, road trauma and home birth. In the last few years, due to the increased focus of CLC work on family violence, the Federation and some CLCs have also played a significant role in helping those bereaved by family violence homicide to navigate the coronial process and seek systemic change.

What we want

Bereaved families must be able to obtain clear information and legal assistance so that they can understand the coronial process and, if they choose, genuinely participate in an inquest into the death of their relative. Currently most families are not legally represented even though most other significant parties in an inquest have taxpayer-funded legal teams. Families also need to know that coronial investigations and inquests will be independent and thorough, and that the focus will be on how to prevent future similar deaths so that others do not have to experience the same trauma. Inquests should therefore produce appropriately targeted recommendations and agency responses that commit to systemic changes. At present, no entity monitors whether such recommendations and responses are implemented, and so many families are left not knowing whether any important changes have been made and often feeling that nothing has changed.

What we have done

The Federation has been a member of the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths Reference Group since it was established in 2009. In 2014–15 we continued our advocacy for dedicated resourcing to the review to boost its capacity. The Federation's submission to the Royal Commission included a detailed discussion and recommendations for a best practice family violence death review, together with associated necessary reforms to the coronial system and enhanced legal help for families.

We also continued our engagement with bereaved families and with coronial and family violence death review



Dr Chris Atmore worked extensively with the media in 2014–15 advocating on family violence and coronial issues, including at *White Ribbon Day* in November 2014.

advocates around Australia working for systemic change. In July 2014 the Federation wrote to the then Attorney-General welcoming a proposed broadening of grounds of appeal of coronial decisions, but saying it would mean little if families remained without legal help in the face of prohibitive costs of appeal in the Supreme Court. We objected to the proposed changes that would narrow the timeframe within which families could appeal the refusal to hold or reopen an inquest, or to challenge inquest findings. We then convened a media conference with representatives of five families who had experienced the Victorian coronial system.

In December 2014 Dr Chris Atmore acted as media spokesperson for Rosie Batty during the inquest into the death of Rosie's son, Luke. Dr Atmore also produced a blog providing in-depth systemic analysis of the issues raised on each day of the inquest.

Our impact

The State Government reinstated funding for the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths in the May 2015 Budget.

The families' media conference led to coverage in major newspapers and on radio, and several family representatives went on to continue their own advocacy via media and communicating with decision-makers. Debate in the Legislative Council noted that the stakeholder consultation had led to significant dialogue between the shadow Attorney-General and the Attorney-General and had resulted in much improved draft legislation. The proposed reductions in time for appeals, about which the Federation raised concern, were withdrawn.

One family member commented: "I am so glad that we had the opportunity to bring this to the public's attention. And I am so glad that I had the opportunity to meet some amazing people, even though it was under the most difficult circumstances."

Smart Justice – smart action for a safer community

The Smart Justice coalition, led by the Federation, works to challenge simplistic and ineffective criminal justice policies. The project advocates for evidence-based responses to crime and offending. Our growing coalition now includes 34 legal and community organisations.



Criminal justice policies implemented in Victoria over the last decade have ignored the evidence about what works to reduce crime and resulted in a 73 per cent increase in the prison population between 2005 and 2015. The prison population rose particularly sharply between 2010 and 2014 as a result of a series of "tough on crime" measures. Changes to the criminal justice system and sentencing laws resulted in more people going to prison for longer, with the recidivism rate predicted to climb to an alarming 45 per cent this year.

What we want

We want effective, evidence-based and human rights compliant criminal justice policies. We want governments to do what works to cut crime, not what is designed to sound good in a headline. We want to stop murders, rapes, assaults and other crimes by preventing them from occurring through tackling the causes of crime, rather than

spending billions of dollars on ineffective punishments that only respond after the damage is done.

There is some indication that the current government is receptive to a smart justice approach, acknowledging the need to adopt an evidence-based approach to criminal law and sentencing policy. We are now working with

government and other stakeholders to secure investment in approaches that hold people who have committed crimes to account but work to support community safety.

What we have done

In the lead-up to the 2014 Victorian state election, we focused on promoting an evidence-based approach to justice policy, including alternative approaches to prison where consistent with community safety. We launched factsheets and infographics to highlight research findings and trends in the justice system, including data showing a marked increase in prison expenditure, prisoner numbers and in reoffending. As part of our work in leading our coalition, we provided them with “fast facts” which they used when talking through the issues with politicians and candidates.

We continued to raise awareness of Smart Justice issues at public events. In August last year, we spoke at our first international conference in Singapore. The Reintegration Puzzle conference, hosted by Deakin University, brings together people working to help people successfully reintegrate into the community after prison. Our project also participated in a Q and A event organised by Monash Criminology at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne in May this year. “Beyond imprisonment” contributed towards generating a new conversation about how innovation can reduce the prison rate and result in better outcomes for Victoria.

The project also hosted two public events, focusing respectively on tackling crime using evidence-based Smart Justice approaches (with the Human Rights Law Centre), and on the rehabilitation of prisoners to reduce reoffending. “Tackling crime the smart way” was held in September last year with a panel featuring former Victorian Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, Magistrate Pauline Spencer and executive officer of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Eddie Cubillo. The forum was broadcast on Radio National’s *The Law Report*. “Rethinking rehabilitation and after-care” was held in October 2014 and featured Singaporean rehabilitation expert, Jason Wong. A report based on the presentation was broadcast on the ABC Radio Current Affairs *PM* program.

Our impact

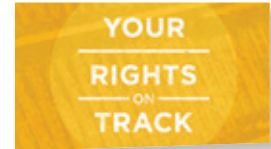
Through our work we attracted a significant media profile across print, TV and radio in our attempt to transform last year’s election debate about crime and to advocate policies that will generate safer communities. The number of media stories and community conversations about the negative impact of prison growth and the need for more effective alternatives have grown. Law and order announcements were not a significant feature of the election campaign, reflecting a growing understanding that simplistic, prison-based responses are ineffective and costly.

Senior Policy Adviser Michelle McDonnell presented at the Reintegration Puzzle conference exploring better ways to reintegrate released prisoners back into the community.



Your Rights on Track – Informing, empowering and protecting commuters interacting with Protective Services Officers

Informing, empowering and protecting commuters interacting with Protective Services Officers to reduce the risk of injury, death and human rights abuses.



Your Rights on Track focuses on issues with the roll-out of over one thousand armed Protective Services Officers (PSOs) across Melbourne and some regional train stations. PSOs are not sworn police officers but are employed and trained by Victoria Police. They carry semi-automatic guns, batons, handcuffs and capsicum spray and have a range of police-like powers including arrest and detention of people under mental health legislation.

What we want

Our report *Tracking Protective Services Officers: Insights from the first three years* published in May highlights the need for change in three broad areas – preventing PSOs exceeding their powers with unwarranted demands for personal information, reducing the risks around PSOs using excessive force by introducing public reporting, and independent monitoring of use of force by PSOs.

There is a lack of evidence and evaluation to support PSO deployment to every train station, which justifies a reconsideration of the PSO policy when the Auditor-General's current evaluation into the effectiveness of the policy in reducing crime on train stations is completed next year. We want evidence-based policing, recommending that the State Government provide Victoria Police with greater flexibility on where and when to deploy PSOs so that PSOs can be targeted towards those train stations with the greatest crime problems.

At the final stage of our three-year project, we are calling for Victoria Police and the Victorian Government to implement our eight recommendations.

What we have done

As well as publishing and promoting our report, which was based on case studies and policy and legal analysis, we have prepared and distributed community legal education (CLE) resources, documented scores of complaints about PSOs and referred them to CLCs for legal help. We used social media and our wallet cards to promote our referral work so that people were aware that they could get free legal advice about charges, fines or lodging a complaint.



Our impact

Since the project started, we have informed thousands of commuters about their rights and responsibilities when interacting with PSOs by distributing over 17,000 wallet cards through targeted networks. We supported more than ten CLCs, providing them with information and legal resources, wallet cards and media kits to increase awareness at the local community level.

Our Senior Policy Adviser Michelle McDonnell actively engaged the media to increase awareness for the project, with over 30 media interviews for TV, radio and print.

As an early adapter of social media as a means of providing CLE and referrals for legal help, we reached over 10,000 people through maintaining a strong social media presence on Facebook with weekly posts.

Working group reports



Access to Interpreters Working Group

Convenor: Suzy Fox (St Kilda Legal Service)

The working group oversees the funding allocated to community legal centres (CLCs) for onsite interpreters and translation services by Victorian Interpreting & Translating Services (VITS) and Vicdeaf. The group also monitors CLC usage of TIS telephone and onsite interpreting services funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

These services are essential for access to CLCs by members of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, and those with hearing impairments. CLC usage reports acquired from TIS clearly demonstrate that over the last five years there has been a gradual increase in CALD community members accessing CLCs for legal assistance. The reports are a clear indication of the diversity of the CALD community and where newly arrived communities are settling, and reflect the ongoing work that CLCs are undertaking to improve CALD access to their legal services.

Statistical data has identified that access to free interpreter services is a vital tool for CLCs in provision of accessible legal services to CALD communities. It is imperative these resources are not only maintained at current levels but increased if interpreter access is identified as a barrier to accessing justice for particular CALD communities, particularly newly arrived immigrants.

The working group will continue to advocate on behalf of CLCs to identify interpreting and translation needs and work towards acquiring additional funding and access to alternative interpreting resources such as the use of cost-effective IT remote access to interpreters for regional/rural centres.

Civil Law Working Group

Convenor: Lisa Grealy
(Consumer Action Law Centre)

The Civil Law Working Group met regularly to discuss a range of civil law issues arising from practice. In October 2014, the working group decided to reconvene as a network, with a focus on information sharing. The network has met three times since then. One meeting was held in conjunction with a training on motor vehicle accidents. The network now has a convenor and is continuing to meet quarterly, and welcomes new members.

Special thanks must go to Graham Wells of Social Security Rights Victoria for his work as convenor of the working group. And special thanks to Lisa Grealy, formerly of Loddon Campaspe CLC and now at Consumer Action Law Centre, for taking on the role of convenor of the Civil Law Network.

Community Development and Community Legal Education Working Group

Convenor: Saskia Weerheim
(Peninsula Community Legal Centre)

The Community Development and Community Legal Education Working Group believes that high quality community legal education and community development activities are integral to the work that CLCs undertake. Workers share a vision of advancing and enhancing access to justice by empowering people through targeted, high-quality legal

education and community development activities. The group provides a dedicated and supportive space for workers to collaborate, innovate and build capacity across the sector.

As well as meeting on a regular basis, we are pleased to be collaborating with Victoria Legal Aid, the Infringements Working Group and 12 individual community legal centres in undertaking scoping for a joint statewide community legal education project on Infringements.

Family Violence Lawyers Working Group

Convenor: Bonnie Renou (Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre) and Abigail Sullivan (Women's Legal Service Victoria)

The Family Violence Working Group (FVWG) is a support and networking group for family violence duty lawyers working in Magistrates' Courts across Victoria. The FVWG utilises their knowledge and experience to inform the policy and law reform work of the Federation.

The FVWG regularly invites guests, which this year included representatives from the Magistrates' Court and Victoria Police, to inform our practice and directly feed back our clients' experiences. In our meeting with Victoria Police, the FVWG offered feedback and case studies of the varied police responses and attitudes to family violence intervention order matters across the state, drawing on the work of FVWG lawyers representing a broad cross-section of experiences from urban, rural and regional areas of Victoria.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence also provided a unique opportunity for the working group to coordinate their individual legal centre's advocacy for change and improvement in the family violence sector – with each other, and with the Federation's own submission.

Human Rights Working Group

Convenor: Russell Solomon (RMIT University) and Daniel Webb (Human Rights Law Centre)

Members of the Human Rights Working Group have used the meetings to discuss current issues around access to the law and to policy issues more generally as they impact upon vulnerable and marginalised people, many of whom are CLC clients. The group has written in respect of various pressing issues during the year and has discussed and then endorsed NGO submissions in respect of particular international human rights treaties or the NGO submissions to the Universal Periodic Review of Australia.

Charter review

Much of the focus of the group has been, at various times, on the training and general education of CLC lawyers and others on the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. Training seminars have been held in the recent past, members of the group have been involved in writing submissions to the 2015 Charter Review and we are currently considering a Charter forum later in the year as well as the development of a toolkit on how to give effect to the Charter for non-legal organisations and groups.

Restraints on children with disabilities in schools

The group has shared knowledge and information about restraints on children with disabilities in schools as well as discussing ways to address this issue and advocate for change.

Access to legal assistance

The group has provided an important networking opportunity for representatives from different organisations, including the Federation, to discuss problems with the funding and other constraints on the provision of legal assistance to those in need.

The matter of legal aid, from both Federal and state sources, has been an ongoing topic of conversation.

Equal Opportunity Act

This Act has been discussed in the past year, partly focusing on where the government may be seeking to amend the Act and otherwise where it needs to be changed.

Indigenous legal service funding cuts and a new funded program

The cuts to indigenous legal services has been a topic of discussion over the past year and on a more positive note, the representative from the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service advised of three-year funding given for a prisoner reintegration program which it shares with three other organisations, but this only relates to adult prisoners, not youth.

VEOHRC Racism Initiative

VEOHRC representative gave a presentation on this campaign and members took information and pamphlets away to distribute in their networks. With people reluctant to report racism, VEOHRC is developing a tool for people to take reports on behalf of people in the cities of Yarra, Darebin and Whittlesea and they are also trying to get this established in Shepparton.

Social Justice Dialogue

Another member informed the group of another relevant initiative of a social justice dialogue group writing a pre-election open letter (in late 2014) for members of the civil society sector to sign calling on the Victorian Government to stop meaningless consultation, listen to the sector and move forward with providing much-needed financial support for the sector.

Infringements Working Group

Convenor: Lucy Adams (Justice Connect)

The Infringements Working Group (IWG) is a joint working group of the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) and the Financial and Consumer Rights Council, supported by lawyers from Victoria Legal Aid. The IWG has worked closely with successive governments to make sure infringements policy is informed by the expertise and experience of practitioners who work daily with clients who are disproportionately impacted by the infringements system.

Our key activities in 2014–15 have been:

1. Eight key points for reform – following the passing of significant reform via the *Fines Reform Act 2014 (Vic)*, the IWG reassessed our priorities, including identifying eight recommendations for implementing the *Fines Reform Act 2014 (Vic)* and for future legislative reform. We have been able to use this two-page list of priorities in our advocacy throughout the year.
2. Infringements and family violence – the IWG made a detailed submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence highlighting the impacts of the current infringements system on victims of family violence, which include severe financial hardship and overwhelming debt, exacerbated fear and anxiety, and sanctions, including licence or registration suspension and the risk of imprisonment for unpaid fines. The submission contained five case studies from members and called for legislative reform to make it easier for victims to exit the system where they have incurred infringements as a result of family violence – for example, when fleeing their home or sleeping in their car – or where the perpetrator has incurred infringements in their name.
3. Guests at IWG meetings – the IWG has invited a number of guests to our bimonthly meetings, including: Jaklin Trajkovski, Acting Assistant Director, Policy & Strategy, Department of Justice; Eddie Haddad, Manager of the Infringements Court; Jane Baldwin; Sheriff's Office; and Dane Meiklejohn and Sandra Court, Victorian Ombudsman. The presence of these guests has provided a good opportunity for a two-way information flow, so that they could understand the work, priorities and recommendations of IWG members, and the IWG could equally understand their priorities and how we could work most effectively with these agencies.
4. Work and development permits – the IWG has long argued that people should have the option of dealing with their infringements through treatment, counselling, education or voluntary work. We welcomed the Work and Development Permit (WDP) Scheme in *Fines Reform Act 2014 (Act)*, but noted a major shortfall in that it would only apply to infringements at an early stage (i.e. not once they became enforcement orders or infringement warrants), which will significantly limit its utility for a substantial proportion of IWG members' clients who seek assistance months or years after receiving their infringement. The IWG has continued to provide this feedback, and other recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the WDP Scheme, to the



- Department of Justice and Regulation, including through a formal submission and participation in working groups.
5. Regular correspondence with decision-makers – in September, IWG representatives met with then Shadow Attorney-General, Martin Pakula, about priorities for infringements reform. We have continued to correspond with him since his appointment as Attorney-General, including through the IWG's two seats on the Attorney-General's Infringement Standing Advisory Committee (ISAC), and have also written to the Department of Justice and Regulation and the Infringements Court with the IWG's recommendations for reducing the current impact of the infringements system on our clients, our services and the justice system.
 6. Infringements survey for financial counsellors and community lawyers – in 2015, we surveyed financial counsellors, CLC lawyers and volunteers about their infringements work and training needs. 108 people completed the survey: 52 financial counsellors; 40 CLC lawyers; and 13 volunteers. Notably, 60 per cent of respondents indicated that they see at least one client every week seeking assistance with infringements matters, with 16 per cent saying people seek this assistance daily. Respondents indicated that their top training priority is fines reform and the data from the survey will inform the content of the IWG PD Day to be held on 10 November 2015.

The IWG has a high level of commitment amongst our members and we look forward to another year of using the extensive evidence and insights from our daily work with clients caught up in the infringements system to inform positive changes.

Professional Standards Working Group

Convenor: Jenni Smith
(Footscray Community Legal Centre)

The Professional Standards Working Group's objectives are to ensure that all CLCs comply with the Risk Management Guide and to provide professional legal advice and support when practice management and insurance-related issues arise. More broadly the group promotes initiatives aimed at enhancing professional development in the sector through collaborative projects with the Federation. These have included:

- » participation in the development of professional development training in February;
- » covering risk management issues at the compulsory principal lawyers meeting in November; and
- » the creation of a principal lawyers network which meets every three months.

The establishment of a principal lawyers' network was a new initiative spearheaded by the group this year. Moreover, the network has proven an invaluable informal space for both new and not so new principal lawyers to discuss a range of supervisory and practice issues, as well as to network and share ideas – something principal lawyers often miss out on due to practice requirements.

The group has also developed draft *Victorian Professional Indemnity Insurance Guidelines* to ensure better induction for working group members. Moreover, the cross-check process has been made more efficient with the summary reporting of cross-check issues and the availability of more accessible versions of the cross-check questionnaire.

The group participates in the National Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) Network which holds monthly meetings. Importantly the group coordinates the annual Victoria-wide Professional Indemnity cross-check.

Next year, we look forward to developing an induction kit for all new principal lawyers as well as continuing to facilitate professional standards training.

Rural, Regional & Remote Working Group

Convenor: Sarah Smethurst
(Gippsland Community Legal Service)

The Rural Regional and Remote (RRR Network) meets by telephone on a bimonthly basis. It provides an opportunity for RRR centres to share information about their centre's work and projects, network, and build relationships. The Network aims to enable RRR CLCs to discuss issues that are common to RRR CLCs, such as isolation, high staff turnover, conflicts of interest, and access to justice issues experienced by clients in rural and regional areas.

Generalist Victorian rural and regional centres include Barwon (in Geelong), Central Highlands (in Ballarat), Loddon Campaspe (in Bendigo), Murray Mallee (in Mildura), Gippsland (in Morwell), and more recently the Healesville branch of Eastern CLC. Specialist RRR centres include Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service (in Geelong) and

Emma House (in Warrnambool). A representative of the Federation also attends RRR Network meetings.

In March 2015, the RRR centres met at Allens in Melbourne for the RRR Network Day. This day provides an opportunity for RRR staff to meet face to face, learn from one another, and build professional networks. On this occasion centres were able to meet with lawyers from the Mental Health Legal Centre, Women's Legal Centre, and the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service.

Thanks to Sarah Smethurst for convening the network for 2014–15.

Tenancy Working Group

Convenor: Yaelle Caspi
(Tenants Union of Victoria)

The Tenancy Working Group provides a forum for CLCs and other community groups to discuss issues relating to tenancy law and practice. The group also discusses wider policy issues relevant to renting.

The Working Group meets bimonthly and aims to:

- » bring together and provide support for community sector workers interested in tenancy issues across Victoria;
- » raise the profile of tenancy issues in Victoria; and
- » advocate for improved tenancy laws in Victoria.

This year the group has worked on the following issues:

- » the availability of public housing policies and procedures;
- » maintenance and repair issues in social and public housing;
- » conduct of social housing providers;
- » VCAT procedures for tenants, lawyers and advocates;
- » department reviews such as the *Residential Tenancy Act* review and the Royal Commission into Family Violence; and
- » tenancy databases.

Violence Against Women & Children Working Group

Convenor: Pasanna Mutha
(Women's Legal Service Victoria)

The Violence Against Women and Children Working Group brings together lawyers, policy officers and legal educators to discuss the broader systemic issues that arise in the violence against women space. In the last financial year, the group shared information on and fed into a number of important law reform issues. These included:

- » the *No More Deaths* election campaign that lobbied to secure key election commitments in relation to family violence prior to the Victorian State election in November 2014;
- » ongoing Department of Justice consultations on reform to practice in the family violence jurisdiction; and
- » continued funding for the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths.

In 2014–15, the Federation flew the banner at a number of rallies on issues at the heart of our work. Here, office coordinator, Philip Marshall, takes part in *White Ribbon Day*.



In December 2014, staff participated in a river walk that offered fascinating insights into the heritage and continuing meaning of the Aboriginal land surrounding Birrarung. The tour was conducted by Dean Stewart (centre) of Aboriginal Tours and Education Melbourne.



Financial report for the year ended 30 June 2015

Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc.

ABN 30 036 539 902



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

The accompanying notes form part of this financial report.

	Note	2015 \$	2014 \$
INCOME			
Victoria Legal Aid - Recurrent		663,816	655,621
VLA Surplus		(560)	(10,374)
ERO State		73,259	42,781
ERO State Carried Fwd		(27,774)	(29,425)
ERO Extra		38,215	25,927
ERO Extra Carried Fwd		(38,215)	(25,927)
Victoria Legal Aid - Other Income		-	3,000
Grant Income - Other Projects		381,242	592,582
Other Income		165,972	221,148
Interest		19,742	22,339
		<u>1,275,697</u>	<u>1,497,672</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Employee benefit expenses		828,890	865,966
Occupancy expenses		19,912	19,147
Operating expenses		74,460	87,595
Project related expenses		335,848	485,918
		<u>1,259,110</u>	<u>1,458,626</u>
Profit before income tax		16,587	39,046
Income tax expense		-	-
Profit after income tax		16,587	39,046
Retained Profits at the beginning of the financial year		<u>284,282</u>	<u>245,236</u>
Retained Profits at the end of the financial year		<u>300,869</u>	<u>284,282</u>

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS AT 30 JUNE 2015

The accompanying notes form part of this financial report.

	Note	2015 \$	2014 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	2	843,539	795,452
Trade and other receivables	3	95,143	18,733
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		938,682	814,185
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	4	2,715	8,309
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		2,715	8,309
TOTAL ASSETS		941,397	822,494
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	5	83,949	83,839
Amounts received in advance	6	468,085	391,677
Provisions	7	70,199	50,738
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		622,233	526,254
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Provisions	8	18,295	11,958
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		18,295	11,958
TOTAL LIABILITIES		640,528	538,212
NET ASSETS		300,869	284,282
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
Retained profits		300,869	284,282
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS		300,869	284,282

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

The accompanying notes form part of this financial report.

	Note	2015 \$	2014 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from Gov't Grants – recurrent		698,306	703,836
Receipts from Gov't Grants – non-recurrent		74,001	3,000
Receipts from Other Sources		483,070	715,809
Interest received		20,504	24,420
Payments to Suppliers and Employees		(1,227,794)	(1,393,242)
Net Cash provided by operating activities	9	48,087	53,823
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Payments for purchase of property and equipment		–	(4,952)
Net Cash provided by (used in) investing activities		–	(4,952)
Net increase (decrease) in cash held		48,087	48,871
Cash at the beginning of the year		795,452	746,581
Cash at the end of the year		843,539	795,452

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

Note 1: Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

This financial report is special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic). The committee has determined that the Association is not a reporting entity.

The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuation of non-current assets.

The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in preparation of this financial report.

- Cash and Cash Equivalents**
Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.
- Income Tax**
The Association is exempt from paying income tax by virtue of Section 50-45 of the Income Tax Assessment Act, 1997. Accordingly, tax effect accounting has not been adopted.
- Property, Plant and Equipment**
Furniture and equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation. The depreciable amount of all furniture and equipment is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the Association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use.
- Employee Entitlements**
Provision is made for the Association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee benefits have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled. Provision is made for the Association's liability for long service leave from commencement of employment.
- Provisions**
Provisions are recognised when the Association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period.
- Impairment of Assets**
At the end of each reporting period, the entity reviews the carrying values of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is an indication that those assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs to sell and

value in use, is compared to the asset's carrying amount. Any excess of the asset's carrying value over its recoverable amount is recognised in the income and expenditure statement.

g. Revenue

Revenue is brought to account when received and to the extent that it relates to the subsequent period it is disclosed as a liability.

Grant Income

Grant income received, other than for specific purposes, is brought to account over the period to which the grant relates.

Deferred Income

Unspent grant income received in relation to specific projects and events is not brought to account as revenue in the current year but deferred as a liability in the financial statements until spent for the purpose received.

Interest Revenue

Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest rate method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate inherent in the instrument.

Donations

Donation income is recognised when the entity obtains control over the funds which is generally at the time of receipt.

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).

h. Goods and Services Tax (GST)

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

i. Economic Dependence

The entity receives a significant portion of its revenue from Victoria Legal Aid. At the date of this report the Committee has no reason to believe Victoria Legal Aid will not continue to fund the entity.

2015
\$

2014
\$

Note 2: Cash and cash equivalents

Cash on hand	250	250
Cash at bank	362,289	329,692
Term Deposit	481,000	465,510
	<u>843,539</u>	<u>795,452</u>

Note 3: Trade and other receivables

Accounts Receivable	81,681	4,695
Prepayments and Sundry Receivables	8,532	8,346
Accrued Bank Interest	4,930	5,692
	<u>95,143</u>	<u>18,733</u>

Note 4: Property, plant and equipment

Furniture and fittings - at cost	129,908	129,908
Less accumulated depreciation	(127,193)	(121,599)
	<u>2,715</u>	<u>8,309</u>

Note 5: Trade and other payables

Creditors and accruals	59,714	67,503
Salary and wage accruals	24,235	16,336
	<u>83,949</u>	<u>83,839</u>

Note 6: Amounts received in advance

Victoria Legal Aid (ERO) - Extra - Future Years	70,637	32,421
Victoria Legal Aid (ERO) - State (unused)	57,454	29,679
Victoria Legal Aid (recurrent)	26,700	26,140
Victoria Legal Aid (Outcomes Measurement Program)	74,001	-
Membership Contributions	-	28,701
Advancing Community Justice (Legal Services Board)	-	89,431
Law Graduate Scheme (Legal Services Board)	66,870	91,756
Smart Justice	72,423	93,549
Wanting Justice	100,000	-
	<u>468,085</u>	<u>391,677</u>

VLA (ERO) - Extra includes funds carried forward from 2015: \$38,215, 2014: \$25,927 and 2013: \$6,493.

Note 7: Provisions

Current		
Provision for annual leave	70,199	50,738
	<u>70,199</u>	<u>50,738</u>

Note 8: Provisions

Non-Current		
Provision for Long Service Leave	18,295	11,958
	<u>18,295</u>	<u>11,958</u>

Note 9: Reconciliation of Cash Flow from Operations with Profit from Ordinary Activities after Income Tax

Profit after income tax	16,587	39,046
Cash flows excluded from operating profit attributable to operating activities;		
Non-cash flows in profit:-		
- Depreciation	5,594	7,441
Changes in assets and liabilities;		
- (Increase)/decrease in trade and other debtors	(76,410)	116,076
- Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	110	27,392
- Increase/(decrease) in amounts received in advance	76,408	(166,396)
- Increase/(decrease) in provisions	25,798	30,264
Net cash provided by Operating Activities	<u>48,087</u>	<u>53,823</u>

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

The committee has determined that the Association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the committee the financial report as set out on pages 1 to 7:

1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc. as at 30 June 2015 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

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

Chairperson: Nick Hudson
Dated: 7 October 2015



Treasurer: James Ferguson
Dated: 8 October 2015



INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES (VICTORIA) INC. ABN 30 036 539 902

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc., which comprises the statement of assets and liabilities as at 30 June 2015, income and expenditure statement and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and statement by members of the committee.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee of Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc., is responsible for the preparation of the financial report, and has determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic) and the needs of the members. The committee's responsibility also includes such internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We have conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the Association's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view, in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Association's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report gives a true and fair view, in all material respects, the financial position of Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc., as at 30 June 2015 and its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, and the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic).

Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc., to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic). As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

Sean Denham

Dated: 8 October 2015
Suite 1, 707 Mt Alexander Road
Moonee Ponds VIC 3039

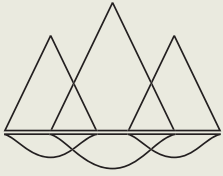
CERTIFICATE BY MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE

I James Ferguson, of 87 Were St, Brighton, certify that:

- a. I will attend the annual general meeting of the Association held on 29 October 2015
- b. The financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2015 will be submitted to the members of the Association at its annual general meeting.

Committee Member: James Ferguson
Dated: 12 October 2015





Federation of
Community Legal Centres
VICTORIA

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