

Annual Report **2016-17**

Access to justice for Victorians

Chairperson's declaration

In accordance with section 12N of the *Legal Aid Act 1978* (Vic) and provisions of the *Financial Management Act 1994* (Vic), I am pleased to present the Victoria Legal Aid Annual Report for the year ending 30 June 2017.



Andrew Guy

Chairperson

29 August 2017

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HIGHLIGHTS 2016-17

UNIQUE CLIENTS



90,649

unique clients*

↑ **4%**



93,697
services

↑ **7%**

**DUTY
LAWYERS**

3 YEAR COMPARISONS

In-house duty lawyer sessions **ALL** ↑ **8%**

In-house duty lawyer sessions relating to **CHILD PROTECTION** ↑ **5%**

In-house duty lawyer sessions relating to **FAMILY VIOLENCE BREACH OFFENCES** ↑ **32%**

In-house duty lawyer sessions relating to **SUMMARY CRIME** ↑ **12%**

NEW FAMILY ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

to assist families affected by family violence

LEGAL HELP TELEPHONE SERVICE



191,030
incoming calls,
up **2.5%**

We dealt with
125,512
calls

↑ **13%**

More Victorians are searching for legal help online



↑ **16%**

Over **2 million**
sessions on
our website

CONTINUED COMMITMENT

Private Practitioner **DUTY LAWYER SERVICES** ↑ **22%**

Private Practitioner **GRANTS OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE** ↑ **13%**

Community legal centre **GRANTS OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE** ↑ **28%**

GRANTS OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE

41,638
grants

↑ **9%**

3 YEAR COMPARISONS

ALL ↑ **21%**

SUMMARY CRIME ↑ **32%**

CHILD PROTECTION ↑ **23%**

INDEPENDENT CHILDREN'S LAWYERS ↑ **34%**

HOMELESS CLIENTS

↑ **22%**



4,356
clients

Our clients are among the most disadvantaged in Victoria



↑ **19%**

ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CLIENTS

5% or 4,102 clients

* A unique client is an individual who accessed one or more of our legal services. This does not include people for whom a client-lawyer relationship was not formed, who received information via the telephone, website or in-person at court or at a public counter, who participated in community legal education sessions, or clients from community legal centres.

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OUR YEAR



About Victoria Legal Aid
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About Victoria Legal Aid

Our vision

A fair and just society where rights and responsibilities are upheld.

Our purpose

To make a difference in the lives of our clients and for the community by:

- resolving and preventing legal problems
- encouraging a fair and transparent justice system.

Our values

Fairness

We stand up for what is fair. We aim to be fair when making choices about which people we help and how we help them.

Care

We care about our clients and the community in which we live. We look out for and take care of each other.

Courage

We act with courage backed by evidence about what is best for clients and the community. We act with courage to be the best we can be.

Our functions

Victoria Legal Aid is an independent statutory authority established under the *Legal Aid Act 1978 (Vic)*. We are funded by Commonwealth and Victorian governments but operate independently of government.

Our statutory objectives¹ are to:

- provide legal aid in the most effective, economic and efficient manner
- manage resources to make legal aid available at a reasonable cost to the community and on an equitable basis throughout the state
- provide to the community improved access to justice and legal remedies
- pursue innovative means of providing legal aid directed at minimising the need for individual legal services in the community.

In so doing, we may:²

- co-operate with social service or social welfare organisations
- undertake research
- make recommendations to reform the law
- carry out educational programs
- provide financial assistance to voluntary legal aid bodies.

In performing our functions, we must:³

- ensure that legal aid is provided in a manner which dispels fear and distrust
- establish any local offices considered appropriate and generally use best endeavours to make legal aid available throughout the state
- determine priorities around who gets legal aid and guidelines for the allocation of work between staff and private practitioners
- co-operate with other legal aid commissions and professional associations to facilitate the use of services provided by private legal practitioners
- make maximum use of services which private legal practitioners offer to provide on a voluntary basis
- endeavour to secure the services of interpreters, counsellors, welfare officers and other appropriate persons to assist people where necessary
- inform the public of the services we provide and the conditions on which those services are provided
- encourage and permit law students to participate on a voluntary basis and under professional supervision in the provision of legal aid
- manage the Legal Aid Fund.

Public benefit

We work to address the barriers that prevent people from accessing the justice system by participating in reforms and ensuring the actions of government agencies are held to account. We serve the broader community by providing information, legal advice and education with a focus on the prevention and early resolution of legal problems, and legal representation to those who need it the most.

1 Section 4 *Legal Aid Act 1978*

2 Section 6 *ibid*

3 Sections 7 and 8 *ibid*

Chairperson and Managing Director's message

On behalf of Victoria Legal Aid's Board, we are proud to present our 2016-17 Annual Report. The report describes the vital work we've done over the past year providing services to Victorians experiencing disadvantage.



'At its heart our purpose is to make a difference by ensuring that disadvantaged and vulnerable people can benefit from the same legal rights as everyone else.'
Our Strategy 2015-18

Busy assisting more people across the state

Helping people who are acutely stressed and vulnerable and who need the safety and protection of the law is the core of what we do. We know that many people will not be able to enforce their rights and will miss out on the help they need to get their lives back on track. So, we must be targeted and thoughtful in what we provide. This can be a difficult balancing act and we are assisted in this task by the goodwill and input of the many different stakeholders with whom we work.

The justice system continues to grow and there are increased activities and interventions across many parts of society that are driving people to enforce their rights and to seek the safety and protection of the law. We've had a good and productive year but we are just keeping up. The justice system is interconnected and matching investment in courts and legal aid is needed, alongside investments in law enforcement, corrections and child protection, if we are to solve entrenched and difficult problems in our community.

After a period of sharp contraction five years ago, legal aid services have now rebounded to record levels albeit with tougher rules and guidelines in place. In general terms, this means the people we are helping have more complex or serious issues. The straightforward client is a thing of the past. We were heartened by the validation of our services from the State Government's Access to Justice Review and the limited scope for efficiencies identified in that review.

We will keep innovating and we remain committed to preserving and improving eligibility over time so that more Victorians can access justice.

In 2016–17, we spent more and expanded our services accordingly. This was very pleasing but we drew on our own reserves to do so and preserving eligibility guidelines whilst adapting and adding new services was only possible because of our principled decision to go into deficit.

Our expenditure grew by \$19 million in response to strong demand growth in the areas of summary crime, family violence, child protection and indictable crime. This trend was not unexpected and it is set to continue. It represents the downstream impact of community safety initiatives adopted by government(s) over recent years, such as additional frontline police, increased family violence reporting, additional child protection workers and lower thresholds of risk for intervening in families. There have also been changes in the law that have increased the consequences of breaches of orders, for example more people are facing the prospect of going to jail or being remanded in custody, pending resolution of their case.

We provided lawyers to 90,649 people, an increase of four per cent. Our clients now present with a growing number of more serious and complex legal and non-legal issues, and therefore many need our most intensive service (a grant of legal assistance).

This year saw a nine per cent increase in grants of legal assistance following an 11 per cent increase the year before. Summary crime grants rose 13 per cent, child protection grants grew by six per cent while indictable crime grants increased by nine per cent. Our expenditure on services provided by the private profession grew by 13 per cent or \$9.5 million to \$80.7 million.

Our in-house duty lawyer services increased by six per cent led by growth in the areas of summary crime, up nine per cent, and family violence, up five per cent. However, we know many people are not getting the time they need or are missing out altogether. We remain concerned that duty lawyer services in particular are stretched and are working in unsustainable ways.

Our commitment to working with community legal centres continued, with \$27.4 million in funding distributed—slightly down on last year's expenditure of \$28.4 million—and we supported the continuation of our transformational grants program and our child protection and family violence to family law pilots. Community legal centres provided 28 per cent more grants of legal assistance this year.

We ended the year with 37 new roles at Victoria Legal Aid, predominantly in frontline roles to support our Legal Help telephone service, expansion in the Mallee region, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy through our law clerks and graduate programs and additional duty lawyers and legal administrative staff across Victoria.

Improving our services in line with Our Strategy 2015–18

We continued to make progress during the second year of Our Strategy 2015–18. We increased the ways people can contact us. Demand for our free Legal Help phone line remained strong and we answered 125,512 calls, an increase of 13 per cent compared to last year. We continued to talk to clients for longer periods in light of more complex legal and non-legal problems.

Our Independent Mental Health Advocacy service, funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, celebrated its first full year in operation, providing 17,630 services to people subject to compulsory treatment orders. The service continues to complement the legal advocacy provided by our Mental Health and Disability Legal team.

After extensive consultation, we have established an office in Mildura to help some of our most disadvantaged clients in the Mallee region. The service is our first health justice partnership. Working with Mildura's Sunraysia Community Health Services, we will be able to offer more integrated services for clients, recognising the strong interrelationship between legal and health needs.

As part of our commitment to deliver better services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, we employed three Aboriginal Community Engagement officers based in Melbourne, Mildura and Morwell. We have also seen a marked improvement in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment rates through our new law graduate program and clerkships. In March 2016, four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees made up 0.5 per cent of our workforce. By June 2017, this had increased to two per cent, or 15 employees.

Strengthening the delivery of access to justice in Victoria

We welcomed the State Government's response to recommendations in the Access to Justice review. The response affirmed that legal assistance services are a crucial 'safety net' for the most disadvantaged members of our community.

In our submission, we described our duty lawyers as being under crushing pressure. Positively, the government's response included significant extra funding that will provide welcome relief for current pressures in the system. Additional investment will also support the expansion and capability to provide more legal information through our website and our Legal Help telephone service. This will help more Victorians solve their problems and improve the current services. We look forward to working with government and our stakeholders to implement the recommendations.

'Better justice every day'—addressing the crisis in summary crime

In June, we released an independent review of our adult criminal law services in the Magistrates' Court. The review, by the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, painted a stark picture of this important public service. Put simply, there are unsustainably high levels of demand in the courts due to the cumulative impact of additional police, changes to sentencing and bail laws, increased drug use and increased family violence reporting. As a result, the Magistrates' Court jurisdiction is on the brink of crisis and, in some courts, the crisis is already occurring. The system is struggling with the current demand let alone the additional future pressure thousands of extra police will bring.

The report makes several recommendations about what is required to repair the system in order to create a space for 'better justice, every day'. We are working closely with police, the courts and government to come together and make a concerted effort to reform the system for clients, victims and those who work in the system. This will mean the community benefits—from a court system that functions more effectively and better supports public safety.

Working closely with our partners

We continued our commitment to consulting and working closely with our partners in the justice and community sectors. We have seen significant improvements in the family violence legal response in recent years and we were pleased to commence our new Family Advocacy and Support Services in Melbourne and Dandenong family law courts funded by the Commonwealth Government. We are heavily engaged in the implementation of the recommendations of Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence. We are pleased that there is a significant amount of new funding from the State Government to implement the recommendations and we look forward to carrying out this important work.

As part of our means test review, we released a series of options on how to best change our means test—to make it fairer, more accessible and easier to understand.

We also received a broad range of suggestions about how to improve our child protection services as part of our Child Protection Legal Aid Services Review. We are working through the feedback and expect to publish our future directions in September 2017.

This year, we helped bring attention to Centrelink's automated data-matching initiative (commonly referred to as 'robo-debt') as we saw a 21 per cent increase in the number of Centrelink matters we assisted. Our submission to the Senate Inquiry detailed our concerns about the fairness and appropriateness of how the automated data-matching system is operating and its impact on the most disadvantaged in our community.

Future outlook

While we are thankful for the additional investment announced by the Victorian Government throughout the year, we remain concerned about the current and growing demand on the justice system, particularly the adult criminal justice system. Much of the new investment supports important new services such as expansion of family violence duty lawyer services or system reforms in youth justice and serious criminal matters, rather than the underlying growth in the criminal justice system. The gap between growing community need and our capacity to meet this need continues to increase and, without additional government investment, greater operating deficits are forecast in the future.

Deficit financing of services is not sustainable and we will continue to work with stakeholders and the government on budget solutions to address the gap between legal need and the growing demand for assistance we are witnessing.

Operating within our existing eligibility guidelines, we expect to provide more grants of legal assistance and duty lawyer services in 2017-18 across the areas of summary crime, family violence and youth crime. However, we plan to add much needed resources and introduce other demand management strategies over the coming 12 months to provide workload relief to staff and lawyers on the frontline as we pursue system reform.

We were pleased to see funding increases from both the State and Commonwealth Governments to the community legal centre (CLC) sector. This vital investment, along with the continuation of some important service pilots, is critical to Australia's largest and most dynamic CLC sector.

Thank you

Even though our clients are increasingly disadvantaged, they show courage and determination. We are privileged to advocate on their behalf and give them a voice. We are continually inspired by the work of our staff, and private and CLC practitioners. We thank them for working tirelessly, and making an invaluable contribution to helping our clients, who suffer deep and persistent disadvantage. We are very grateful for their dedication and professionalism.

We thank the Attorney-General of Victoria, the Hon. Martin Pakula MP and the Attorney-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Senator George Brandis QC. We would also like to thank and acknowledge the Victoria Legal Aid Board of Directors, members of our Sector Innovation and Planning Committee and our community and justice sector partners.

We look forward to another busy, challenging and inspiring year. But most of all, we look forward to continuing the important work we do.



Andrew Guy

Chairperson



Bevan Warner

Managing Director

Understanding this report

Victoria Legal Aid participates in a variety of accountability mechanisms to raise awareness and engender community confidence in what is done in its name.

Our work is carried out in accordance with the *Legal Aid Act 1978* (Vic).

This annual report details our activities and performance against the themes and goals we have committed to in *Our Strategy 2015-18*, *Annual Business Plan 2016-17*, *National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services* and the *Victorian Budget 2016-17 Budget Paper 3*.

We must manage a fixed fund known as the Legal Aid Fund. Unlike the rising cost of welfare payments that grows as unemployment increases, the Legal Aid Fund is capped and choices must be made to prioritise and adjust eligibility for legal aid services where demand increases and resources are held constant.

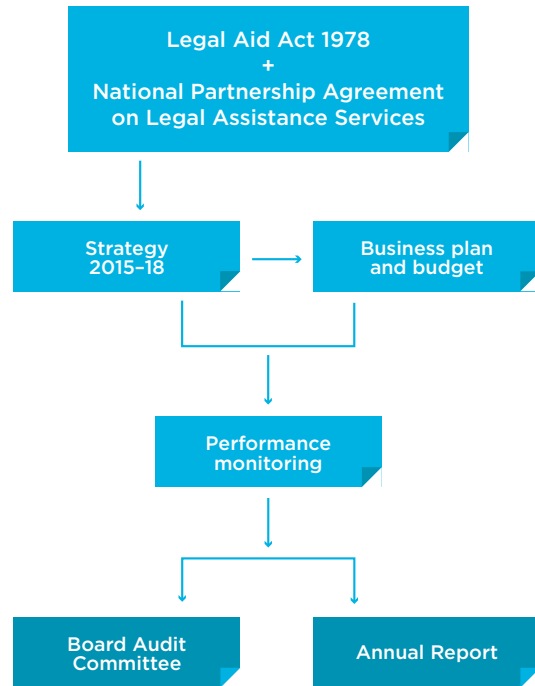
The Legal Aid Act sets out the legal framework which must be observed when delivering assistance. Under Section 49 of the Legal Aid Act we must give effect to any government agreements, including about priorities for legal aid. Section 12M of the Legal Aid Act provides that the Attorney-General may give directions. Policy guidance from government(s) about classes of persons who should be prioritised, and how legal assistance should be arranged, is imported to and reflected in Victoria Legal Aid's independent operations through the *National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services 2015-20*.

This means we must comply with legislation, observe the policy guidance provided by government(s), articulate clear strategies and allocate and align available resources to planned activity in the form of an annual budget and business plan.

This report reflects our commitment to public trust and accountability, providing financial details and an account of how we have used public funds. It reports against our statutory objectives, strategic directions, output measures and is part of our continuous improvement effort to be more transparent.

Strategic planning and business reporting

We use a range of methods to measure our performance against the targets and indicators outlined in our *Strategy 2015-18* and *Annual Business Plan 2016-17*.




Snapshot of key service performance

Clients	2016-17	2015-16	% change
Unique clients*	90,649	86,847	4
Calls dealt with by our Legal Help telephone service	125,512	111,504	13
Independent Mental Health Advocacy			
High intensity occasions of service (advocacy and self-advocacy)	6,349	3,548**	N/A
Low intensity occasions of service (information and referral)	11,281	6,251**	N/A
Preventative services			
Calls to our Legal Help telephone service	191,030	186,389	2.5
Community legal education participants	14,222	11,215	27
Community legal education sessions	334	392	-15
Sessions on our website	2,034,706	1,760,227	16
Early intervention services			
Legal advice, minor assistance and advocacy	41,725	40,770	2
Family Dispute Resolution Service			
Number of conferences	1,044	1,097	-5
Duty lawyer services			
In-house duty lawyer services	83,720	78,976	6
Private practitioner duty lawyer services	9,977	8,186	22
Grants of legal assistance			
Grants of legal assistance	41,638	38,345	9
In-house grants of legal assistance	11,226	11,456	-2
Private practitioner grants of legal assistance	29,735	26,360	13
Community legal centre grants of legal assistance	677	529	28

* Unique clients are individual clients who accessed one or more of our legal services. This does not include people for whom a client-lawyer relationship was not formed, who received information via telephone, website or in-person at court or at public counters, who participated in community legal education sessions, or clients from community legal centres.

** The Independent Mental Health Advocacy service was established 31 August 2015, therefore no variance comparing 12 months of operations is available.

OUR SERVICES



Our services

Preventative and early intervention services

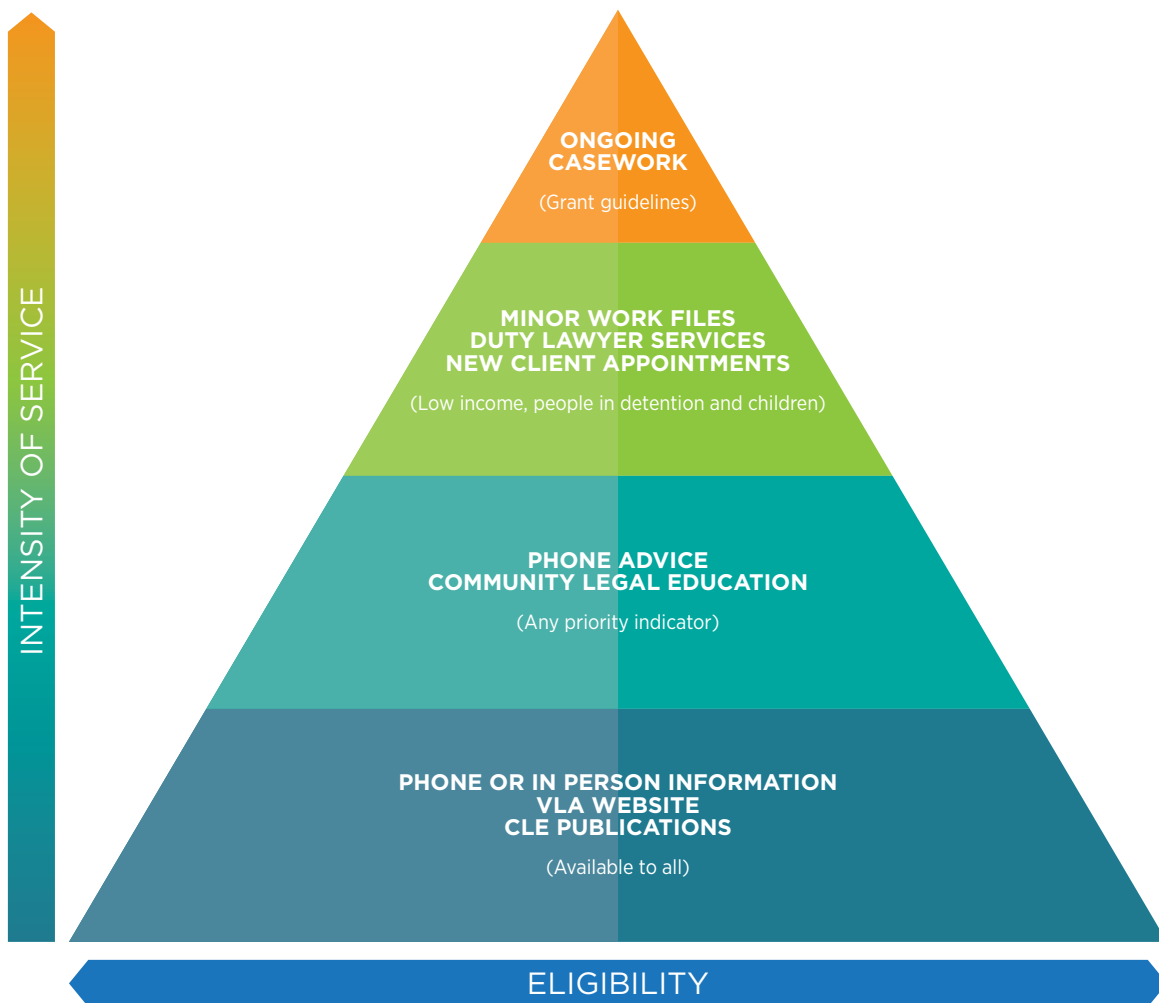
Family Dispute Resolution Service

Independent Mental Health Advocacy

Duty lawyer services

Grants of legal assistance

Eligibility for Victoria Legal Aid services varies depending on the service provided. As the service intensity increases, eligibility tightens, as demonstrated below.



Preventative and early intervention services

We provide preventative services to Victorians to help them understand their legal options at the earliest opportunity and who to contact if they need further assistance.

An informed person can act on their legal rights and can help prevent a legal problem from escalating, avoiding costly litigation at court.

Our preventative services are free and include:

- our Legal Help telephone service, the main entry point to legal aid services, which provides legal information, advice and referrals
- our face-to-face information and referral service, available at all Victoria Legal Aid offices
- online and printed information through our website and publications
- targeted community legal education to increase people’s knowledge of their legal rights and responsibilities and mitigate the escalation of legal disputes
- legal advice sessions over the phone or face-to-face at our offices or via outreach services
- minor assistance and advice (which includes advocacy services) when there is a need for some ongoing assistance and there is a tangible benefit for the client.

Legal Help telephone service

Our free Legal Help telephone service received 191,030 calls, an increase of 2.5 per cent. We dealt with 125,512 of these calls, 13 per cent more than last year.

The top five matters dealt with by our Legal Help telephone service were:

- Time spent with children
- Infringements (fine default)
- Property settlement (in family law)
- Family violence (application for intervention orders)
- The law in general.

During 2016-17, callers to Legal Help were reported as:

- 52 per cent female
- 47 per cent male
- one per cent unspecified.

During 2016-17, of the callers provided with legal information by Legal Help:

- 21 per cent disclosed having a disability
- 27 per cent identified being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

Call wait time and duration over three years

Year	Average call wait time	Average call duration
2016-17	8 minutes 42 seconds	9 minutes 47 seconds
2015-16	7 minutes 26 seconds	8 minutes
2014-15	2 minutes 59 seconds	6 minutes 49 seconds

Demand for help over the phone is increasing. We recognise we need to respond to the increasing demand by providing the community with a modernised, easy to access service. See page 37 for more details on how we are working towards a bigger, modernised Legal Help telephone service.

Our Legal Help team answered more calls this year and spoke to the people they were advising for longer, an average of nine minutes and 47 seconds. The longer call lengths can be attributed to the increase in more intensive matters, meaning our staff took the time to explain more complex and difficult issues. While wait times for our Legal Help service increased, we continued to offer a call-back system so that people did not have to wait in the queue.



Triage of clients for telephone services only

We triage people seeking assistance at Legal Help and our regional offices to ensure we reach the people who most need assistance and link them up with the most appropriate help.

Client triage pathway	Legal Help number of matters	Suburban and regional offices number of matters	Number of matters (total)
Legal information*	45,389	316	45,705
Legal advice**	10,891	0***	10,891
Referral only	28,629	15,262	43,891
Total	84,909	15,578	100,487

* This is a subset of information services counted in 'Community legal education and information services'.

** This is a subset of advice services counted in 'Legal advice and minor assistance services'.

*** Our suburban and regional offices refer requests for advice to our Legal Help service (counted in 'Referral to another Victoria Legal Aid service') or make a follow-up advice appointment (counted in 'Legal advice and minor services').

Referrals*	Legal Help	Suburban and regional offices	Total
Referral to another Victoria Legal Aid service	31,395	10,968	42,363
Referral to an external service	62,755	7,499	70,254
Total	94,150	18,467	112,617

* Some calls may result in more than one matter or referral, depending upon the client's circumstances and needs.

Client access and referrals

We make appropriate referrals to other services (non-legal as well as legal) that may be relevant to a client's needs. We also refer clients to external agencies when we are unable to help, for example, if we have a conflict of interest or we cannot help because of the nature of the matter.

We referred 86,158 matters to appropriate external agencies. The top five referrals were to:

- Private practitioners
- Generalist community legal centres
- Law Institute of Victoria referral service
- Specialist community legal centres
- Courts.

Website

We had 2,034,706 sessions on our website (up 16 per cent). A session is a group of interactions that take place on a website within a given time frame. A session can include multiple page

views. The top five 'Find legal answers' topics were:

- Writing a character reference (down three per cent)
- Criminal records (up 18 per cent)
- Drug possession (up 14 per cent)
- Driving and accidents (up 29 per cent)
- Age of consent (up 24 per cent).

Our website also facilitated 204,601 online referrals, up 11 per cent. The top five online referrals to other agencies were to:

- The Law Handbook (up 41 per cent)
- Federal Circuit Court of Australia—How do I apply for a divorce (no comparison, new to website)
- Federation of Community Legal Centres—Find a CLC (up 11 per cent)
- Federal Circuit Court of Australia—Forms and Fees (up 512 per cent)
- Magistrates' Court of Victoria—Application of personal safety intervention order (up 63 per cent).

As at June 30 2017, we had 3,840 likes on Facebook, an increase of 1,764 per cent. The most engaging post was about the Centrelink automated debt recovery system, posted on 8 February 2017. This post had a reach of 65,750 users and a total of 1,430 engagements (including 712 reactions, 206 comments and 512 shares). There were also 3,325 clicks on the post, including 515 on the link to our website content on 'Get help with Centrelink's automated debts'. During its promotion, the 'Get help with Centrelink's automated debts' page received 934 views, 28 per cent of the total for the year 2016-17.

Community legal education and publications

Young people are a focus for our education programs, and we worked in mainstream and special schools to deliver preventative education about sexting, consent and age of

consent. Staff are often asked about what consent means in practice and whether 'a kiss could be seen as an assault' or 'how much a person has to drink before they can no longer give consent'. These questions help us guide young people through tricky social and legal territory. Although the number of community legal education sessions were down we had larger groups and reached 27 per cent or 3,007 more people.

We distributed 320,946 publications, up 10 per cent. Working with the Office of the Public Advocate we distributed 57,793 copies of *Take control*—a publication about making powers of attorney and guardianship. Our popular *Am I old enough?* booklet was out-of-stock for the first three months of the financial year, however we distributed 31,457 units by the end of the year. Our *Sex, young people and the law* wallet card distribution was 54,628 units with our *Sexting* card being the most popular at 16,974 units being distributed.

Performance against Victorian Government targets*

Major output/deliverable performance measures	2015-16 actual	2016-17 target	2016-17 actual	% change on 2016-17 target
Community legal education and information services**	126,284	135,000-140,000	129,260	- 4
Legal advice and minor assistance for clients	40,770	42,000	41,725	- 1

* The Victorian Budget sets a number of output performance measures and targets for departments and their agencies and statutory bodies in *Budget Paper 3*.

** This does not include publications and website sessions.

The community legal education and information services is comprised of 334 community legal education sessions and 128,926 information services. Although the number of community legal education sessions were down, we reached 27 per cent (or 3,007) more people.

As we explain on page 37, our Legal Help telephone platform experienced some technical difficulties throughout the year. This limited the number of information sessions offered by our Legal Help team. Additionally, there has been an increase in the time spent on the phone (p. 16). This reflects the increase in more time intensive advice services being offered, requiring Legal Help to spend more time on the phone to discuss difficult issues.

The variance for legal advice and minor assistance for clients is due to increases in demand for other more intensive services, such as duty lawyer services and casework under grants of legal assistance (p. 22-23). This year, we reduced our target for legal advice to prioritise these other services.

Family Dispute Resolution Service

We help parents and other adult family members involved in family separation resolve their family disputes about:

- parenting arrangements
- division of property (where parents are in dispute about children's issues and have superannuation or a home mortgage)
- partner maintenance
- adult child maintenance
- international parental child abduction.

Our Family Dispute Resolution Service (FDRS) involves a case manager assessing whether family dispute resolution is appropriate in each case, given factors such as power imbalance and any history of family violence. This assessment considers, for example, practical safety issues and a parent's capacity to negotiate. A family dispute resolution practitioner (a chairperson) conducts a conference to help family members discuss their dispute and make decisions that are in the best interests of the children.

These conferences typically deal with high conflict cases that would usually not be mediated in the community but are conferenced because of the additional safety practices we deploy. The availability of these conferences is highly valued by the Family Courts who often refer parties to us.

Each person usually has a lawyer to help them make decisions and to provide legal advice. Clients may have to pay for their own lawyer's fees if they do not have a grant of legal assistance. In some cases a client can be referred to a lawyer from the Family Law Legal Service. Most conferences occur at an early stage in family law matters, avoiding the need to go to court. However, in appropriate matters, conferences occur during court proceedings to help settle the dispute before a final hearing.

'We provided 1,044 family dispute resolution conferences (down by five per cent) with a settlement rate of 83 per cent'

Family dispute resolution services over three years

Year	Number of conferences	Settlement rate
2016-17	1,044	83%
2015-16	1,097	83%
2014-15	1,087	86%

We provided 1,044 family dispute resolution conferences (down by five per cent) with a settlement rate of 83 per cent. The settlement rate is based on settlement of some or all issues in a dispute on an interim or ongoing basis.

The slight decline in conference numbers for 2016-17 can be attributed to five per cent fewer grants of legal assistance converting to a conference, compared with the previous year. Reasons for a grant of legal assistance not proceeding to a conference include:

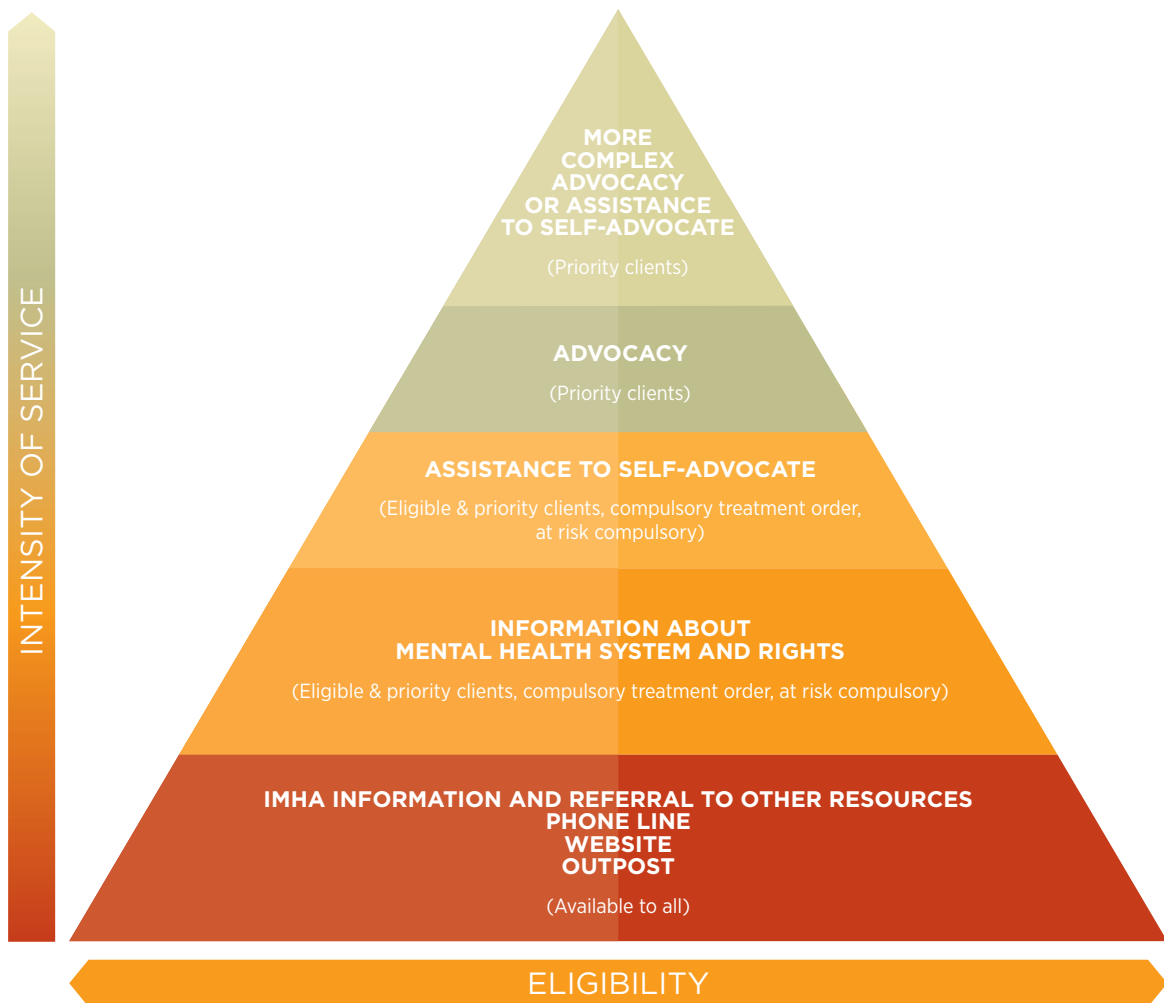
- an invited party refuses to participate in the process
- a party or parties withdrawing from the process
- the case manager assessing a matter as inappropriate for mediation.

Of the cases in which both parties have agreed to participate in the FDRS process at the outset, 66 per cent of cases proceeded to conference, which was the same percentage as last year.

Independent Mental Health Advocacy

The Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) program, which is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and delivered by us, has a vision of promoting and supporting the human rights of people experiencing compulsory treatment in mental health care. The service is free, independent of mental health legal services and has an advisory group of people who have lived experience of mental health issues, *Speaking From Experience*. IMHA is staffed by a team of advocates, a senior consumer consultant and manager, and the service works with consumers, support people, mental health services and the mental health system to embed supported decision making and recovery-orientated service delivery.

Advocates engage in representational (or instructed) advocacy, and by taking their instructions from consumers, ensure that people are supported to exercise their rights, speak for themselves and have someone ‘on their side’ who can represent their views, preferences and concerns to service providers and other relevant stakeholders. Ultimately, IMHA always aims to support people to become empowered with self-advocacy skills so that they can advocate for themselves in the future. Advocates also provide people with information about their rights and the mental health system and make referrals to legal, health and social welfare services. The service complements the legal advocacy provided by our Mental Health and Disability Legal team to the people facing compulsory mental health treatment before the Mental Health Tribunal.



Independent Mental Health Advocacy	2016–17	2015–16	% change
High intensity occasions of service (advocacy and self-advocacy)	6,349	3,548**	N/A
Low intensity occasions of service (information and referral)	11,281	6,251**	N/A

** The Independent Mental Health Advocacy was established 31 August 2015, therefore no variance comparing 12 months of operations is available.



'IMHA really helped me feel listened to.'

Giving clients a voice in treatment planning—an IMHA case study

Consumer issues:

- On an Inpatient Treatment Order and subject to a Mental Health Tribunal (MHT) order permitting twelve Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) sessions.
- Being physically restrained for ECT causing her significant distress and retriggering memories of prior traumatic experiences.
- Received six ECT treatments—wanted these to cease immediately, citing significant side effects and no net therapeutic benefit due to compounding previous trauma.
- Felt daunted during treating team meetings and would hence often not offer her own perspective about treatment options.
- Did not want to be discharged to her home directly from hospital, preferring a more supportive environment.

Service provided:

- *Provided information and coaching to self-advocate:* Information regarding when ECT can be given, and options available if she does not agree with the MHT decision. Information regarding criteria for compulsory treatment, rights to participate in decision making, Advance Statements and information about Prevention and Recovery Care (PARCs) Centres.
- *Referral:* Information about the right to seek a second opinion and options of referral to Second Psychiatric Opinion Service and our own Mental Health and Disability Law team.
- *Representational advocacy:* IMHA advocate initiated and joined a treating team meeting with the consumer to provide a supported opportunity for her to discuss her concerns about ECT, discharge preferences and to request the clinical team undertake an assessment of her capacity to consent to ECT.

Outcomes:

ECT ceased two days after the meeting, discharge to PARCs five days after the meeting, consumer commenced drafting an Advance Statement to inform future treatment and is now actively participating in her treatment planning and reporting feeling heard by her treating team.

'IMHA really helped me feel listened to.'

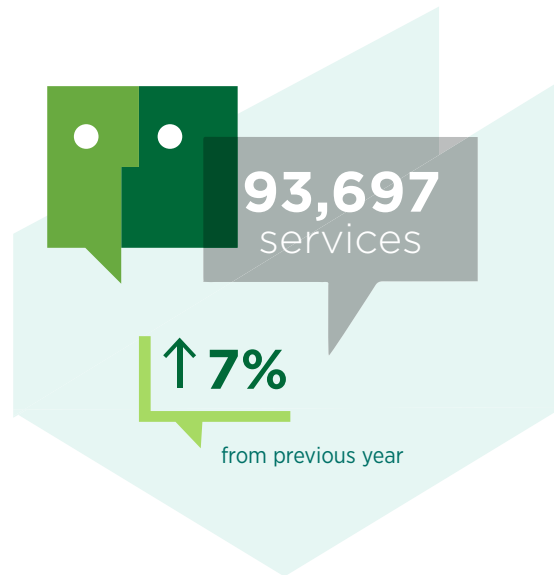
Duty lawyer services

Our lawyers are on ‘duty’ at many courts and tribunals across Victoria to help people who are at court for a hearing, but do not have their own lawyer.

Our duty lawyers provide free legal information, advice and representation to clients. Duty lawyers do not represent everyone. We prioritise serious cases, including people who are in custody or at risk of going into custody and people who need intensive support.

We provide duty lawyer services through our legal programs:

- Criminal Law program (p. 146)—Magistrates’ Court summary crime duty lawyer services and Children’s Court crime duty lawyer services
- Family, Youth and Children’s Law program (p. 148)—Children’s Court (Family Division), Magistrates’ Court (for family violence, and in some cases personal safety, intervention order matters) and Commonwealth Family Law Courts
- Civil Justice program (p. 144)—Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Human Rights and Residential Tenancies Divisions), Mental Health Tribunal, Administrative Appeals Tribunal, Magistrates’ Court (Special Circumstances List) and Federal Circuit Court (migration directions).



Performance against Victorian Government targets*

Major output/deliverable performance measures	2015-16 actual	2016-17 target	2016-17 actual	% change on 2016-17 target
Duty lawyer services	87,162	83,000-85,000	93,697	10

* The Victorian Budget sets a number of output performance measures and targets for departments and their agencies and statutory bodies in *Budget Paper 3*.

We experienced a significant increase in demand for duty lawyer services. This demand is driven largely in summary crime, family violence and youth crime areas. The summary crime demand can be attributed to an increase in police initiations, resulting from the introduction of 1,156 additional police, announced in the 2014-15 State Government budget. See page 40 for more details about the summary crime evaluation report, which details what is required to repair the system to create a space for ‘better justice, every day’.

Due to important community safety initiatives, there has been an increase in demand for in-court duty lawyer services relating to family violence and youth crime.

Grants of legal assistance

We provide grants of legal assistance to people who cannot afford a lawyer, who meet our eligibility criteria and who are experiencing a legal problem that we can help with. A grant of legal assistance can enable a lawyer to:

- give legal advice
- help resolve matters in dispute
- prepare legal documents
- represent a client in court.

We provide grants for certain criminal, family and civil law matters. We determine whether an applicant is eligible for a grant of legal assistance based on:

- their financial situation
- the type of legal problem they have
- how successful they are likely to be in their case.

Clients with a grant of legal assistance can be helped by a Victoria Legal Aid lawyer or a lawyer on one of our panels, including private practitioners and in some instances lawyers from community legal centres.



Performance against Victorian Government targets*

Major output/deliverable performance measures	2015-16 actual	2016-17 target	2016-17 actual	% change on 2016-17 target
Grants of legal assistance	38,345	35,000	41,638	19
Per cent of applications for legal aid processed within 15 days	94 per cent	95 per cent	95 per cent	0

* The Victorian Budget sets a number of output performance measures and targets for departments and their agencies and statutory bodies in *Budget Paper 3*.

We experienced an unprecedented demand for our most intensive form of service, grants of legal assistance. As with our duty lawyer services, the demand is highest in summary crime. In 2016-17, there were 16,502 summary crime grants of legal assistance, an increase of 1,911 grants or 13 per cent. This growth can be attributed to several factors, including but not limited to, higher crime rates, increases in frontline police numbers, increases in breaches of family violence intervention orders and family violence matters drawing harsher penalties at court requiring more intensive form of services (grants of legal assistance).

We are also experiencing the flow-on effects of the additional child protection workers and legislative changes introduced in the previous financial year. There was a six per cent increase in the number of child protection grants of legal assistance and 11 per cent increase in Independent Children’s Lawyers grants of legal assistance. We are in the process of finalising a review of our Child Protection Legal Aid Services Review and aim to begin implementation of the recommendations in the next financial year. See page 34 for more details.

Sub-program performance report

For additional program information, including program expenditure, client demographics, grants of legal assistance and number of duty lawyer services please see pages 144-150.

OUR CLIENTS



Our clients
What our clients had to say about us

During 2016-17, we helped 90,649 unique[^] clients, including clients seen by a private practitioner duty lawyer. Unique clients are individual clients who accessed one or more of Victoria Legal Aid’s legal services. This does not include people for whom a client-lawyer relationship was not formed, who received telephone, website or in-person information at court or at public

counters, or participated in community legal education—we do not create an individual client record for these people. Neither does this client count include people assisted by our new Independent Mental Health Advocacy service.



These figures do not include clients seen by a private practitioner duty lawyer.

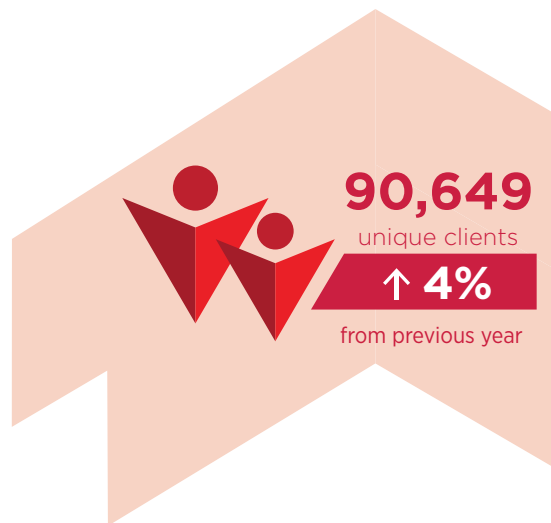
[^] Unique clients are individual clients who accessed one or more of our legal services. This does not include people for whom a client-lawyer relationship was not formed, who received information via telephone, website or in-person at court or at public counters, who participated in community legal education sessions, or clients from community legal centres.

* Examples include children and young people, people experiencing homelessness, people in custody and immigration detention, and psychiatric patients.

** This is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics definition of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It includes people who speak a language other than English at home and people who were born in a non-English speaking country.

We are committed to assisting clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and are sensitive to their needs and requirements. Our free Legal Help telephone service is staffed by bilingual lawyers which enables us to provide direct assistance in 23 languages other than English without the need for a third-party interpreter. Legal Help has a strong focus to continue and expand the bilingual services. As evidenced by the most recent census data, we are servicing a growing culturally and linguistically diverse community and our service should be responsive to this need. Some other benefits of the introduction of bilingual lawyers include community engagement, building trust with clients and reaching out to wider sections of the community.

Our regional and remote offices play a pivotal role within the community and their commitment to helping Victorians.



Performance against Victorian Government targets*

Major output/deliverable performance measures	2015-16 actual	2016-17 target	2016-17 actual	% change on 2016-17 target
Clients who accessed one or more of our legal services	86,847	84,000	90,649	8

* The Victorian Budget sets a number of output performance measures and targets for departments and their agencies and statutory bodies in *Budget Paper 3*.

The variance reflects the increase in clients accessing duty lawyer services and grants of legal assistance (p. 22-23).

Our offices

We have 15 offices in metropolitan and regional Victoria. People living in regional and remote communities can feel isolated and find it difficult in accessing legal assistance. Therefore, our regional offices play a vital role in servicing the community, providing professional and timely advice to those living in rural and remote parts of Victoria.

Melbourne

570 Bourke Street (head office)
Melbourne VIC 3000

Suburban

Broadmeadows—North western office
Dandenong—Westernport office
Frankston—Peninsula office
Ringwood—Outer eastern office
Sunshine—Western suburbs office

Regional

Bairnsdale—Gippsland regional office
Ballarat—Central highlands regional office
Bendigo—Loddon-campaspe regional office
Geelong—Barwon regional office
Horsham—Wimmera regional office
Morwell—Gippsland regional office
Mildura—Mallee regional office (from 17 August 2017)
Shepparton—Goulburn regional office
Warrnambool—South Coast office

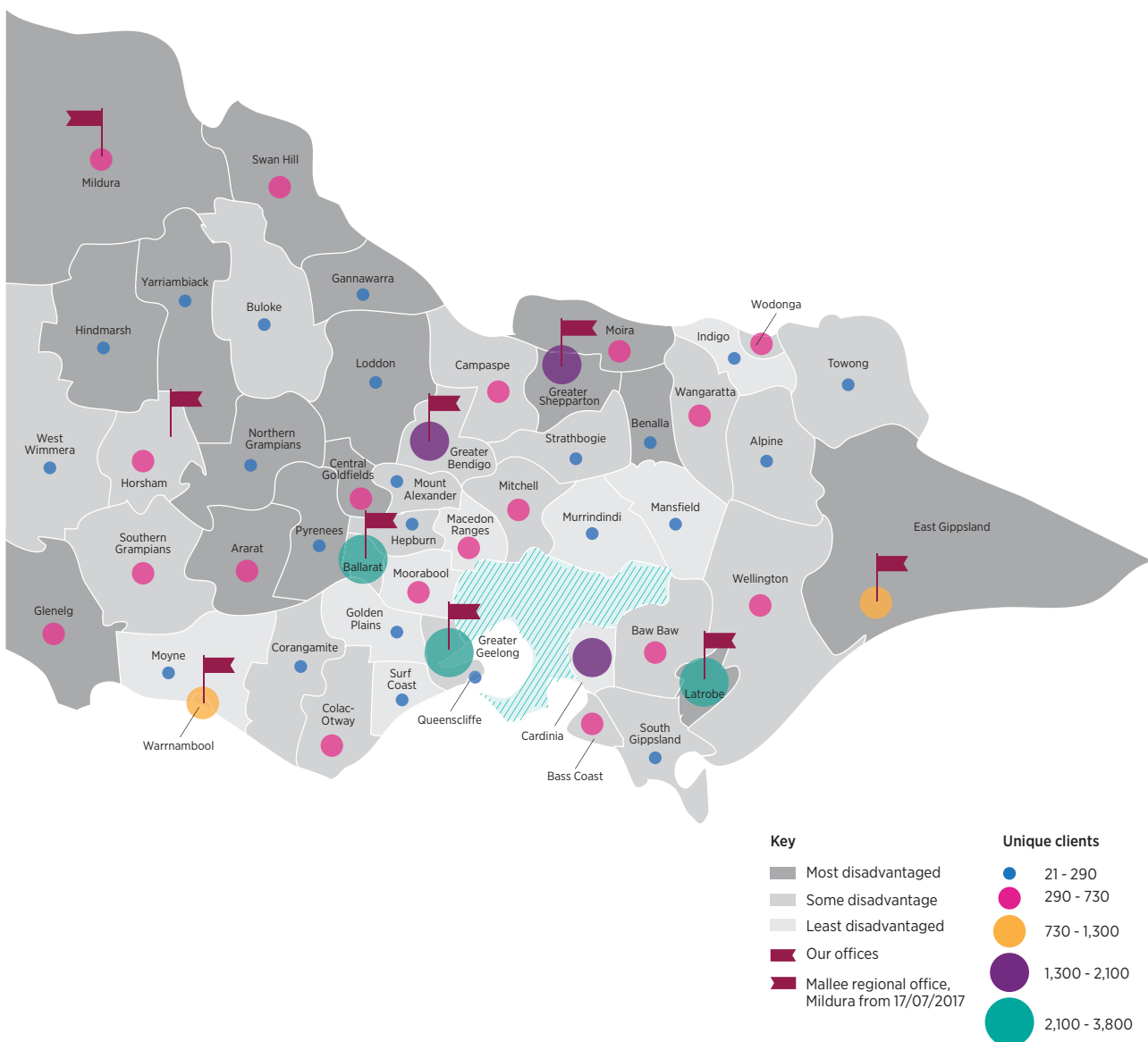
Our clients across Victoria

Our clients are among the most disadvantaged people in Victoria. The following maps indicate the number of unique clients we helped in each local government area during 2016-17.

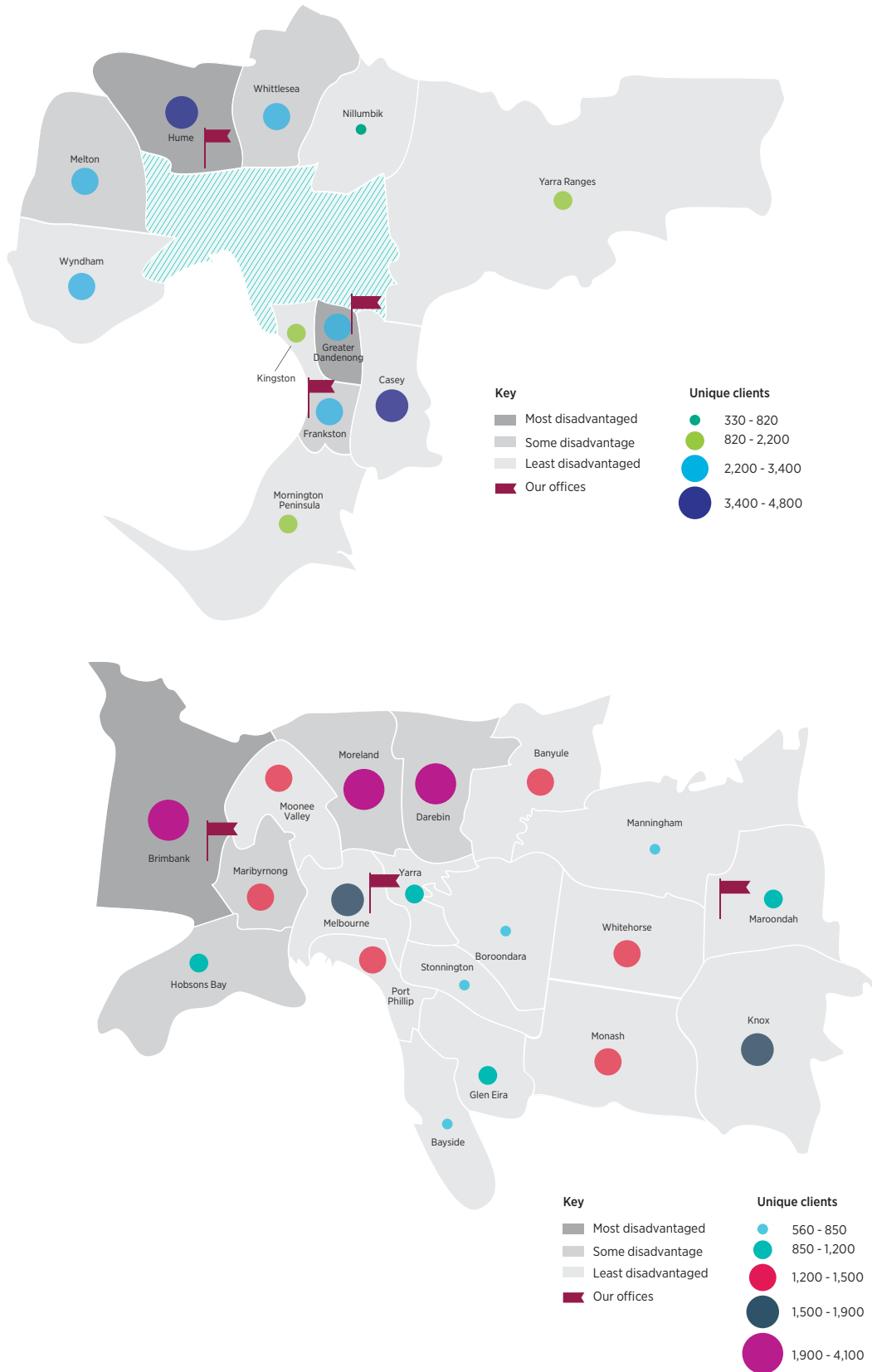
Client locations are based on the primary address they nominate. This may include prisons, hospitals, remand centres and temporary accommodation facilities.

The maps also show the relative socio-economic disadvantage of each area, using the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2011 Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage. The Australian Bureau of Statistics broadly defines relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in terms of 'people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society'. Clients assisted by a private practitioner duty lawyer are not included in the following maps.

Regional and rural Victoria



Metropolitan Melbourne



What our clients had to say about us

In February and March 2017, we conducted a client survey to help us better understand our clients' experience and their expectations of our service. The survey, a blend of online or telephone questionnaires, was a random sample of 1,001 clients who had either used our Legal Help telephone service or who had received either a grant of aid, legal advice or a duty lawyer service during 2016-17.

Survey respondents were representative of almost all service areas and across all programs (Criminal, Family, Youth and Children's Law, Civil). We also conducted an additional 20 in-depth interviews with clients to find out more about their experience of our services.

Key findings

- 70 per cent of clients were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with our services
- 86 per cent of clients thought it was easy to contact us
- 81 per cent of clients would recommend our services to others

Clients were generally satisfied with the performance of their lawyer, with:

- 82 per cent agreeing that their lawyer/advisor listened to them
- 76 per cent agreeing their lawyer helped them understand their legal situation.

This high satisfaction of lawyer performance was irrespective of whether the lawyer was employed by Victoria Legal Aid, or if the lawyer was a private practitioner or community legal centre lawyer undertaking legal aid work.

Many clients also reported emotional benefits after they received our assistance, with lower self-reported levels of stress, depression and anger compared with their emotional state before receiving help from legal aid. Following their service, 86 per cent of clients also agreed they would know where to go in future to get legal help.

While most clients were satisfied, levels of dissatisfaction with the service have increased over the last few years from 10 per cent of clients dissatisfied in 2011 to 19 per cent in 2017. The most common suggestion for improvement by clients across all programs was more time, funding and resources for Victoria Legal Aid. In-depth interviews also revealed some clients were frustrated with accessing legal assistance, due to restrictions on eligibility and limits on the types of legal matters for which they could receive assistance. Using the feedback, we need to be more effective in how we manage clients' expectations in how we may be able to help (for example, through effective referrals) or better explain why we cannot help. Work continues with developing actions in response to these results.

Best part of dealing with Legal Aid? They listen to you and doesn't matter what you say they have an answer for you. Anything you're worried about and I can just call her up and talk to her and she'll put my mind at ease. And things just seem to be organised. When she calls me she has everything in front of her ready to go. Just get the impression she's organised.

Casework client

I was really scared and depressed. The person doing the assessment was nice. Polite, efficient when she asked the questions. However, this did not really matter. They could not give me help. It was because of eligibility, but I did not know why.

Duty Lawyer client

It was really busy. There was a long wait to see the Duty Lawyer. They just have too many cases.

Duty Lawyer client

OUR PERFORMANCE



Snapshot of financial performance
National Partnership Agreement
Reporting against our statutory objectives
Reporting against our strategic directions
Working together better
Making a difference through our advocacy and law reform
Our partnerships

Snapshot of financial performance

We finished the year with a \$9.9 million deficit from transactions, our day-to-day business. The result is an \$11.5 million decrease on our prior year surplus of \$1.5 million, and reflects a significant growth in operating expenditure which has resulted from escalating demand for our services.

The comprehensive deficit was \$10.9 million compared to a \$2.7 million surplus last year.

The year-end cash balance was \$44.6 million.

The 2016-17 financial statements record:

- Victorian Government income of \$94.7 million
- Commonwealth Government income of \$50.4 million
- Public Purpose Fund income of \$31.1 million
- \$80.7 million spent on case-related private practitioner payments
- \$16.8 million allocated as direct funding provided to community legal centres with a further \$10.5 million allocated as indirect funding, a total of \$27.4 million funding
- a comprehensive deficit of \$10.9 million.

See 'Our Finances' (p. 84) for the financial year in review and financial statements, including the Auditor-General's Report.

Financial summary	2016-17 \$000	2015-16 \$000	% change
Income from government	145,136	140,744	3
Income from the Public Purpose Fund	31,162	28,313	10
Total income from transactions	181,352	173,877	4
Total expenses from transactions	(191,297)	(172,337)	11
Net result from transactions	(9,945)	1,540	-746
Net result for the period	(10,917)	2,744	-498
Net cash flow from operating activities	(2,129)	9,676	-122
Cash at 30 June	44,619	48,703	-8
Total assets	84,016	86,798	-3
Total liabilities	50,633	42,498	19
Total equity	33,383	44,300	-25

Funding that we distribute (\$)*	2016-17 \$000	2015-16 \$000
Community legal centres	15,844	15,776
Community legal centres, project funds	1,003	2,945

* This does not include Commonwealth payments to community legal centres. The combined total State and Commonwealth funds to community legal centres administered by Victoria Legal Aid amounts to \$27.4 million.

National Partnership Agreement

A five-year National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services commenced on 1 July 2015 and is due to expire on 30 June 2020. The 2015-20 NPALAS provides comprehensive policy guidance and includes state-wide performance indicators for legal aid commissions and community legal centres, and a requirement for state-wide sector planning. Our Sector Innovation and Planning Committee (SIPC) alongside services delivered by our Services and Innovation team have made significant progress in this area. See page 66 for more details on SIPC.

Under the benchmark for legal aid commissions and community legal centres, 95 per cent of representation services are to be delivered to people experiencing financial disadvantage. Since the commencement of 2015-20 NPALAS, we have consistently met and exceeded this target, as our services are means tested.

Reporting against our statutory objectives

Victoria Legal Aid is an independent statutory authority established under the *Legal Aid Act 1978* (Vic). We are funded by the Commonwealth and Victorian governments but operate independently of government.

As an independent statutory authority, we are set up to meet the following statutory objectives:

Provide to the community improved access to justice and legal remedies

Measure	Outcome
132,000 calls answered by Legal Help	125,512 calls were answered by Legal Help. The performance variance is attributed to issues with the telephone software, longer call length due to more intensive form of services and staff training time required by recent legislative changes. More information on page 16.
Five per cent increase in priority clients (unique) accessing grants of aid and duty lawyer services as a percentage of total clients by service type.	<p>Unique clients</p> <p>Grants of legal assistance: seven per cent increase Duty lawyer services: four per cent increase</p> <p>Priority clients</p> <p>Grants of legal assistance: nine per cent increase Duty lawyer services: five per cent increase The client numbers do not include services delivered by private practitioner duty lawyer scheme.</p>
>80 per cent overall satisfaction rating in client survey.	70 per cent of clients surveyed expressed satisfaction with services received. Further analysis of the results, including drivers of dissatisfaction, is being undertaken. Recommendations for action in response to survey results will be developed and implemented in the next financial year. See page 29 for more information on the client satisfaction survey.
<p>Victoria Legal Aid has set a target of >50 per cent of service improvements identified through complaint-handling being implemented within six weeks.</p> <p>A service improvement is an action taken to address the underlying cause of a complaint with the aim of continuously improving the quality of our services.</p>	<p>54 per cent of service improvements, which had a six-week implementation date expiring within reporting period, were implemented within six weeks or less.</p> <p>An example of a service improvement in 2016-17 was a change in process in response to a privacy complaint to ensure outgoing grants correspondence defaulted to the lawyer's address if it was returned to sender. This service improvement helps to avoid breaches of privacy and ensures clients get notice of important decisions about their legal aid funding. See page 77 for more information on complaints.</p>

Provide legal aid in the most effective, economic and efficient manner

Measure	Outcome
87,630 unique clients helped.	90,649 unique clients helped, this includes clients seen by a private practitioner duty lawyer (p. 25).
Victoria Legal Aid is within +/- five per cent of targets against key service types.	Target: 318,713, Performance: 305,986. The negative four per cent variation is due to a reduction in number of information services delivered across the organisation.
Percentage of 200 private practitioner files checked with a satisfactory rating.	<p>11 per cent of practitioners, from two panels (family law and summary crime) had files checked.</p> <p>51.5 per cent of practitioner files had a satisfaction rating. Many had minor problems relating to record keeping. The most common problems relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not having an up-to-date understanding of legal aid obligations and processes • Not understanding guidelines for legal assistance • Not providing clients with sufficient information to enable them to effectively participate in the proceedings, make informed decisions and provide instructions.

Manage resources to make legal aid available at a reasonable cost to the community and on an equitable basis throughout the state

Measure	Outcome
30 per cent of unique clients residing in regional and rural areas.	29 per cent unique clients reported to reside in regional and rural areas. However, nine per cent of our unique client location is unknown.
Progress of sector planning, including development of legal needs model.	A broad range of stakeholders have been consulted on our approach to sector planning, including staff from Victoria Legal Aid, Federation of Community Legal Centres, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria, Department of Justice and Regulation, Legal Aid NSW, private practitioners and the Sector Innovation and Planning Committee. A prototype tool for exploring legal need and service coverage in Victoria will be available online for testing with the sector late 2017.

The Board also receives comparative data on service delivery comparing Victoria Legal Aid to other legal aid commissions.

Pursue innovative means of providing legal aid directed at minimising the need for individual legal services in the community.

Measure	Outcome
>80 per cent of community legal education sessions targeted to vulnerable client groups or organisations/individuals that work with vulnerable groups (such as children and young people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability and Indigenous people).	Of the 334 community legal education sessions, 86 per cent, or 287, were targeted to vulnerable client groups or organisations that work with vulnerable groups. See page 35 for more information on how we are working with schools in this space.
30 per cent increase in website sessions for <i>Find legal answers</i> .	While there was an increase of 19 per cent, which is well above the Victorian population increase rate, we did not achieve the target of 30 per cent. We aim to identify additional opportunities for increasing a more tailored access to our website in the next financial year.

Reporting against our strategic directions

We have to make choices based on evidence about what works. In developing our *Strategy 2015–18*, we applied our values of care, fairness and courage to guide our choices about who to prioritise for help and how to best help them.

Our three strategic directions guide us in working with our partners in the justice and community sector to improve the way Victorians access justice. They help us to deliver the most appropriate legal services at the right time, based on client needs, with the funds available to us.

Strategic direction: Invest in timely intervention, especially for children and young people

Helping people as soon as they need it rather than when their lives have reached a crisis point benefits clients and the community. For children and young people in particular, timely intervention can make a real difference in their lives and minimise their risk of becoming future legal aid clients. We want to see fewer children in the justice system because we know that in the long term that will lead to fewer adults in trouble with the law.

Outcomes against our Business Plan

A youth crime strategy that promotes timely intervention and improves service delivery for at risk young people

In 2016 a Youth Crime Service Review was carried out. The report was timely given events of the past year where there has been a strong community focus on youth crime and conditions in youth detention centres, leading to changes to the youth justice system and the introduction of new legislation.

The review is being used to develop a youth crime strategy. Due for development in 2016–17, the Strategy was delayed due to the external issues in the youth crime environment.

In 2017–18, we will finalise and implement our youth crime strategy relying on the findings of the service review, and support the recent changes in the justice system to respond to youth crime, which will provide increased options for earlier intervention and where appropriate more intensive, therapeutic responses to address the underlying causes of youth offending. The Strategy will also consider our statutory obligations as per *Legal Aid Act 1978* (Vic), the external policy environment and legislative changes.

Managed through our Criminal Law Program.

More legally aided young people diverted away from the criminal justice system through access to diversion

We support youth diversion as an effective way of holding young offenders to account for their actions and breaking the cycle of crime. The greater use of diversion in the Children's Court and the commencement of the *Bail Amendment Act 2016* (Vic) is enabling positive change for some young offenders.

In 2016–17, more legally aided young people accessed diversion with 11 per cent of youth crime grants of legal assistance resulting in diversion (nine per cent last year) and six per cent of youth crime duty lawyer sessions resulting in diversion (four per cent last year).

The 2016–17 State Government announced funding to deliver a state-wide youth diversion program, following the successful completion of a 12-month pilot. We were invited to be members of the Children's Court Youth Diversion (CCYD) steering committee and working group to assist in the rollout of the program. The CCYD ensures consistent and equitable access to diversion for young Victorians early in their contact with the Children's Court.

Managed through our Criminal Law Program.

A Child Protection Legal Aid Services Review outlining a new approach to legal services designed and targeted to provide more effective and timely support for children and families

Our Child Protection Legal Aid Services Review is about ensuring that children, young people and parents benefit from services that are targeted, timely and help reduce the need for future assistance.

In October 2016, we invited submissions on our consultation and options paper. This paper outlined options to improve our services and drew on consultations with over 300 stakeholders on issues affecting child protection legal services.

The submissions contained a great deal of useful feedback and suggestions about how our services might be improved. We will release actions coming out of this review later in the year.

Managed through our Family, Youth and Children's Law Program.



'We take a proactive approach with young people. They might have questions they don't realise they can ask, so you have to reach out.'

Early intervention making a difference

Nat Purcell, one of our Community Legal Education (CLE) Coordinators, has seen first-hand how early intervention can make a difference to a young person's life.

One day each week Nat works as a lawyer at a high school in Geelong, building relationships with students and staff and providing CLE sessions on age-appropriate issues. She also provides confidential legal advice and referrals to students.

Nat recently helped a student who was dealing with an intervention order. It was clear from the evidence that the application was unfair, says Nat. Having time to work through the details meant that she and the duty lawyer were able to get it dismissed on the first mention.

'I spent a significant amount of time with the student and their mum. The student was anxious, their mum was anxious, and so having a bit more time to develop the relationships and alleviate some of their concerns was beneficial. The student could settle a bit, focus on their schoolwork, and focus on staying out of trouble,' Nat said.

Victoria is the first state in Australia to trial lawyers in schools, with several community legal centres first getting involved, and we launched into this space at the end of 2016. With Nat's help, the high school also successfully applied to become a lead school in the Victorian Government's Respectful Relationships initiative, receiving funding of \$20,000.

Amanda Davis is a wellbeing coordinator at the school. She says engaging young people in their rights and responsibilities is critical. Many of their students are experiencing complex issues, but Amanda also sees a lot of potential.

'Our students are really resilient given what some of them have been through. It's a privileged position to help them achieve their potential and address the barriers. For our students, the relationship is fundamental to be able to engage with them,' Amanda says.

Nat also co-convenes the Victorian School Lawyer Reference Group, with WEStjustice, the Western Community Legal Centre. It's a place for other lawyers working in mainstream, flexible learning and special schools to share ideas, experiences and resources. We are working with the group to develop an evaluation framework to support the model as it evolves.

'We take a proactive approach with young people. They might have questions they don't realise they can ask, so you have to reach out.'

Working with schools, facts and figures:

In 2016-17, we delivered 193 CLE sessions in schools reaching more than 9,000 young people, up from 2015-16 with 124 sessions reaching 5,000 young people.

Clearer and more consistent family law guidelines and new family law practice tools

The new-look guidelines which set out eligibility criteria for grants of legal aid in family law matters came into effect on 3 July 2017.

A plain-language guideline rewrite, in consultation with practitioners from private practice, community legal centres and our lawyers, was one of 35 recommendations from the 2015 Family Law Legal Aid Services Review.

Making it easier for lawyers to assess eligibility means families needing assistance with family law disputes can be referred to the right services more quickly.

The purpose of the redraft was not to change the criteria which determines who gets aid. However, by addressing inconsistencies

and gaps, there were some minor expansions in eligibility. The new guidelines align with our stated policy and will help ensure better access to family law services by priority clients.

The guidelines and the redrafted notes on the guidelines, provide clear and comprehensive information on all the criteria that must be satisfied, the conditions attaching to grants and the available fees. Links between guidelines, between different sections of the guidelines, and to an extensive glossary of key definitions mean the guidelines are more user-friendly.

We also developed a suite of family law quality practice tools. The tools are currently being piloted by our lawyers, and will be made available to all practitioners in September.

Managed through our Family, Youth and Children's Law Program.



Through storytelling, Pick A Path will allow young people to discuss legal processes, how the processes apply to common experiences, and potential solutions...

Legal education for newly arrived young people

We know that people from newly emerging communities can find it difficult to understand the Australian legal system and they do not generally access legal services. Our Settled and Safe program aims to help people from new and emerging communities learn about laws in Australia around family relationships.

Our community partners, who participated in Settled and Safe, told us they wanted a similar legal education program for young people. Therefore, we developed a youth-focused adaptation of Settled and Safe—'Pick A Path'—which covers a range of legal issues.

Through storytelling, Pick A Path will allow young people to discuss legal processes, how the processes apply to common experiences, and potential solutions. This will encourage young people to consider choice and consequences and how they might play out in real-life.

The issues Pick A Path will deal with include forced marriage, child protection, intervention orders, sexting, age of consent, consent and cyber bullying. Young people will set the agenda for what they want to learn and their experiences are reflected in the stories that make up the basis for the information sharing program. Not only will young people learn about the application of the law but we will gain an insight into the lives and experiences of young people from new and emerging communities.

Pick A Path will be piloted throughout 2017-18.

Co-ordinated early assistance for 'legacy caseload' asylum seekers

Working with our partners, we provide asylum seekers living in Victoria with the legal assistance they need to have their claims for protection assessed fairly.

Changes to federal legislation moved some 11,000 asylum seekers living in Victoria who arrived by boat between 13 August 2012 and 1 January 2014 through a 'fast-track' review process at the discretion of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. This does not ordinarily include any interview, and they do not have any right to a review hearing if their claim is rejected.

Additional work and time pressure has been imposed by the setting of an October 2017 deadline for the filing of all Legacy Caseload visa applications. Nonetheless, together with our partners we have:

- engaged with private lawyers, to encourage pro bono assistance for asylum seekers
- developed and delivered joint training to improve the quality of legal assistance to asylum seekers in the Legacy Caseload
- clarified, in several Federal Circuit Court cases, how fairness is to be provided in the course of the fast-track process.

We are a member of the Legacy Caseload working group, which won the Law Institute of Victoria Access to Justice Award in May 2017.

Managed through our Civil Justice Program.

Strategic direction: Match services to the needs and abilities of our clients

Legal help can be difficult to access, particularly for people who have complex legal and personal issues. We want to make it easier for people to resolve their legal problems by considering their individual circumstances, and matching our services to what clients need and the consequences they face.

Outcomes against our Business Plan

Client Safety Framework implemented across all Victoria Legal Aid services and locations

We developed and rolled out risk identification training under the Client Safety Framework in 2016 to all client-facing staff. It helps our staff to identify safety risks, then offer appropriate supports to clients who are survivors or perpetrators of family violence and/or who are at risk of suicide.

While lawyers are not risk managers, they can and do see indicators, or flags, of risks when they work with clients. This framework ensures that they are delivering robust advice to their clients, meeting all ethical obligations, and promoting safety while doing so.

Of our over 300 staff who have so far attended training, there has been overwhelmingly positive feedback: 98 per cent said their knowledge of safety risk indicators increased, and 99 per cent said they are now able to respond to safety risk indicators.

We are now working with others in the justice sector on how to use this framework and the underlying research and principles in their own service delivery work.

Managed through our Family, Youth and Children's Law Program.

A bigger, modernised Legal Help telephone service that provides the main entry point to the whole legal assistance sector

Our Legal Help telephone service is a major access and triage point for the Victorian legal assistance sector. The demand for our free telephone service is growing fast. This year, we received 191,030 calls, an increase of 2.5 per cent, and dealt with 125,512 of these calls, an increase of 13 per cent.

This year, we launched the Legal Help expansion project which aims to improve the telephone service by increasing client accessibility and refining the operational performance of the centre. Although we answered more calls this year, some software and technical issues meant not all Victorians calling Legal Help could get through. We're addressing the software issues and in the coming year expect to see enhancements in our ability to respond to the demand as it increases and changes in line with the external environment.

Responding to external factors, we set up a new line to specifically help clients needing support and advice in relation to Centrelink's automated data-matching initiative (commonly referred to as 'robo-debt'). We also increased the ways that people can contact us, by adding a specialist Prisoner Help line, see page 39 for more details.

Our Legal Help telephone service is staffed by bilingual lawyers, which improves access to legal advice for people from multicultural backgrounds. Read more about how we are assisting clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds on page 26.

Managed through our Access and Equity Program.

Meet Erin Rose, Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer

In her role as an Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer, Erin Rose is improving access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to legal assistance.

In achieving this, Erin is delivering services in new, fresh and different ways.

‘My role allows for new ideas, for more meaningful services and is a great opportunity to work in partnership with other stakeholders,’ Erin said.

‘I enjoy meeting with various Aboriginal programs and organisations to discuss the community need—rather than an unintentional assumption that we already know what the issues are—attending various outreach programs across Victoria in the Southern Metro and Hume Region, creating opportunities for, and, working with Community Legal Education and participating in Sisters Day Out—which is lots of fun.’

Erin’s role is one of three Aboriginal Community Engagement Officers at Victoria Legal Aid. Erin is based in Melbourne’s Civil Law Program; colleague Jessica McDonald is based in Morwell and Bairnsdale and Calinda Egan is based in Mildura.



‘I enjoy meeting with various Aboriginal programs and organisations to discuss the community need...’

Client focused communications and triage processes

Our Assignments team is responsible for administering grants of legal assistance. As part of an 18-month communications improvement project, we made 100 calls to clients about their understanding of the letters they receive from the Assignments team. The feedback identified areas where clients needed clearer and/or additional information about grants of legal assistance decisions and processes.

Using the feedback, we are updating the structure, content and tone of the letters to clients and lawyers. The new letters will improve the accessibility and transparency of decisions made, support clients to access more information, exercise reconsideration rights, and increase referrals to other services and resources where legal assistance is refused. Information sheets will clearly explain client obligations, including equitable charge and contribution conditions. A new BPAY payment option was introduced in May 2017.

Client focussed communications will also be supported by plain English training, improved triage processes and new service standards. These will document customer service expectations and internal processes to promote consistent, high quality service delivery by the Assignments team.

Managed through our Legal Practice.

Improved legal services and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

In December 2016, we launched our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2016–18. The employment strategy provides measurable actions to ensure we are an organisation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want to work at, while also aiming to improve service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The employment strategy sets out our commitment to creating a more inclusive and supportive workplace, and a plan for how we might get there.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan 2015–2018 (RAP) provides several measurable steps to improve our service response to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. One of the actions arising from the RAP, was to employ three Aboriginal Community Engagement (ACE) Officers as a way of improving access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to legal assistance. These ACE Officers are based in Morwell, Civil Justice in Melbourne and Mildura as part of our Mallee health-legal partnership. The two-year pilot program supports the delivery of legal assistance services in family and civil law to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

With one year remaining of our current RAP, we are starting to plan for our second RAP, while challenging ourselves ‘how can we do better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?’

Managed across all Victoria Legal Aid Programs.

Consistent and co-ordinated triage, intake, assessment, assignment and improved communication with clients

We have built and tested a prototype of a new tool called the Online Referral Booking and Information Tool (ORBIT), to help our staff and community legal centres better match clients to the available services across the legal sector. ORBIT also allows clients to be booked into our services more easily, reducing the points of contact to receive a service. The prototype will be further tested and developed in 2017-18.

In February 2017, we launched a new Prisoner Legal Help telephone service. Prisoners are now able to seek legal assistance from Victoria Legal Aid staff five days a week, by making a free confidential call from prison yard phones. The

service operates in four pilot prisons, the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, the Metropolitan Remand Centre, Port Phillip and Loddon/Middleton Prisons. Prisoner Legal Help replaces our previous weekly or fortnightly visiting lawyer service. It enables this marginalised cohort to address underlying legal matters which will assist them to re-integrate into the community after release. Our lawyers triage calls, provide procedural and legal information and advice, as well as referrals to further services within Victoria Legal Aid and elsewhere. Prisoner Legal Help provided 1,300 services in the four months of operation.

Managed through our Access and Equity Program.



It addressed Ian's anxiety in prison and gives him a connection to his family and the outside world for when he is released.

Keeping families together—Prisoner Legal Help case study

Ian* phoned Prisoner Legal Help with a family law parenting dispute. He was distraught that telephone contact with his son had stopped, and without explanation. There were reservations about Ian's prospects of getting child contact because of his offending. However, he met our guidelines for a video conference with our Family Law team. They subsequently called the mother and found that she supported contact, and that the lapse was for inadvertent reasons. Contact has resumed. This intervention means Ian's son can maintain a meaningful relationship with his dad. It addressed Ian's anxiety in prison and gives him a connection to his family and the outside world for when he is released.

*not real name.

New integrated services at Family Law Registries

A new approach that combines specialist legal assistance and social support was made available from 1 May 2017 for families affected by family violence who are involved in family law proceedings.

Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) places lawyers and specialist family violence support workers in both of the state's busy daily family law courts, Melbourne and Dandenong, with two additional duty lawyers and two support workers in each registry, along with an Information Referral Officer who triages families to see if they are eligible for FASS services.

FASS combines legal advice, risk screening, safety planning, social support and referrals and is the first time people coming to these courts who are affected by family violence can be directed straight to the different support services they need. Previously, they would have been given a phone number by a duty lawyer, but in many cases they would have nowhere to go after that, often leaving significant issues that contribute to family violence unresolved.

We established this service with funding from the Australian Government under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. FASS is funded to operate until 30 June 2019. The service was formally launched on 6 June by Senator James Paterson.



FASS combines legal advice, risk screening, safety planning, social support and referrals and is the first time people coming to these courts who are affected by family violence...

Strategic direction: Maximise benefits by working with others

Working closely with our partners in the legal assistance sector will help us ensure legal services are responsive to changing needs and population growth.

Outcomes against our Business Plan

Summary crime evaluation report with recommendations to feed into planning and investment

In June 2017, we released an independent review of our criminal law services in the Magistrates' Court. The report makes 23 recommendations about what is required to repair the summary crime system and create a space for better justice to be served.

The findings and recommendations will provide the foundation for the development of a long-term strategy around our summary crime services and for how we will work with the courts, police, government and others on repairing, reforming and properly funding the summary crime system.

With thousands of extra police, there will be an increase in demand for our services. Now is the time for Victoria Legal Aid,

the police, the courts and government to come together and make a concerted effort to reform this system for clients, victims and the whole community. By working together, we can reshape the system to support community safety and deliver better justice, every day.

We all have a role to play in supporting our long-term summary crime strategy which affects so many of us in our everyday work, and so many of our clients and stakeholders. The Magistrates' Court is where most Victorians experience the criminal justice system (either as defendants or victims, or family members of either) and as the report has found the system is approaching crisis.

An advisory group was established to oversee and guide the evaluation. The group was made up of representatives from the Law Institute of Victoria, Victoria Police, courts, Department of Justice and Regulation and the Victorian Bar. There were representatives from across Victoria Legal Aid, both within and outside of the criminal law program.

We commissioned the report by the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, specialists in access to justice research and evaluation, in 2015.

Managed through our Criminal Law Program.

An enhanced Victoria Legal Aid presence in the Mallee region to help improve access to justice

In December 2016, we formalised a health justice partnership with Mildura's Sunraysia Community Health Services (SCHS). The new service, which will commence in July 2017, will work to support better integration of services for clients across health and justice agencies in the Mallee region, recognising the overlap of health and legal issues in many people's lives.

Our consultation with local services showed high levels of unmet legal need with civil law problems and in child protection matters. We bolstered our long standing and successful relationship with private criminal law and family law firms and set about establishing a new service that will prioritise civil law (including assistance with mental health orders, tenancy matters, accrued fines and reviewing Centrelink matters) and early intervention advice and legal support for families at risk of child protection intervention. The team comprises a managing lawyer, two lawyers, an Aboriginal Community Engagement officer and a legal assistant.

By partnering with SCHS, and working closely with other health providers in the community, we will be better placed to identify legal problems at an earlier stage and offer services that improve the overall health and wellbeing of our clients.

Managed through our Services and Innovation Program.

Work with other legal assistance service providers in Albury Wodonga to help improve access to justice

In 2016, we began development of a model to underpin collaborative service planning across Victoria. The proposed model will tell us the level of legal need in a region, so we can work together with other service providers (including private practitioners and community legal centres) to determine the best way to maximise access to justice.

Working alongside NSW Legal Aid, Hume Riverina Community Legal Service and our private practitioner colleagues, we are piloting our proposed legal needs model in the Albury Wodonga region. We facilitated a number of workshops with local services to test the model, which was met with support and enthusiasm.

We will continue to work to identify and address the needs of this region in the forthcoming year, noting the unique challenges for people living in border communities.

Managed through our Services and Innovation Program.

A range of responses developed and agreed upon to respond to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

While none of the RCFV recommendations are specific to Victoria Legal Aid, approximately 164 of the recommendations are relevant for the justice sector and will impact upon us in some way. Some recommendations will have a direct impact on the way in which services are delivered and we will need to respond accordingly, for example the expansion of specialist courts. Other recommendations do not require Victoria Legal Aid to engage in implementation, but participation and engagement in design presents opportunities for us to improve our service delivery model, for example, the creation of Support and Safety Hubs.

Over the last 12 months, we have been working with the State Government and organisations across the family violence response sector including police, courts, family violence services and community legal centres to contribute practice expertise to drive change and shape laws and services so that they will benefit clients and the community.

We have implemented the first stages of a comprehensive plan as part of our response to the recommendations. This encompasses service design, professional development, community legal education, and engagement with a range of changes to law and practice.

Managed through Family, Youth and Children's Law Program.

The transformation and strengthening of the legal assistance sector is supported

We continued to manage the community legal centre Innovation and Transformation Fund (I&T) program, to ensure all funded projects were delivering the outcomes projected in their project plans. To share lessons learnt across the I&T Fund, we held a series of showcase workshops for community legal centres and relevant partners in the broader legal and non-legal assistance sector. The first workshop was held at Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative in February 2017. It was a chance for individual projects to share in-depth insights with their colleagues, and feedback suggests it was well received. The final evaluation report will be completed in October 2018.

The Community Legal Services Program (CLSP) is the program that manages most of Victoria's CLCs funding. It has not been substantially revised for 21 years. This year there was a large amount of consultation about better reporting and administrative frameworks to reduce red tape and enhance accountability. We used a variety of consultation processes, including Yammer—a professional social media platform. An options paper has been developed which details different ideas about how to reform the program. Consultation is continuing.

Managed through our Access and Equity Program.

Welcome to the Services and Innovation team

In August 2016, we launched the Services and Innovation directorate, a new division at Victoria Legal Aid. With responsibility for seven regional offices and a new health justice partnership based in Mildura, the Services and Innovation team provides organisational leadership on issues impacting regional access to justice and legal aid service delivery. As well as advocating for the needs of staff and clients outside of the Melbourne CBD, the Services and Innovation directorate also leads innovation projects across the state including sector planning, improving our data use and capability, and the development of our new organisational strategy.



Recommendations for changes to our means test identified

We are committed to ensuring that we provide legal assistance to those who need it most. We know that the means test is complex and the people in need of legal assistance are missing out. The Productivity Commission estimated that 13.8 per cent of people live below the poverty line but only eight per cent qualify for legal aid on financial grounds. There is clearly a large justice gap and we want our means test to work well for the community. We want to make our means test simpler, fairer and easier to understand, and to expand eligibility.

In August 2016, we released the Means Test Review consultation paper. The paper was designed to raise awareness and receive feedback on the challenges associated with rationing legal assistance. We wanted to hear peoples' stories about what it was like to miss out on legal aid because of not meeting means test financial eligibility criteria.

During consultation, we launched a dedicated engagement portal and received 25 submissions from organisations including the Victorian Council of Social Service, the Law Institute of Victoria and the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service. More than 1,000 people engaged with the means test review overall.

In April 2017, we released an options paper for further consultation which covers possible changes to the means test and contributions policy. The paper was informed by the earlier consultation process with clients, partners and the public. During the options consultation, we received over 200 responses to our online survey. Most of this engagement came from a social media post reaching 25,288 people with 437 likes, 107 shares and 31 comments.

We are likely to see some changes to modernise the means test next financial year. But, making legal aid more readily available to more acutely vulnerable people, such that the justice gap is closed, will require more funds.

Managed through Legal Practice.

Community set to benefit from strategic advocacy

We are increasingly joining with partners to undertake proactive advocacy campaigns seeking law reform where laws have or are being administered in ways that disproportionately impact on vulnerable people.

Care not Custody: addressing the over-criminalisation of children in residential care. In January 2017, we released our Care not Custody research report. The report explores the link between child protection residential care and criminal charges for children. It found that children who are living away from their families in out-of-home care face relatively high numbers of criminal damage charges. For example, a child in residential care who threw a phone when she wanted to talk with her mother now has a permanent criminal conviction for 'discharging a missile'.

Reflecting international experience, the report suggests that the criminalisation of children in residential care can be reduced by cooperation between police and residential care providers to approach children's behaviour in a trauma-informed way that minimises contact with police over low-level incidents. We are in discussions with the Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria Police, and a range of residential care providers—and their peak body, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare—to progress a Care not Custody approach to children in residential care in Victoria.

Coalition seeking to remove burden of toll fines on criminal justice system. We brought together a range of stakeholders to discuss solutions to the increasing burden that toll road infringements have on communities, the courts and the justice system. Working with these partners has resulted in more informed and creative solutions being identified, and will increase the weight of proposals to be provided to government. We remain confident that together we will devise an acceptable solution that provides more options for our clients experiencing hardship, and reduces pressure on courts.

Managed through Legal Practice.

Working together better

What we said we would do in our Business Plan

Our annual *Business Plan 2016-17* commits to investing in a legal assistance sector that provides increased access to justice for the community's most vulnerable and disadvantaged. It puts into action a number of initiatives in the *Strategy 2015-18* and commits to continuing to improve services that clients and the community need.

Outlined below are some key achievements against the *Business Plan 2016-17*.

Flexible technology adopted by staff delivering client services across the state

The second year of our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy saw us transition all our systems to the cloud, providing best of breed information security, reliability and accessibility for our staff to deliver client services. We implemented a stable and reliable network to support the use of mobile tools including Surface Pro tablets and Skype for Business telephony. We also partnered with the Magistrates' Court to provide our staff with seamless access to a Wi-Fi network in Magistrates' Courts across Victoria.

As part of our new Melbourne CBD office, we introduced 'follow me printing' to support a reduction in paper usage and electronic faxing, removing the need for the sending and receiving of approximately one million paper faxes per year.

Due to the introduction of these flexible technologies, our staff can access the electronic information and tools they need regardless of the time or location.

Managed through Corporate Affairs.

Staff engagement and wellbeing is improved

Our Leadership and Management Program (LAMP) provides a suite of activities tailored to continuously improve manager capability. In 2016, two streams of activity were undertaken. A five-day leadership program was delivered to 16 participants, including a 360-degree component and syndicate project work. The program also provided an opportunity for participants to undertake an accredited Diploma in Management, designed to further extend learning. In addition to the leadership program, four Manager Fundamentals modules were delivered to a cohort of 110 staff in coaching skills, resilience, change management and developing financial understanding. Feedback from all LAMP participants throughout 2016 was sought and has shaped offerings for 2017 to ensure the programs are appropriately designed and delivered.

In August 2016, we undertook an employee engagement survey, which achieved a response rate of 82 per cent. The survey measured how aligned and engaged staff were to Victoria Legal Aid. See page 67 for more details on the survey and action plans.

We have made significant progress in creating a safety culture, however it remains that the work we undertake has physical, emotional and psychological effects on employee wellbeing. Pilot programs have been undertaken in several areas to understand what works and is most sustainable. See page 75 for more details on psychological wellbeing.

During 2016-17, there was an increase in employee utilisation of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services, with a recorded rate of 12.29 per cent. This is higher than our historic rate of nine per cent. In April 2017, Assure Programs was appointed to provide EAP services. See page 74 for more details on our health, safety and wellbeing.

Managed through Corporate Affairs.



Continued our Chambers circuits in regional areas

Our Chambers advocates provide high quality representation for clients with a grant of legal assistance in criminal law, civil law, child protection and family law. This year, our Chambers advocates continued to work across the state appearing in Family Federal Circuit Courts in Ballarat, Geelong, Mildura and Bendigo.

Our advocates appeared in 2,180 cases, with 17 per cent of all hearings conducted in regional locations. Of the criminal matters, 16 per cent were conducted in regional locations, of the family matters, 26 per cent were conducted in regional locations and of the civil matters, eight per cent were conducted in regional locations.

Transition to new premises promotes effective and safe work practices, with improved facilities for staff and clients

In 10 April 2017, all our CBD staff moved to new premises at 570 Bourke Street marking consolidation of all CBD staff in one location. Prior to this, staff were spread across four separate locations in the CBD. Our main location had staff split across eight different floors in a 20-year-old fit-out that was stretched to capacity.

Our vision to progressively change the way we help our clients to resolve and prevent legal problems was one of the driving factors for the move and design. Research and our practice experience tells us that many clients have multiple legal and non-legal issues, and to achieve the best outcomes for our clients we need to move beyond focussing on the single presenting legal issue. With staff now consolidated into one site, the new workspace creates the opportunity for greater connection between teams and practice areas to allow us to work better together and deliver improved services. We also created a centralised reception, client interview rooms and public library space that is more welcoming, safer when interacting with clients and reflective of a quality service.

Our new premises provide our staff with modern, functional facilities that support staff wellbeing. Our supported open plan environment and new mobile technology (such as Microsoft

Surface Pros with integrated Skype for Business telephony) provides staff with the ability to work in a range of different ways according to their preference or work style. This includes spaces for quiet, focussed work, collaboration, meetings of all sizes and professional development.

We will be reviewing how the new workspace is taken up over the next 12 months and while we are still working through a range of transition activities, including changing some of our work patterns and behaviours, anecdotal feedback from clients and staff has been positive.

Importantly, our decision to move was cost effective and financially responsible. The move was cost neutral while also allowing Victoria Legal Aid to reduce its CBD space requirements by 20 per cent due to occupation of larger and more space efficient floors. We were able to fund the move via a commercial lease arrangement on favourable terms. We are also pleased that the project was delivered on time, on budget and without any service disruption.

Managed through Corporate Affairs.

Human Centred Design workshops

In early 2017, our service designer Jess Bird facilitated two human centred design workshops to explore the reception experience at Victoria Legal Aid for various staff (from a range of program areas), clients and external stakeholders. The participants used case studies to look at the experience of the reception from the perspective of different stakeholders (receptionist, another staff member, client, corporate stakeholder). They then identified some of the things that are frustrating or cause concern, and brainstormed ideas for addressing these issues. The top ideas were further developed, detailing how they could be implemented. Some of the ideas from the workshops are already happening in the new reception space at the new CBD office, 570 Bourke Street. Others will be looked at by the reception team to identify how they might be implemented in the future.



Commitment to greater transparency

To be more transparent and accountable with how we use public funds, for the first time we published our mid year service and financial results. The report disclosed all that we had achieved in the first six months of 2016-17 as well as an outlook, forward planning and predicting how we expected to end the year. We will continue to publish our six-monthly results, reflecting our commitment and responsibility to greater openness.



Making a difference through our advocacy and law reform

The defining characteristic of strategic advocacy is that it provides the community with improved access to justice and legal remedies. Strategic advocacy employs innovative means to address the causes of legal problems to prevent their likelihood of reoccurring. This benefits people who may never seek or be eligible for legal assistance, reduces the need for legal services in the community and ensures legal aid is delivered in the most effective, economic and efficient manner.

At Victoria Legal Aid, we are committed to working on the justice system as well as in it. Under the *Legal Aid Act 1978* (Vic) we are required to pursue innovative means of providing legal assistance to reduce the need for individual legal services. Our strategic advocacy is informed by our broad practice in family, youth, criminal, civil and administrative law. The breadth of our work means we are well placed to identify opportunities for reform within the justice system.

Our justice and law reform activities include:

- running test cases to expand rights or clarify points of law
- making submissions to inquiries and reviews
- advocating directly to government and the courts to improve policies and processes.

Significant cases

Ensuring full payment of supports under the NDIS

In March 2017, we won a landmark appeal confirming that people with disabilities participating in the National Disability Insurance Scheme have the right to full payment of the supports that they require. Liam McGarrigle is a 21-year-old man with autism spectrum disorder and an intellectual disability. In 2013 he began participating in the NDIS and was eligible for funding and support to attend a disability group program and employment. Despite his entitlement, the National Disability Insurance Agency provided Mr McGarrigle with only 75 per cent of the annual cost of \$15,850 for taxis and transport.

We argued that the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (Cth) does not allow for supports to only be partially funded. The test case, which was the first time the Federal Court had the opportunity to review some of the key provisions of the legislation, clarified that the Agency's policy to provide only a partial contribution toward transport and other costs is not lawful. Provided other funding criteria are met, people with a disability found to be eligible for supports will now be entitled to the full costs of those supports. For Mr McGarrigle and others living in rural areas who are unable to drive or access public transport, the decision means they can now attend the supports needed to enhance their participation in society as far as possible.

Supreme Court clarifies the right for tenants to live in safe and properly maintained housing

A Supreme Court decision delivered in September 2016 set new ground in clarifying tenants' rights to expect that a rented home is maintained in good repair. Vikki Shields had been homeless before accepting a property that was in terrible condition. Despite numerous requests to the landlord, not all faults were rectified, and ultimately Ms Shields was evicted when her support worker encouraged her to pursue her repair rights. The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal found that Ms Shields was not entitled to compensation as the landlord had not breached their duty to maintain the premises in good repair, as it was let in poor repair to begin with and at a low rent.

The Supreme Court held that the obligation on a landlord under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (Vic) that they 'must ensure that rented premises are maintained in good repair' imposed a positive duty that properties are firstly brought into a state of good repair, and maintained thereafter. The court went further and held that any inspection by an estate agent at the commencement of a tenancy placed the landlord on constructive knowledge of any outstanding repair issues.

The decision has far reaching beneficial impact for Victoria's most disadvantaged tenants whose landlords will be prevented from renting out unsafe properties in disrepair. The case has also been instructive in our support for minimum rental standards as part of the government's review of the Residential Tenancies Act .

Appeal clarifies law, and frees intellectually impaired man from indefinite prison order

In June 2017, we were successful in an appeal under the *Crimes (Mental Impairment and Unfitness to be Tried) 1997* (Vic) (the 'CMIA'). The appeal was not only life changing for the individual client, who had an indefinite custodial order reversed, but also significantly advanced the law in relation to how the courts deal with persons found unfit to be tried.

The case of *Richards (a Pseudonym) v The Queen (No 2)* [2017] VSCA 174 was a successful appeal against an indefinite custodial supervision order under the CMIA. Mr Richards was an elderly man with multiple physical and mental ailments, including an intellectual impairment, who had been found unfit to be tried for historical offences. Although Mr Richards had been found unfit to be tried, for a variety of reasons neither Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) nor Forensicare could identify any services or treatment options that would assist his condition.

The custodial supervision order effectively meant that Mr Richards was likely to spend the remainder of his life in prison,

with little prospect of review. In Mr Richards' case, through a misinterpretation of the CMIA, the first-instance judge failed to consider the wide discretion they had to release Mr Richards on an appropriately structured non-custodial order. This resulted in Mr Richards' detention in prison for a period of almost two years. Our lawyers, who had not acted at first-instance, came across Mr Richards in prison while researching a different case.

On appeal, the Crown conceded there had been an error in the interpretation of the CMIA, and the Court of Appeal allowed the appeal and ordered that Mr Richards be placed on a non-custodial order in the community. This allowed Mr Richards to return to his specialist residential aged-care facility.

This decision has expanded the range of options for people made liable to supervision under the CMIA. Courts considering such orders can now be assured that there is a wide discretion to construct appropriate therapeutic or supervisory conditions as part of a non-custodial orders, not limited to treatment by DHHS or Forensicare.

Major submissions

Evidence based responses informing youth justice inquiries

We have provided the State Government with information and recommendations to inform youth justice policies. This has taken a range of forms including provision of evidence-based written submissions, appearance at committees and public hearings, meeting with staff from various government departments and responding to confidential consultation papers.

In late 2016 and early 2017 we contributed to the Department of Health and Human Services' Review of Youth Support, Youth Diversion and Youth Justice Services that will create a policy framework for the development of a contemporary youth justice program and service delivery model.

In March 2017, we drew on our substantial expertise in providing a submission to the Victorian Parliament Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues' Inquiry into Youth Justice Centres in Victoria.

We were subsequently invited to attend and provide evidence at a public hearing of the Committee. Helen Fatouros, Executive Director, Criminal Law Services appeared before the Committee on behalf of Victoria Legal Aid. In providing evidence Ms Fatouros highlighted that we are a major provider of legal services to young people who face criminal charges before the Children's Court, and emphasised the importance of engaging young people before offending starts.

Ensuring practical family violence reforms address the Royal Commission's recommendations

The Victorian Government introduced a broad reform agenda to give effect to the recommendations in the Royal Commission into Family Violence Report released in March 2016.

Throughout the year we attended a range of regular meetings to work with government, courts, police and other stakeholders on the rollout of the Royal Commission recommendations. We were also invited to engage in several co-design consultations where we provided our institutional knowledge to inform the practical realisation of the recommendations. The first two Family Violence Protection Amendment Bills resulting from the recommendations have already passed. Our advocacy around the implementation of the recommendations has emphasised:

- our support for the prompt and thorough implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations
- survivor safety as top priority
- the critical role of early legal advice in responding to family violence
- the need to coordinate legislative change with resourcing and training of decision-makers (including police and lawyers)
- approaches which promote help-seeking by both perpetrators and survivors
- safeguards for the many victims who are incorrectly identified as primary perpetrators of family violence
- the importance of victim agency, including consent to information sharing
- increased accountability for perpetrators, recognising that a legal response to perpetrators increases safety
- better system responses to family violence by adopting client-centred approaches, working collaboratively with legal and non-legal service providers.

Our participation in Royal Commission implementation law reform has helped make the new legislation more likely to be workable as it comes into effect, and more likely to best promote survivor safety.

Advocating for the suspension of Centrelink's 'robo-debt' scheme

We have been a consistent and strong critical voice against Centrelink's adoption of the automated debt recovery system commonly known as 'robo-debt' because it is procedurally unfair and results in false debts and widespread injustice. We responded to the commencement of the scheme with a social media campaign that enabled us to reach potential clients, and to highlight the unfairness of the scheme. Our reach across Facebook, twitter and LinkedIn expanded quickly and brought traditional media with it. We were quick to identify and join with social service organisations and collaborated with the #notmydebt campaign, expanding our reach for service provision and raising the public profile of the opposition to the scheme.

In response to this advocacy, and following release of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's report in April 2017, Centrelink made a number of minor changes aimed at improving the scheme.

In February 2017, the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee commenced an inquiry. Drawing on our casework we provided a submission to the inquiry that highlighted the harm being done to already disadvantaged people by a scheme that undermined the key tenets of proper and lawful government action.

Managing Director, Bevan Warner and Executive Director Legal Practice, Katie Miller, appeared and gave evidence at a public hearing of the Committee on 11 April 2017, giving voice to the experience of our clients and providing insight on the inherent unfairness of the system.

The Committee reported on 21 June and was highly critical of the scheme. It agreed with many of our submissions, including that shifting the onus on to affected individuals to disprove an alleged debt is unreasonable, is flawed due to a fundamental lack of procedural fairness and recommended that the scheme be immediately halted.

We continue to advocate publicly and in collaboration with other organisations for the adoption of the report's recommendations, while concurrently servicing increased demand and assisting clients to challenge calculation of the alleged debts on individual bases.

Our partnerships

We are committed to building strong, effective partnerships with other organisations for the benefit of our clients.

National Legal Aid

As a member of National Legal Aid, we work with the other state and territory legal aid commissions to ensure that legal aid is delivered in the most effective and efficient way possible across Australia.

More information: www.nationallegalaid.org

Legal Assistance Forums

Australian Legal Assistance Forum

The Australian Legal Assistance Forum brings together National Legal Aid, the Law Council of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, the National Association of Community Legal Centres and the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum.

The forum allows these organisations to address legal assistance issues in Australia in a co-operative and coordinated way.

More information: www.nationallegalaid.org

Victorian Legal Assistance Forum

The Victorian Legal Assistance Forum (VLAF) brings together the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria, Federation of Community Legal Centres, Justice Connect, Law Institute of Victoria, the Victorian Bar, Victoria Law Foundation, Victoria Legal Aid and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.

The forum allows these organisations to plan and advocate for increased access to legal services for socially and economically disadvantaged Victorians, and to develop responsive service delivery models.

This year the Victorian Legal Assistance Forum has:

- undertaken a review of the Forum's aims, principles and membership
- implemented virtual meetings when required between quarterly face-to-face meetings, to allow the Forum to be more responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

More information: www.vlaf.org.au

Mixed model of service delivery

Victoria Legal Aid delivers legal services through a mixed model of service delivery. The foundation of the mixed model is section 8 of the *Legal Aid Act 1978* (Vic).

The mixed model comprises:

- solicitors working as sole practitioners or in law firms and incorporated legal practices (referred to in the Act as 'private practitioners')
- barristers
- Victoria Legal Aid's staff practice
- community legal centres
- Aboriginal Legal Services, in particular the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria.

Using the mixed model to deliver legal services provides the following benefits:

- flexibility to respond to changes in demand for legal aid services
- managing conflicts of interest between clients receiving legal aid
- supporting a client's entitlement to select a legal practitioner of their choice
- providing legal services across Victoria
- addressing service gaps in certain locations or within certain areas of law
- promoting specialisation of skills, experience and knowledge.

Clients either choose their lawyer or are referred to a lawyer by the Legal Help telephone line or the duty lawyer service. The lawyer is then responsible for running the legal matter, including making decisions about whether to brief a barrister and which barrister to brief.

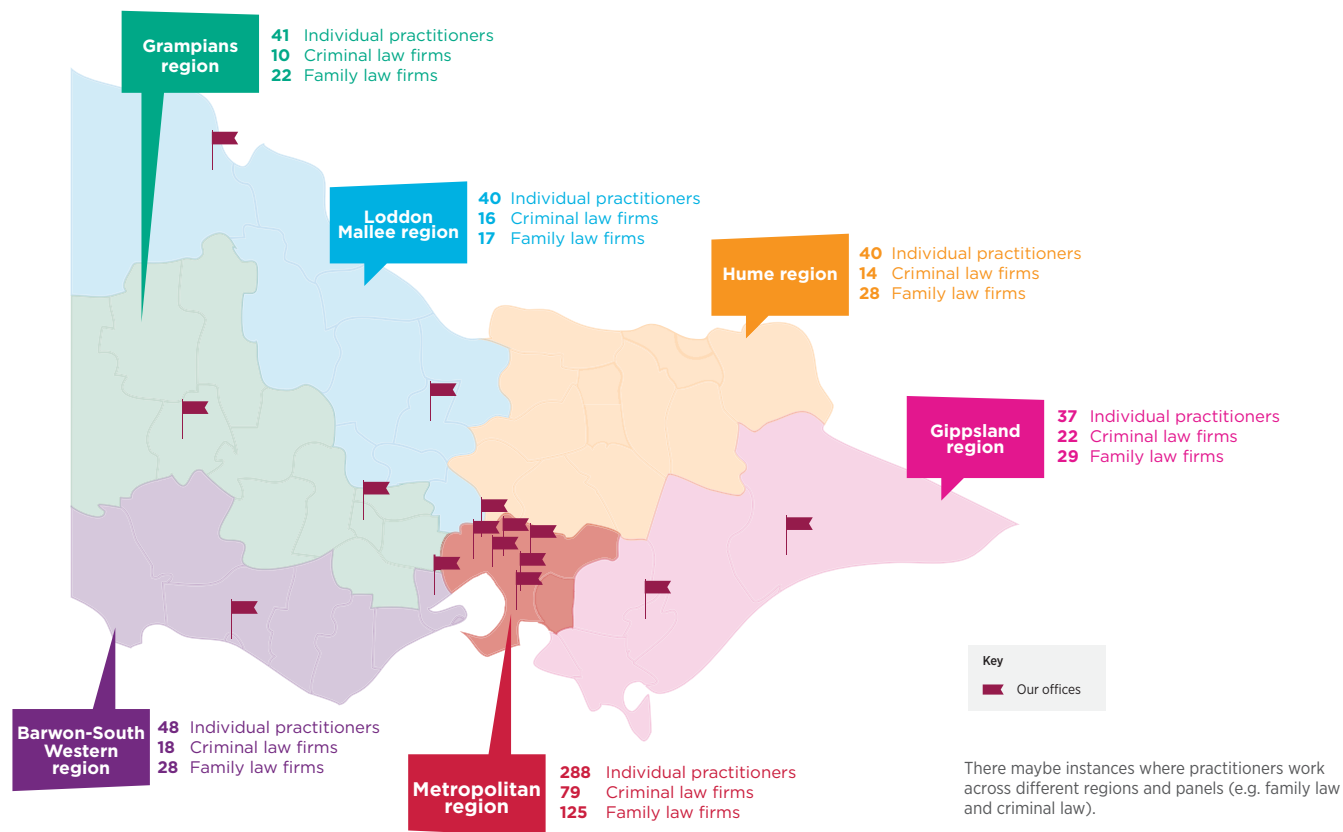
The mixed model is also used to provide duty lawyer services, either on an ongoing or interim basis. Barristers are used to manage short term demand pressures.

Community legal centres

Community legal centres, including the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria, are a vital part of the mixed model.

Lawyers working at CLCs must be on one of our specialist panels to conduct matters pursuant to a grant of legal aid; or if they seek funding for disbursements. We work closely with CLCs to support their lawyers with meeting our panel requirements.

Private practitioners doing legal aid work across Victoria



Private practitioners

For most legally aided matters, private practitioners must be members of one or more of our specialist panels established under section 29A of the Legal Aid Act. Applicants for membership of the panel must demonstrate experience and quality legal service in the relevant area of law, including client care, practitioner’s understanding of relevant issues and the quality of work. Members of the panel commit to conducting legally aided files in accordance with Victoria Legal Aid’s Practice Standards, which set minimum standards for the conduct of legally aided matters.

We are committed to building close working relationships with lawyers on our specialist panels. Our partnership with private practitioners continues to evolve through increased collaboration and engagement. Panel practitioners provide valuable contributions to our strategic initiatives and projects, such as the Means Test Review and the summary crime evaluation report, which was commissioned by us and completed by the NSW Law and Justice Foundation.

Private lawyers receiving grants of legal assistance

In 2016-17, 73 per cent of grants of legal assistance were assigned to private lawyers on our panels (70 per cent last year). This included:

- 68 per cent of criminal law grants (65 per cent last year)
- 85 per cent of family and children’s law grants (82 per cent last year)
- 18 per cent of civil law grants (18 per cent last year).

Private practice law firms vary greatly in size and areas of practice and this impacts on the volume and type of legal aid work they can undertake.

The duration and complexity of individual cases also influences the number of legally aided cases that each firm can undertake.

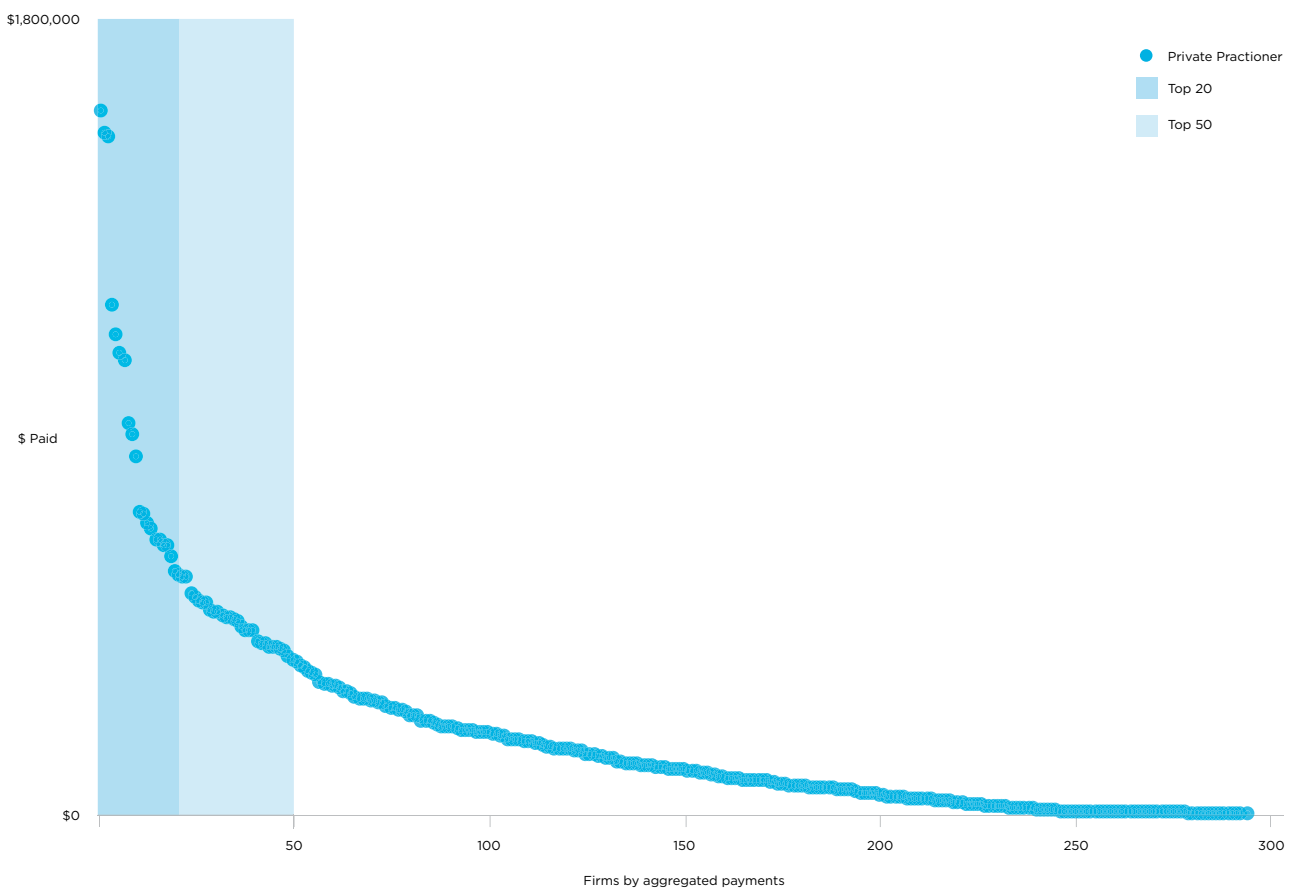
Practitioners who do legal aid work are not a homogenous group. Panel firms vary in size, location, specialisation and the proportion of legally aided matters the firm undertakes compared to privately funded matters. For some practitioners, legally aided work is a core part of their practice. For others,

legally aided work is an important part of their professional commitments as a legal practitioner, even though it may not be a significant contributor to the firm's revenue. This variation makes comparisons of fees paid to firms of limited utility without a proper understanding of the differences in how those firms operate.

Through consultation and using data, Victoria Legal Aid is developing a better understanding of why practitioners do legal aid work and how much they are prepared to do. This is important to understand the true extent of supply available to legal aid clients, particularly in areas of growing demand or decreasing supply. This in turn will inform decisions about how Victoria Legal Aid supports and contracts with panel practitioners and, in particular, whether greater variability is needed to reflect the variety of practitioners who do legally aided work.

The following graphs demonstrate that the majority of legally aided work undertaken by private practitioners is undertaken by 20 firms. This reflects the degree of specialisation amongst these firms, their predominantly metropolitan locations and the ongoing process of firm mergers and acquisitions within the legal services market. The amount of work undertaken by the top 20 firms means that they have an intimate understanding of legal aid work and the legal aid sector, including the challenges that limit successful outcomes for our clients and community and opportunities for improvement and innovation. In addition to providing legal services to clients, our top 20 firms are generous in their contributions to our reviews, section 29A panel selection committees, steering committees and the development of the profession through training and support.

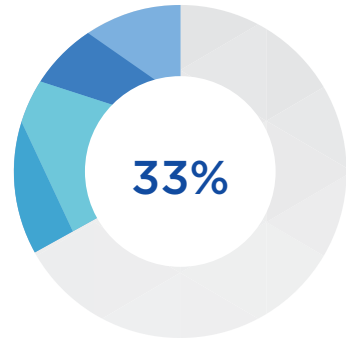
Private practitioner firms doing legal aid work



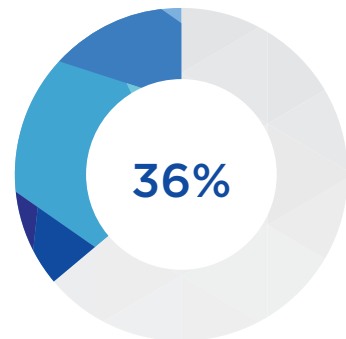
The following expenditure tables and pie charts include any fees and disbursements to third parties where the payment is made via private practitioners. Disbursements may include court fees, interpreters' fees, service fees, barristers' fees, fees for investigations and professional/expert reports, transcripts of evidence, plans and photographs (some of which require prior written approval from Victoria Legal Aid). Expenditure may include cases commenced in previous years.

Top 20 private law firms receiving the highest aggregate payments for legal aid cases in 2016-17

2016-17 Rank	Private practitioner firm	Region	Area of Law
1	Stary Norton Halphen Pty Ltd	M	Family, Crime
2	Dowling McGregor Pty Ltd	M	Family, Crime
3	James Dowsley & Associates	M	Family, Crime
4	Cathleen Corridon & Associates Family Lawyers	M	Family
5	Gorman & Hannan	M	Family, Crime
6	Emma Turnbull Lawyers Pty Ltd	M	Family, Crime
7	Richard Revill Lawyers	M	Family, Crime
8	Claudia Grimberg	M	Family, Crime
9	Tyler Tipping & Woods	G	Family, Crime
10	Doogue & O'Brien George	M	Family, Crime
11	Papa Hughes Lawyers Pty Ltd	M	Crime
12	Martin Irwin & Richards	L	Family, Crime
13	Leanne Warren & Associates	M	Family, Crime
14	Nicole Amad	M	Family
15	Dotchin Tan	M	Family
16	Tp Legal & Associates	M	Family
17	Comito & Associates	M, H	Family, Crime
18	Bayside Solicitors Vic	M	Family, Crime
19	Greg Thomas	M	Family, Crime
20	Valos Black & Associates	M	Family, Crime



Proportion of payments to top 20 private practitioners compared to overall private practitioner spend



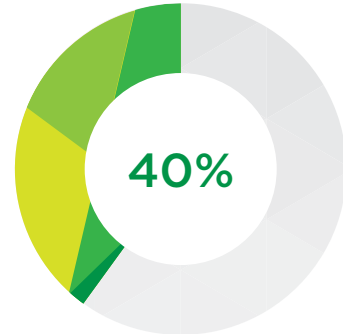
Proportion of new grants matters allocated to top 20 private practitioners compared to the overall new grants matters assigned

Key

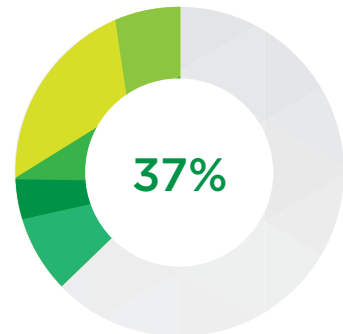
- M Metro
- L Loddon
- F Family
- H Hume
- G Gippsland
- C Crime

Top 20 private family law firms receiving the highest aggregate payments for legal aid cases in 2016-17

2016-17 Rank	Private practitioner firm	Region	Area of law
1	Dowling McGregor Pty Ltd	M	Family, Crime
2	Cathleen Corridon & Associates Family Lawyers	M	Family
3	Gorman & Hannan	M	Family, Crime
4	Claudia Grimberg	M	Family, Crime
5	Nicole Amad	M	Family
6	Tp Legal & Associates	M	Family
7	Comito & Associates	M H	Family, Crime
8	Lampe Family Lawyers	M	Family
9	Tyler Tipping & Woods	G	Family, Crime
10	Deanne Jackel	M	Family, Crime
11	Emma Bridge	M	Family, Crime
12	Bayside Solicitors Vic	M	Family, Crime
13	Ian Porter	M	Family, Crime
14	Heinz & Partners	G	Family
15	Isabelle Harrison Pty Ltd	M	Family, Crime
16	Taft Lawyers	M	Family
17	Peter Lynch	M	Family, Crime
18	Dotchin Tan	M	Family, Crime
19	Macgregor	M	Family
20	Barwick & Associates Solicitors	M	Family, Crime



Proportion of payments to the top 20 family law private practitioners compared to overall spend for family law matters



Proportion of new grants matters allocated to top 20 family law private practitioners compared to the overall new family law grants matters assigned

Key

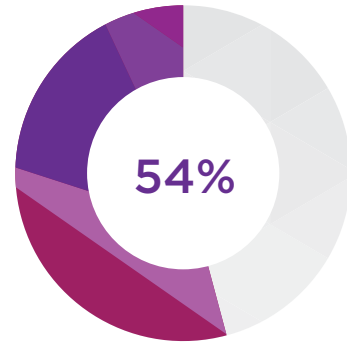
Metro	Gippsland	Family
Hume	Grampians	Crime

Top 20 private criminal law firms receiving the highest aggregate payments for legal aid cases in 2016-17

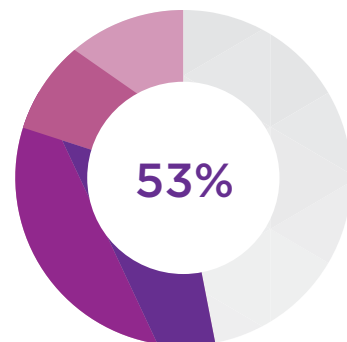
2016-17 Rank	Private practitioner firm	Region	Area of law
1	Stary Norton Halphen Pty Ltd	M	Family, Crime
2	James Dowsley & Associates	M	Family, Crime
3	Emma Turnbull Lawyers Pty Ltd	M	Family, Crime
4	Richard Revill Lawyers	M	Family, Crime
5	Doogue & O'Brien George	M	Family, Crime
6	Papa Hughes Lawyers Pty Ltd	M	Crime
7	Leanne Warren & Associates	M	Family, Crime
8	Greg Thomas	M	Family, Crime
9	Valos Black & Associates	M	Family, Crime
10	Criminal Lawyers Geelong	B	Family, Crime
11	Ann Valos Criminal Law	M	Family, Crime
12	Paul Vale Criminal Law	M	Family, Crime
13	Martin Irwin & Richards	L	Family, Crime
14	Balmer & Associates Pty	M	Family, Crime
15	Wabgat Pty Ltd (T/a Slades & Parsons)	M	Family, Crime
16	Matthew White & Associates	M	Family, Crime
17	Tait Lawyers	M	Family, Crime
18	Mike Wardell	G	Family, Crime
19	Marich Legal Pty Ltd (Dr Martine Marich)	M	Family, Crime
20	Kurnai Legal Practice	M	Family, Crime

Key

M Metro	G Grampians	Family
L Loddon	B Barwon	Crime



Proportion of payments to top 20 criminal law private practitioners compared to overall spend for criminal law matters



Proportion of new grants matters allocated to top 20 criminal law private practitioners compared to overall new criminal law grants matters assigned

Barristers

Barristers appear in matters pursuant to a grant of aid and in some duty lawyer services. Barristers are generally chosen by the instructing solicitor, who exercises their professional judgment and experience to choose whom to brief.

Barristers wishing to be briefed in indictable criminal trials of more than 15 days in length must be members of our Criminal Trial Preferred Barrister List. Applicants for membership must demonstrate experience in the skills required to conduct indictable criminal trials.

Our partnerships—private barristers

Includes all costs paid including circuit fees, travelling cost and other expenses.

2016-17	Briefed by private practitioner (\$)	Briefed by Victoria Legal Aid (\$)	Total (\$)
Total all barrister payments	15.9 million	4.6 million	20.5 million

2015-16	Briefed by private practitioner (\$)	Briefed by Victoria Legal Aid (\$)	Total (\$)
Total all barrister payments	14.2 million	4 million	18.2 million

Direct payments to private barristers by area of law

Area of law	Payments to barristers (\$)	% of total
Criminal	13,855,002	67
Family and children	6,311,234	31
Civil	390,113	2

Direct payments to private barristers for criminal matters

Type of work	Payments to barristers (\$)	% of total
Appellate crime	772,855	6
Indictable crime (includes sexual offences)	9,266,325	67
Summary crime	3,061,180	22
Youth crime	754,642	5

Direct payments to private barristers for family related-matters

Type of work	Payments to barristers (\$)	% of total
Family Dispute Resolution Service	688,201	11
Child protection	1,837,678	29
Family violence	414,008	7
Child support	46,307	1
Independent Children's Lawyers	1,995,911	32
Parenting disputes	1,329,129	21

Direct payments to private barristers for civil related-matters

Type of work	Payments to barristers (\$)	% of total
Commonwealth entitlements	39,251	10
Equality	4,728	1
Mental health and disability	17,447	4.5
Migration	193,381	50
Social inclusion	135,306	35

Supporting the mixed model

Throughout 2016-17, we continued our renewed approach to our compliance function by focusing on:

- training and educating private practitioners about our guidelines
- assisting private practitioners to meet our Practice Standards through advice, information, training and resources.

Quality Assurance

Private practitioners are audited on their adherence with our Practice Standards. We use a risk based approach to identify practitioners for audit, meet with lawyers to discuss the process and receive feedback about the audit process and our other processes. In 2016-17, we audited 48 panel lawyers and over 240 files in family law, summary crime and child protection. Lawyers were audited in regional and metropolitan Victoria.

The audits highlighted the following issues in some cases:

- clients were not provided with sufficient information to understand the process to enable them to make informed decisions
- practitioners did not have current knowledge and understanding of funding requirements and their obligations under the Practice Standards
- inadequate evidence of legal analysis on files.

We are using this information to inform our approach to supporting lawyers in 2017-18.

Community legal centres

Community legal centres are independent community organisations that provide free advice, casework and legal education to their communities. There are currently 50 of these centres in Victoria. Some specialise different areas of law.

More information: www.communitylaw.org.au

We administer funding to most (37) of Victoria's community legal centres, including the Federation of Community Legal Centres, and monitor their performance against service agreement obligations and service targets to ensure accountability for the use of those funds. We are increasingly focusing on working with the sector to understand and respond to legal need collaboratively through joint legal needs assessment projects.

This year saw the introduction of a new data system for the CLC sector, replacing the existing system, Community Legal Service Information System (CLSIS). Migration of data to the new Community Legal Assistance Services System (CLASS) system was completed at the end of March, however the reporting function to access CLASS data is not yet available. As such, data reports on CLC activity in this annual report only cover the eight-month period to 31 March 2017.

Community legal centre performance outputs

The following data is obtained from the Community Legal Service Information System (CLSIS) database which was used for data collection by community legal services across Australia since 2003. Not all community legal centres use this system. In Victoria, six community legal centres funded by Victoria Legal Aid are using other systems designed to meet their individual centre data requirements. Reports are provided to Victoria Legal Aid every six months.

The accuracy of individual centre data varies based on user understanding and interpretation of the system and the data categories and the timeliness of submission of the data.

As at 31 March 2017, CLC data was migrated from the existing CLSIS data system to the new national data collection system (CLASS), coordinated by the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC). Whilst centres are currently able to input data in to this new system, the reporting function in CLASS is not yet available, therefore, the following CLSIS-derived data for 2016-17 only covers the eight-month period from 1 July 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Activity	1 July 2016-31 March 2017 (8 months)	2015-16 (full year)
Information	32,629	49,790
Advice	35,636	53,943
Cases* opened	18,477	24,978
Community legal education projects delivered	595	1,041
Law reform and legal policy submissions	85	153

* Community legal centre case definition is different from a case conducted under a grant of legal assistance. It involves more than one-off advice. For example, a lawyer looking over documents, undertaking research, providing written advice, making telephone calls, advocating for a person or negotiating on their behalf, or making a simple appearance before a court or tribunal. Occasionally it involves representation in court, including complex matters.

Top 10 matters

Matter type	1 July 2016–31 March 2017 (8 months)	2015–16 Number of matters (full year)
Family or domestic violence order	13,362	17,291
Child contacts or contact orders	5,065	8,000
Government/admin issues relating to fines	4,162	5,511
Road traffic and motor vehicle regulatory offences	3,282	4,628
Property in marriage	2,270	3,881
Family or domestic violence	2,922	3,782
Divorce	2,664	3,747
Motor vehicle accident	2,365	2,852
Child residency	1,290	2,694
Family Law other	1,855	2,375

Basic analysis of this data shows a projected increase of 16 per cent in delivery of services to address family violence matters and a projected increase of 13.3 per cent in delivery of services to address fines, infringements and other government administrative legal issues.

Explanatory notes for performance outputs

Figures are from a database used by 31 of the 37 community legal centres funded through Victoria Legal Aid in 2016-17. The figures do not include client service and community and law reform activities undertaken by the following funded centres: Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria, Consumer Action Law Centre, Federation of Community Legal Centres, Homeless Law (Justice Connect), Job Watch and Refugee and Immigration Legal Clinic. These community legal centres do not use the common database. Figures do not include client advice provided by the Tenants' Union of Victoria, which records this activity on a separate database.

Funding through the Community Legal Centres Funding and Development Program 2016-17

We granted and administered funding to 37 community legal centres across Victoria and the Federation of Community Legal Centres as the sector's peak body. Funding was provided by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and by Victoria Legal Aid out of its state funding allocation.

Community legal centre	Commonwealth funding* (\$)	State core funding (\$)	Other one-off projects (\$)	Total payments (\$)
Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria**	0	324,217	0	324,217
Barwon Community Legal Service	576,148	519,654	0	1,095,802
Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre, Comm Unity Plus	265,200	646,079	0	911,279
Casey Cardinia Legal Service	339,191	381,099	0	720,290
Central Highlands Community Legal Centre	319,726	360,780	0	680,506
Consumer Action Law Centre**	321,388	1,048,656		1,370,044
Darebin Community Legal Centre	202,368	526,250	0	728,618
Disability Discrimination Legal Service**	248,769	48,294	0	297,063
Eastern Community Legal Centre	472,496	882,985	0	1,355,481
Emma House Domestic Violence Service	0	154,596	0	154,596

Community legal centre	Commonwealth funding* (\$)	State core funding (\$)	Other one-off projects (\$)	Total payments (\$)
Environmental Justice Australia (Victoria)**	0	191,333	0	191,333
Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic)**	0	826,772	0	826,772
Fitzroy Legal Service	231,651	477,835	3,000	712,486
Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre	122,348	258,473	0	380,821
Gippsland Community Legal Service, Anglicare Victoria	412,795	327,071	0	739,866
Homeless Law, Justice Connect**	181,604	336,525	0	518,129
Hume Riverina Community Legal Service, Upper Murray Family Care	557,784	315,461	500,000	1,373,245
Inner Melbourne Community Legal Inc.	243,619	239,451	0	483,070
Job Watch**	0	479,623	0	479,623
Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre, Advocacy and Rights Centre (including Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre)	244,498	862,770	0	1,107,268
Monash Oakleigh Legal Service	243,416	23,859	0	267,275
Moonee Valley Legal Service	110,278	268,916	0	379,194
Murray Mallee Community Legal Service, Mallee Family Care	557,498	179,021	0	736,519
Northern Community Legal Centre	424,681	657,977	0	1,082,658
Peninsula Community Legal Centre	870,704	1,052,981	500,000	1,923,685
Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre**	0	173,312	0	173,312
Seniors Rights Victoria, Council on the Ageing**	95,039	598,195	0	693,234
Social Security Rights Victoria	258,488	40,797	0	299,285
South East Community Links**	97,548	2,185	0	99,733
Springvale Monash Legal Service	517,668	288,574	0	806,242
St Kilda Legal Service	130,371	389,875	0	520,246
Tenants Union of Victoria**	144,788	647,093	0	791,881
West Heidelberg Community Legal Service	122,296	198,948	0	321,244
Western Community Legal Centre	505,880	1,053,050	0	1,558,930
Whittlesea Community Legal Service, Whittlesea Community Connections	272,928	480,333	0	753,261
Women's Legal Service Victoria**	1,261,224	405,588	0	1,666,812
Youthlaw, Young People's Legal Rights Centre**	163,642	175,034	0	338,676
Total	10,516,034	15,843,662	1,003,000	27,362,696


* This funding includes Commonwealth funding to the Community Legal Sector Program. It does not include other Commonwealth funding allocated directly to centres.

** Specialist community legal centre.

Explanatory notes for core funding table

These funding amounts include core grants and contributions from the Commonwealth and Victorian governments to assist funded community legal centres to meet increased staff salaries under the Social and Community Services Award Equal Remuneration Order. The table also includes one-off grants; most notably, two payments of \$500,000 for the Family Violence to Family Law Continuity of Service Delivery pilot projects. This funding is for two years of service (2016-17 and 2017-18) by two centres (Hume Riverina CLS and Peninsula CLC).

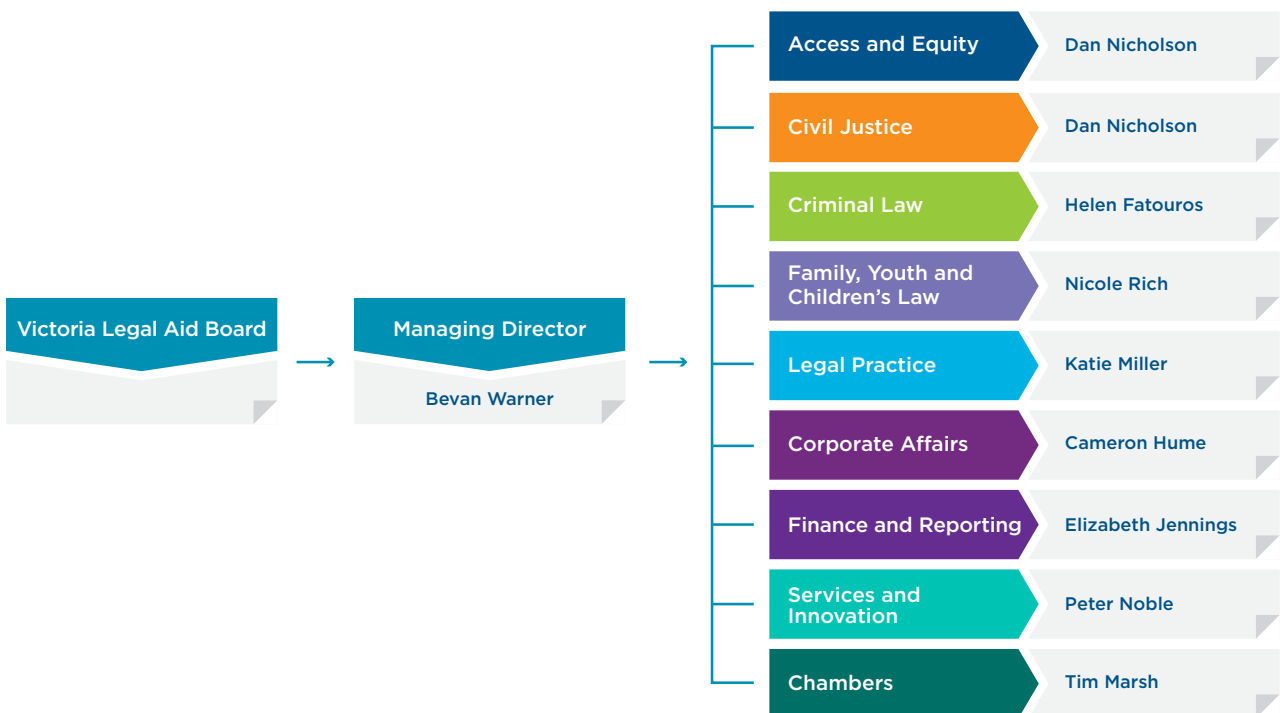
MANAGING OUR ORGANISATION



Corporate governance
Supporting our people
Legislative compliance

Corporate governance

Organisational structure



Governing legislation

Victoria Legal Aid is an independent statutory authority established under the *Legal Aid Act 1978 (Vic)*. We receive funding from the Commonwealth and Victorian governments and through the Victorian Public Purpose Fund, but are independent of government.

Our responsibilities are set out in the Act, which gives us authority to provide legal aid in accordance with the legislation and to control and administer the Legal Aid Fund.

We are also required to perform functions according to any specific written direction given by the Victorian Attorney-General. No ministerial directions were given during 2016-17.

We have legislated and organisational processes in place to ensure transparency and accountability to the Victorian public. These include external and internal auditing, regular reporting to stakeholders, and the tabling of audited financial statements as part of this report.

The Board

Our Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring Victoria Legal Aid meets its statutory objectives and carries out its functions and duties in accordance with the Act. The Board met eight times in 2016-17.

Board members

The Board has seven directors nominated by the Victorian Attorney-General and appointed by the Governor-in-Council. At least one member must have experience in financial management and one must have experience in business or government operations. One of the directors is our Managing Director.



Andrew Guy, Non-executive Director and Chairperson

Andrew Guy has more than 40 years of legal and management experience. A former managing partner at Arthur Robinson & Hedderwicks, Andrew has extensive experience as a director, sitting on the boards of several listed public companies as well as Anglicare Victoria. Andrew was appointed as Chairperson of the Victoria Legal Aid Board in October 2011.



Bevan Warner, Managing Director

Bevan was appointed Managing Director of Victoria Legal Aid in August 2008. He has experience in Labour Relations, Corrections and in Aboriginal Affairs where he developed an appreciation of the diversity and underlying causes of the over representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice and child protection systems. Bevan was formerly the General Manager of Legal Aid Western Australia.



Catherine McGovern, Non-executive Director

Catherine McGovern has extensive experience in social and health policy and government relations having held senior roles both in Australia and overseas, including as General Manager, Government and Public Affairs, at Medibank Private. Before this, she worked in merchant banking and as advisor in the Howard Government. Catherine is also a board member of Melbourne City Mission. Catherine was appointed in September 2011.



David Thompson, Non-executive Director

David Thompson has more than 30 years' experience in the finance sector in senior roles in Australia and America, including as Chief Financial Officer for the NAB Business Bank. He holds a Masters in Applied Finance and graduate diplomas in computing, chartered secretarial practice and corporate administration. He is a member of the Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand Council. David was appointed in February 2013.



Jennifer Kanis, Non-executive Director

Jennifer Kanis has extensive legal, government and community experience. She has practised in employment, industrial relations and equal opportunity law. Prior to pursuing a legal career, Jennifer spent six years as a secondary school teacher. She was elected to the Melbourne City Council in 2008 and the Parliament of Victoria in 2012 as the Member for Melbourne. Jennifer was appointed in May 2015.



Robbie Campo, Non-executive Director

Robbie Campo has extensive experience in governance, policy, public affairs and management. She has held senior management roles in the superannuation industry, including Deputy Chief Executive of Industry Super Australia, and has undertaken extensive work in legal and regulatory policy, financial oversight and government and public affairs. Robbie holds a Graduate Diploma in Applied Finance and Investment and a Bachelor of Laws (Hons). Robbie was appointed in October 2016.



Betty King, Non-executive Director

Betty King was the first female Crown Prosecutor for the State of Victoria and the first Prosecutor for the Commonwealth of Australia. She was appointed as Queen's Counsel for the State of Victoria in 1992, a Judge of the County Court in 2000 and a Justice of the Supreme Court in 2005 (retired 2015). Betty was appointed in October 2016.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee assists the Board to fulfil its governance responsibilities. It provides oversight of financial performance including:

- the annual financial statements
- assurance on the operation and implementation of the risk management framework
- overview of the scope, quality and outcome of internal and external audits
- monitoring our compliance with legal and regulatory requirements and compliance policies.

The Charter for the Audit and Risk Committee, approved by the Board, specifies the committee's purpose and objectives, authority, membership, attendance at meetings, and roles and responsibilities.

Members

The Audit and Risk Committee membership comprised:

David Thompson

Chair of Audit and Risk Committee

Andrew Guy

Non-executive Audit and Risk Committee member

Catherine McGovern

Non-executive Audit and Risk Committee member

Jennifer Kanis

Non-executive Audit and Risk Committee member

Robbie Campo, Non-Executive Director

Non-executive Audit and Risk Committee member

Betty King, Non-Executive Director

Non-executive Audit and Risk Committee member

A standing invitation to attend the Audit and Risk Committee meetings is issued to the:

- Managing Director, Chief Financial Officer, Manager Complaints and Statutory Compliance
- external auditor—the Victorian Auditor-General's Office
- internal auditor—KPMG.

These representatives receive a copy of the meeting papers and minutes. The Audit and Risk Committee met four times in 2016-17.

Internal audit

KPMG provides our internal audit services. Our internal auditing procedures assist the Audit and Risk Committee through examining our control and risk management practices and determining whether they are effective, efficient and economical in assisting us to achieve our objectives. Where necessary, improvements in procedures and systems are recommended.

Reports

The Audit and Risk Committee was regularly presented with reports on audit activities undertaken, advisory services provided and audit support carried out. Reports and advice during the year included:

- information technology project management
- business intelligence
- financial performance model
- cash management
- phone advice services.

Agency executive

The senior executive team meets regularly to plan, discuss and review operational performance.



Bevan Warner
Managing Director

Bevan was appointed Managing Director of Victoria Legal Aid on 4 August 2008. He has experience in Labour Relations, in Corrections and in Aboriginal Affairs where he developed an appreciation of the diversity and underlying causes of the over representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice and child protection systems. Bevan was formerly the General Manager of Legal Aid Western Australia.



Helen Fatouros
Executive Director Criminal Law Services
Executive Director for Goulburn region

Helen was appointed Executive Director of Criminal Law in January 2013. She was previously employed by the Victorian Office of Public Prosecutions (OPP) for 13 years. She held the role of Legal Prosecution Specialist, appearing on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions in complex indictable matters. Helen has an extensive criminal law background having also been the Directorate Manager of the Specialist Sex Offences Unit at the OPP. She also led the profession-wide implementation of the Sexual Offences Interactive Legal Education Program in 2012, earning her the Law Institute of Victoria's 2013 President's Award, for Government Lawyer of the Year. Helen is a Commissioner to the Victorian Law Reform Commission and a Director on the Sentencing Advisory Council.



Nicole Rich
Executive Director Family, Youth and Children's Law
Executive Director for Gippsland region

Nicole commenced as Executive Director Family, Youth and Children's Law in August 2013 and was formerly our Director Research and Communications. She is experienced in developing legal research and policy, including as the former Director, Policy and Campaigns at the Consumer Action Law Centre, and has practised in the private profession and community legal centres. Nicole is the immediate past Chair of CHOICE (the Australian Consumers' Association).



Cameron Hume

Executive Director Corporate Affairs
Executive Director for Wimmera region

Cameron was appointed Executive Director Corporate Affairs in November 2014, following his appointment as Director Research and Communications in October 2013. He previously worked at the Department of Justice and Regulation in project, policy and operations management roles relating to law reform and administration of the justice system. He also spent several years as a management consultant working across a variety of public sector management areas, including research and evaluation, strategic planning, corporate governance, business case development, organisational and operational reviews. This work spanned a range of social policy and operational portfolios including justice, human services and the community sector. Cameron holds a Masters of Public Policy and Management and is an independent member of the joint Finance and Audit Committee for the Sentencing Advisory Council and Judicial College of Victoria.



Dan Nicholson

Executive Director, Civil Justice, Access and Equity
Executive Director for the Western Suburbs region

Dan was appointed Executive Director Civil Justice, Access and Equity in November 2015 having acted in the role on previous occasions since joining Victoria Legal Aid in 2012 as Associate Director of Access and Equity. Prior to joining Victoria Legal Aid, he managed the Human Rights Unit at the Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation, was Associate to Justice Maxwell, President of the Court of Appeal, and worked at Fitzroy Legal Service. He has also worked on a range of human rights issues in Cambodia and Timor-Leste.



Elizabeth Jennings

Chief Financial Officer

Elizabeth joined Victoria Legal Aid as Chief Financial Officer in November 2011. She was previously Head of Strategic Finance at World Vision Australia. She has held senior financial roles in government and not-for-profit sectors. Her commitment to social justice is also reflected in a prior board role at the Leprosy Mission Australia and a current board role at donkey wheel house. Elizabeth's qualifications include a Master of Business and a Master of Assessment and Evaluation.



Katie Miller

Executive Director, Legal Practice Executive Director for the Barwon region

Katie joined Victoria Legal Aid in August 2016 with more than a decade of experience in supporting the public sector. At the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office and the Australian Government Solicitor, Katie assisted clients in administrative law, public sector governance and integrity. Katie is also a Law Institute of Victoria Accredited Specialist in Administrative Law and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. In her roles as a past president of the Law Institute of Victoria and Chair of the Accredited Specialisation Board, she developed invaluable insights into the legal assistance sector and the legal profession.



Peter Noble

Executive Director, Services and Innovation

Peter was appointed Executive Director, Services and Innovation in August 2016. He is also the line manager for the seven regional offices which don't report to other executive directors. Peter's legal practice experience has focused on the legal assistance sector, initially as a private practitioner in Queensland and later with the community legal centre sector. He led the establishment of Bendigo's Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre and Shepparton's Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre, becoming Executive Officer of their parent organisation ARC Justice in 2013. Peter's work has focused on innovative service design, including Health Justice Partnerships, and meeting the justice needs of rural and regional communities.

Independent review

Independent reviewers can reconsider or review a decision made by one of our officers or another independent reviewer, where it relates to a grant of legal assistance.

They can also hear and determine matters relating to the removal or exclusion of a lawyer from our general referral panels.

When reviewing a matter, the independent reviewer must have regard to the *Legal Aid Act 1978 (Vic)* and any guidelines determined by the Board. They can confirm, vary or change our decision.

Independent review of decisions

Review of decisions relating to a grant of legal assistance

Nature of review	2016-17	2015-16
Independent reviewer agreed with our decision	49	104
Independent reviewer changed our decision	11	14
Total	60	118

Review relating to proposed removal or exclusion of a lawyer from one of our practitioner panels

Nature of review	2016-17	2015-16
Independent reviewer agreed with our decision	0	0
Independent reviewer changed our decision	0	0
Total	0	0

Independent reviewers

We acknowledge the valuable contribution of the independent reviewers appointed under the Act:

- Andrew McIntosh (Chairperson from July 2015)
- Brook Hely (reappointed November 2016)
- Carmel Morfuni (reappointed November 2016).

Sector Innovation and Planning Committee

The Sector Innovation and Planning Committee (SIPC) is a multidisciplinary advisory group formed under the Legal Aid Act. It replaces the Community Consultative Committee and is an important part of our commitment to support disadvantaged Victorians. The committee includes private practitioners, members from community legal centres and members with experience in Indigenous organisations. It is supported by a small team of Victoria Legal Aid staff.

The committee was first convened in 2016 and provides advice on legal assistance sector reform and innovation. SIPC meets

for design-led workshops on a quarterly basis. It also uses an online platform to engage with members between workshops. This year, SIPC has provided advice on:

- The Family Law Duty Lawyer service. External consultants Portable facilitated a workshop with SIPC to explore what a successful family law duty lawyer service looks like.
- The Child Protection Legal Aid Services Review. SIPC members discussed and provided advice on four themes in the Child Protection Review; the purpose of our Child Protection Program, access to services, client-focused services and the future of the Program.
- Sector Planning. Across two human centred design workshops, SIPC members have provided advice on the Model for sector planning, the methodology, and data visualisation.

Committee members

Rebecca Boreham is a sole practitioner in Mildura, working in summary crime, Children's Court (crime and family divisions), family law and intervention orders.

Freia Carlton is the Manager of the Family Dispute Resolution Service at Victoria Legal Aid.

Lee Carnie a lawyer in the LGBTI Rights Unit at the Human Rights Law Centre.

Indi Clarke, a proud 23-year-old Muthi Muthi and Lardil man, is State Manager of the Koorie Youth Council.

James Dowsley is an accredited criminal law specialist and principal at his firm James Dowsley and Associates.

Joanna Fletcher is Chief Executive Officer at Women's Legal Service Victoria.

Eleanore Fritze is a senior lawyer in the Mental Health and Disability Law sub-program at Victoria Legal Aid.

Suzie Forell is Principal Researcher at the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales. She has over 20 years experience in justice sector research.

Mark Madden is Deputy Director of the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT University.

Helena Maher is Manager of Strategy and Planning at the Royal Women's Hospital and Company Director of Co-health.

Meena Singh is Associate Director of Aboriginal Services at Victoria Legal Aid and a Melbourne-born Yorta Yorta woman with Indian heritage.

Josh Taaffe is an accredited criminal law specialist and partner of the firm Doogue O'Brien George.

Allegra Walsh is the Director of Criminal Justice Operations at the Department of Justice and Regulation.

Supporting our people

Victoria Legal Aid is committed to support our people by:

- taking care of staff, building their resilience and supporting their professional development
- building a culture that genuinely supports staff to make a positive contribution and take pride in their unique roles
- improving the way we manage change and communicate with staff.

During 2016-17, the three areas prioritised to support our strategic commitments were employee health, safety and wellbeing; employee engagement; and building change capability.

Staff engagement survey

In August 2016, we ran our first employee Alignment and Engagement Survey designed to establish whether the day-to-day operations of our organisation are aligned with our strategic goals, and the extent of employee engagement.

We received an 82 per cent response rate which is significantly above industry average and noteworthy for a first survey.

We extensively debriefed managers and staff on the results and coordinated teams to discuss and develop actions plans in response to the results.

Our top priorities are addressing demand pressures and workload, and creating more opportunities to further connect, communicate and demonstrate understanding across the organisation. We are planning to repeat the survey in early 2018.

Employment practices

We work in an inclusive environment, supported by employment policy and procedures that reflect the values of our organisation and help us to develop and deliver services that meet the justice needs of our community. This year the implementation of new technology such as Surface Pro's, Wi-Fi enabled buildings and Skype for Business have enabled greater flexibility in work practices, allowing our employees to work from various locations. This change in the way we work has led to the development of employment policies and guidance to support a more agile workforce.

Employment and conduct principles

Our staff are bound by the values and employment principles in the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees and the *Public Administration Act 2004 (Vic)*.

In addition, our Respectful Workplace Behaviours policy has been updated to better reflect the expectations of our staff, and we have reinvigorated our Workplace Contact Officer program, to further strengthen the peer support network in place for our staff.

This year, attention has focused on successful negotiation of a new Enterprise Agreement. Importantly, the new Enterprise Agreement supports our intention to give preference to ongoing forms of employment over casual and fixed term arrangements wherever possible, acknowledging the positive impact that secure employment has both on our staff, and on the quality of services we provide to the Victorian community.

Employee benefits

Our employees have access to a broad range of flexible working arrangements that support work/life balance. We continue to encourage family friendly employment practices and our parental leave provisions continue to support staff retention. This year, 32 per cent of our staff worked part-time. Twelve per cent of staff accessed paid parental leave entitlements as a primary caregiver, and four staff accessed paid parental leave as a secondary caregiver.

Parental leave absence for primary caregivers often extends beyond 12 months and our staff can request part-time work arrangements until each child reaches school age. We expect these leave absences to remain at a similar level due to our current staff profile, which is 80 per cent female. Additionally, 70 per cent of our female workforce are under 45 years of age.

Our 2016-2020 Enterprise Agreement includes progressive provisions relating to family violence leave and alcohol, drug, or problem gambling addiction leave. We have also strengthened workplace support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with additional ceremonial and cultural leave and compassionate leave in recognition of specific kinship and family obligations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees

We are working towards creating a balanced working environment where equal opportunity and diversity are valued. This year, we implemented our first Aboriginal Employment Strategy, to support the objectives of our Reconciliation Action Plan.

In March 2016, four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees made up 0.5 per cent of our workforce. By June 2017, this had increased to 1.95 per cent (15 employees). This was due to a concerted effort to promote our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clerkship program.

In 2018, we will have our first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate Program, which will provide two graduates with the opportunity to learn on the job while completing their practical legal training requirements for admission. This program bridges the gap between our Clerkship Program and New Lawyers Program—providing a career pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students from study to post admission practice.

Workforce data

Our people resources are aligned with our strategic directions to enable us to deliver the most appropriate services at the right time, based on client needs. This year has seen demand for our services increase across the community and we have responded with the establishment of additional resources to frontline services. We added additional resources to support the new Family Advocacy and Support Services, which involves an enhanced duty lawyer service at the family law courts integrated with social support services to provide a more holistic service to families affected by family violence. Further frontline roles were added to regional locations and to support the increased demand in our Legal Help telephone services, as well as to resource the expansion of services to the new drug court based in Melbourne. We have also expanded into the Mallee region, by co-locating with Sunraysia Community Health Services (see page 41 for more details).

Details of employment levels

All employees—Demographic data

Demographic	June 2016 Number (headcount)	June 2017 Number (headcount)	June 2016 FTE	June 2017 FTE
(Gender) Male	156	164	150.1	155.3
(Gender) Female	581	615	509.4	541.0
(Age) 15-24	19	20	6.0	15.6
(Age) 25-34	247	271	66.0	257.1
(Age) 35-44	229	236	97.0	203.7
(Age) 45-54	135	143	144.0	125.0
(Age) 55-64	93	91	38.0	79.8
(Age) 65+	14	18	4.0	15.1

All employees—Classification data

Demographic	2016 Number (headcount)	2017 Number (headcount)	2016 FTE	2017 FTE
(VLA grade) VLA1	0	0	0.0	0.0
(VLA grade) VLA2	156	172	133.4	148.0
(VLA grade) VLA3	284	330	255.2	292.0
(VLA grade) VLA4	200	181	177.6	165.5
(VLA grade) VLA5	68	68	64.9	63.5
(VLA grade) VLA6	22	19	21.5	18.5
(VLA grade) Total	730	770	652.5	687.4
(Senior employees) STS	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) PS	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) SMA	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) SRA	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) Executives	7	9 ⁴	6.9	8.9
(Senior employees) Other	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) Total	7	9	6.9	8.9
Total employees	737	779	659.4	696.3

⁴ The increase is attributed to one new Senior Executive role (Executive Director, Services and Innovation) and one vacant Senior Executive role during the 2016 reporting period.

Ongoing—Demographic data

Demographic	2016 Full-time (headcount)	2017 Full-time (headcount)	2016 Part-time (headcount)	2017 Part-time (headcount)	2016 FTE	2017 FTE
(Gender) Male	117	117	13	16	126.7	128.6
(Gender) Female	289	305	167	173	402.2	424.2
(Age) 15-24	5	3	0	1	5.0	3.8
(Age) 25-34	153	159	27	31	171.1	180.0
(Age) 35-44	112	120	79	83	165.1	176.4
(Age) 45-54	73	75	43	43	103.9	106.0
(Age) 55-64	56	56	26	24	72.4	72.3
(Age) 65+	7	10	5	6	11.4	14.2

Ongoing—Classification data

Demographic	2016 Full-time (headcount)	2017 Full-time (headcount)	2016 Part-time (headcount)	2017 Part-time (headcount)	2016 FTE	2017 FTE
(VLA grade) VLA1	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
(VLA grade) VLA2	73	75	51	56	107.3	114.2
(VLA grade) VLA3	149	171	55	67	185.1	214.8
(VLA grade) VLA4	117	110	58	46	156.8	142.8
(VLA grade) VLA5	45	45	14	17	56.4	57.6
(VLA grade) VLA6	16	14	1	1	16.5	14.5
(VLA grade) Total	400	415	179	187	522.0	543.8
(Senior employees) STS	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) PS	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) SMA	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) SRA	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) Executives	6	8	1	1	6.9	8.9
(Senior employees) Other	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) Total	6	8	1	1	6.9	8.9
Total employees	406	423	180	188	528.9	552.7

Fixed term and casual—Demographic data

Demographic	2016 Number (headcount)	2017 Number (headcount)	2016 FTE	2017 FTE
(Gender) Male	26	31	23.4	26.7
(Gender) Female	125	137	107.2	116.8
(Age) 15-24	14	16	11.6	11.8
(Age) 25-34	67	81	62.3	77.1
(Age) 35-44	38	33	30.8	27.3
(Age) 45-54	19	25	15.4	19.0
(Age) 55-64	11	11	9.1	7.5
(Age) 65+	2	2	1.4	0.9

Fixed term and casual—Classification data

Demographic	2016 Number (headcount)	2017 Number (headcount)	2016 FTE	2017 FTE
(VLA grade) VLA1	0	0	0.0	0.0
(VLA grade) VLA2	32	41	26.1	33.8
(VLA grade) VLA3	80	92	70.1	77.2
(VLA grade) VLA4	25	25	20.9	22.7
(VLA grade) VLA5	9	6	8.5	5.9
(VLA grade) VLA6	5	4	5.0	4.0
(VLA grade) Total	151	168	130.6	143.5
(Senior employees) STS	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) PS	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) SMA	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) SRA	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) Executives	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) Other	0	0	0.0	0.0
(Senior employees) Total	0	0	0.0	0.0
Total employees	151	168	130.6	143.5

Workforce distribution and active workforce

The table labelled *All employees—Active workforce*, below, shows our comparative active workforce staffing levels as full-time equivalent (FTE) on our payroll. We have excluded 16.5 FTE on long term leave (including paternal leave) as these positions are usually backfilled by contract staff included in the count.

In addition to our FTE staff on payroll, we had 15 agency or labour hire staff engaged to perform the work of vacant budgeted positions during the final pay period of the 2016-17.

All employees—Active workforce

Active workforce	2016 Number (headcount)	2017 Number (headcount)	2016 FTE	2017 FTE
Active	716	761	641.0	679.8
Non-active	21	18	18.4	16.5
Total	737	779	659.4	696.3

Our comparative workforce distribution of staff across direct and indirect client service roles and corporate service roles is expressed in the table labelled *All employees—Workforce Distribution*, below.

Our roles are categorised as:

- direct client service delivery roles—involve direct client interaction
- indirect client service delivery roles—do not involve direct interaction with clients but support direct client services
- corporate service roles—deliver traditional corporate functions, such as finance, communications, human resources, business reporting and information and communication technology.

In line with our commitment to frontline service delivery, the number of direct client service delivery roles have increased. Our indirect client service delivery and corporate service roles has remained consistent.

All employees—Workforce Distribution

Workforce distribution	2016 Number (headcount)	2017 Number (headcount)	2016 FTE	2017 FTE
Direct service delivery	539	584	480.1	515.8
Indirect service delivery	114	112	99.7	100.0
Corporate	84	83	79.6	80.5
Total employees	737	779	659.4	696.3

Executive officers at 30 June 2017

We have one executive board member, the Managing Director, and seven executive director positions leading our services and functions and one Chief Counsel of Chambers. The workforce data tables below include executive officers active in the final full pay period of the 2016-17 financial year.

Number of ongoing executive officers, by gender

Class	All (No.)	All (Var.)	Male (No.)	Male (Var.)	Female (No.)	Female (Var.)
EO-1	0	0	0	0	0	0
EO-2	1	0	1	0	0	0
EO-3	8	0	4	1	4	(1)
Total	9	0	5	1	4	(1)

The executive team represents a diverse team with an equal number of male and female executives.

Reconciliation of executive numbers

Role	2017	2016
Executives (Financial Statement note 8.4)	8	8
Accountable Officer (Managing Director)	1	1
(Less) separations	0	2
Total executive numbers at 30 June	9*	7

*The increase is attributed to one new Senior Executive role (Executive Director, Services and Innovation) and one vacant Senior Executive role during the 2016 reporting period.

The following table discloses the annualised total salary for senior employees of Victoria Legal Aid. The salary amount is reported as the full-time annualised salary.

Annualised total salary, by \$20,000 bands, for executives and other senior non-executive staff

The salaries reported above is for the full financial year, at a 1-FTE rate, and excludes superannuation.

Income band (salary)	Executives	STS	PS	SMA	SRA	Other
< \$160,000	-	-	-	-	-	^3
\$160,000 - \$179,999	-	-	-	-	-	^3
\$180,000 - \$199,999	2	-	-	-	-	-
\$200,000 - \$219,999	6	-	-	-	-	-
\$220,000 - \$239,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$240,000 - \$259,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$260,000 - \$279,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$280,000 - \$299,999	1	-	-	-	-	-
\$300,000 - \$319,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$320,000 - \$339,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$340,000 - \$359,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$360,000 - \$379,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$380,000 - \$399,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$400,000 - \$419,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$420,000 - \$439,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$440,000 - \$459,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$460,000 - \$479,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
\$480,000 - \$499,999	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	9	0	0	0	0	6

^ These are non-executive staff paid above the maximum of a VLA Grade 6 - \$146,921 recognising senior technical speciality required in the role.

Health, safety and wellbeing

We have a strong Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) framework, a strategically focussed HSW Committee and an active network of trained Health and Safety Representatives.

Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is our most effective early intervention program. Increases in the use of the service will often lead to a reduction in more complex workplace issues and claims that can emerge when issues are not identified early and dealt with in a timely manner. In April 2017, we completed a tender process and appointed Assure Programs as our EAP provider for a three-year period.

In September 2016, the HSW Committee endorsed a four-year strategic vision that articulates our desire to move from a reactive to a proactive safety culture by 2020. To support us achieve this vision, an annual Health Safety and Wellbeing Management Plan (HSWMP) has been developed. This plan is designed to enhance the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff, manage hazards, and prioritise and mitigate risk. The plan is underpinned by four pillars—leadership and capability, risk

management, consultation and communication, and wellbeing and support.

In November 2016, we commenced a Personal Safety Project to understand the health and safety hazards and risks our staff are exposed to when working at off-site locations that are not controlled by us. Action plans are to be developed to address the findings based on risk level.

The number of standard WorkCover claims has decreased from the previous year, with no identifiable trend or cause. We have strengthened our approach to early intervention with our managers taking an active role in supporting their staff to stay at work and return to work early after injury. Early intervention programs are supported by People and Culture and expert external providers.

There have been no serious incidents to the regulator WorkSafe during the reporting period. There were 125 incidents reported during the 12-month period, demonstrating a doubling of incidents reported from 56 incidents in the previous financial year. The increase in incident reporting can be attributed to an

increase in training, proactive conversations and awareness by our employees of workplace hazards and risks. Of the 125 incidents reported, 124 were classified as insignificant or minor and one incident resulted in lost time from work.

The move of the Melbourne CBD office to 570 Bourke Street April 2017 presented opportunities for health and safety risk assessments to take place. The move also coincided with updating of our ergonomic e-module. Additionally, risk assessments have been undertaken at several regional offices, and greatly informed the fitout of our new premises in Shepparton.

Psychological wellbeing

Good progress has been made towards embedding a proactive safety culture, however, we still have many staff facing emotionally, mentally and at times physically confronting and demanding experiences in their roles.

We have piloted psychological wellbeing solutions to program areas, to understand what works and is most sustainable. This approach is continuing, with further work on diagnostic testing and delivery of psychological wellbeing interventions to be undertaken in 2017-18. We have also introduced workshops for staff to maintain the momentum of the psychological wellbeing work done to date. The program work that will be undertaken over the next 12 months will inform our strategic direction for staff psychological wellbeing.

Staff continue have access to a 24-hour Employee Assistance Program, that provides confidential professional counselling for personal and work-related issues. Critical incident response and support occurs as necessary. Our new provider, Assure, has additional focused programs available for staff including wellbeing coaching, Indigenous cultural assist program, manager support program, leaders and executive assistance program.

Performance against occupational health and safety measures

Incidents

Performance indicator	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
No. of incidents	125	56	31
Rate per 100 FTE	18.3	8.52	5.1

Of the 125 incidents, 124 were classified as insignificant or minor and one incident resulted in lost time from work.

Claims

Performance indicator	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
Total WorkCover claims	3	8	1
No. of standard claims*	2	7	0
Rate per 100 FTE	0.29	1.07	0
No. of lost time claims*	1	6	1
Rate per 100 FTE	0.15	0.91	0.016
No. of claims exceeding 13 weeks*	0	1	0
Rate per 100 FTE	0	0.15	0

* Data was sourced from WorkSafe Victoria's authorised agent. A claim is standard when the employer liability period (ten days lost and/or medical expenses of \$682 indexed annually) has been exceeded.

Other measures

Performance indicator	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
Fatality claims	0	0	0
Average cost per standard claim*	\$7,479.40	\$35,690.75 [^]	N/A
Percentage of claims with return to work plan less than 30 days	100%	75% [^]	100%

* Data was sourced from WorkSafe Victoria's authorised agent.

[^] Data different from figures reported in 2015-16 Annual Report due to reconciliation.

Training, development and support

Professional development

We provide training, development and support for our lawyers and staff through:

- professional support lawyers
- ongoing professional legal education
- specialist accreditation support, including study groups and materials.

Professional legal education includes training on priority topics for each practice area delivered face-to-face and online, as well as topics that span the compulsory fields of continuing professional development.

We also provide targeted internal and external training opportunities to our community legal centre lawyers and volunteers, and private legal practitioners on our panels. This year we expanded delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training, making workshops available to community legal centres and private legal practitioners in regional Victoria.

This year we also continued to work with the Children's Court of Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services to deliver multi-disciplinary training and development events. This training assists child protection practitioners, lawyers and court staff to perform more effectively in areas including child protection and permanent care reforms, court practices, family violence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence.

New Lawyers Program

Our New Lawyers Program attracts and retains high quality first and second year lawyers and provides the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively represent our unique and diverse clients. Since the first intake in September 2010, 78 lawyers have participated in the New Lawyers Program.

Participants are selected through a rigorous and highly competitive process and after two years on the program are placed within the organisation, as legal vacancies emerge. This enables the program to support agile and streamlined recruitment into lawyer roles, complementing our regular recruiting practices.

New lawyers recruited in 2016 participated in placements across our programs and offices, including our Warrnambool, Geelong, Morwell and Bendigo offices.

The program continues to attract high calibre junior lawyers and provides Victoria Legal Aid with a skilled pool of talent ready to deliver legal services across Victoria.

Law student opportunities and training placements

We continued to meet our statutory obligation to provide opportunities for law students to obtain experience in legal aid work. We have established relationships with many educational institutions, including most major universities in Victoria. We provide opportunities for students to undertake placements within our organisation to gain practical experience. In 2016-17 we continued to host law students as part of our Family Law and Civil Law Internship programs and students from Leo Cussen Centre for Law who completed their Practical Legal Training course. We also provided other volunteer opportunities for law students across our Geelong, Ringwood, Frankston, Dandenong and Broadmeadows offices.

We now have a steady stream of law students (at any stage of their law degree) completing clerkships across our program areas and offices (including regional placements). This is a program tailored to the individual needs of each student in relation to timing of placements and interest.

Specialist accreditation

We recognise the value of the Law Institute of Victoria's Accredited Specialisation program as a means of ensuring quality representation for legally aided clients. The Accredited Specialisation Program is incorporated into pathways to membership for section 29A panels. As such, we continue to support staff lawyers and private practitioners to undertake the assessment program to be recognised as Accredited Specialists.

We supported participants for accreditation specialisation by:

- providing guidance from our professional support lawyers
- holding professional legal education lectures and all day intensive sessions
- facilitating study groups
- providing study notes, resources and practice exams
- paying application fees for lawyers employed by Victoria Legal Aid.

This year we supported lawyers to participate in the criminal law and children's law accreditation assessment program.

The accreditation program runs on a calendar-year basis and 2016 figures are reported below.

Number of lawyers supported through the specialist accreditation program in 2016

Lawyers accredited as specialists

Area of law	Victoria Legal Aid lawyers	Private practitioners*	Percentage	Number
Criminal law	9	24	73	24
Children's law	2	3	0**	0**
Migration law	0	0	0	0

* This includes community legal centre and private lawyers.

**All candidates withdrew from the study support program. Two withdrew prior to the lodgement of applications for Accredited Specialisation.

Within Victoria Legal Aid as at 30 June 2017 we have:

- 33 accredited criminal law specialists
- 10 accredited family law specialists
- 14 accredited children's law specialists
- one accredited immigration law specialist
- three accredited administrative law specialists.

Number of lawyers being supported through the specialist accreditation program in 2017*

Area of law	Victoria Legal Aid lawyers	Private Practitioners**
Family law	4^	2^
Children's law	1^^	0

* Exams will be conducted in July–August 2017.

** This includes community legal centre and private lawyers.

^ An additional five candidates commenced the study support program but withdrew prior to lodgement of applications.

^^ One additional candidate withdrew their application.

Legislative compliance

This report has been prepared in accordance with all relevant legislation. See Appendix 1 for the disclosure index that identifies our compliance with statutory disclosure requirements.

Complaints

We welcome complaints as a valuable source of information about the quality of our services and a way to highlight new opportunities to improve how we help our clients.

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and fairly. Our website explains how to make a complaint if we do not meet expectations. Anyone can make a complaint about our staff, services or private practitioners representing clients under a grant of legal assistance.

In the last year, our focus has been on better integrating data from our complaint handling and other quality assurance processes. We aim to recognise high-quality work and support quality improvement wherever necessary to continuously improve the level of service that we give to our clients.

This year we received 768 complaints and enquiries, from users of our services and the general community, compared to 753 in 2016-17 (up by two per cent).

What people complained about

Nature of complaint	2016-17	2015-16	Variance
Our services and staff	196	207	-5%
Services provided by private practitioners	109	99	10%
Enquiries	463	447	-4%
Total	768	753	2%

Our targets

Complaints resolved within 28 days	2016-17	2015-16
Our services and staff	90%	88%
Services provided by private practitioners	37%	68%
Overall	64%	77%

Resolution times for private practitioner complaints exceeded our target this year due to higher than usual staff transition in the Complaints and Statutory Compliance team.

Complaints about our services and staff

We received 196 complaints about our services and staff (down by five per cent). The most common complaints were about:

- legal services (41 per cent)
- communication issues (26 per cent)
- policy and administrative processes (11 per cent)
- funding eligibility and service limitations (seven per cent).

These complaints were most commonly resolved by:

- providing information or an explanation to the complainant (32 per cent)
- the complaint not being substantiated and no further action being required (22 per cent)
- further action such as a change of practice, staff training or passing on feedback to a manager (24 per cent)
- an apology (five per cent).

Complaints about services provided by private practitioners

We received 109 complaints about services provided by private practitioners (up by 10 per cent). Overall the number of complaints about private practitioners remains low at approximately one complaint per three hundred grants of legal assistance approved to private practitioners.

Complaints about private practitioners are considered in relation to VLA's Practice Standards, the most common

complaints were about:

- Practice Standard 3.2(t)—lack of progress of legal case (16 per cent)
- Practice Standard 4.4.4(a)—requirements for Independent Children's Lawyers (10 per cent)
- Solicitor Conduct Rule 8.1—fail to follow instructions (six per cent)
- Legal Aid Act section 32—improper request for private payment (nine per cent).

These complaints were most commonly resolved by:

- the complaint not being substantiated and no further action being required (50 per cent)
- private practitioner taking additional action, such as making contact or returning fees to the client (13 per cent)
- providing additional information (eight per cent)
- panel outcome, such as a caution or notice of potential panel non-inclusion (three per cent).

Private practitioners are required to have an internal complaint handling policy, and complaints resolved under those policies are not captured in our data.

Enquiries

We received 463 enquiries this year about a range of issues including queries about another person's eligibility for a grant of legal assistance or seeking information about our services.

Government advertising expenditure

The disclosure threshold for government advertising expenditure (campaigns with a media spend) is \$100,000 (exclusive of GST). Our total advertising expenditure during 2016-17 was not more than \$100,000 (exclusive of GST).

Consultancy expenditure

Details of consultancies (valued at \$10,000 or greater)

In 2016-17, we engaged 17 consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants were greater than \$10,000. The total expenditure incurred during 2016-17 in relation to these consultancies is \$720,302 (excluding GST). Details of individual consultancies are outlined below:

Consultant	Purpose of consultant	Total approved project fee (\$) (excl. GST)	Expenditure (\$) (excl. GST)	Future expenditure (\$) (excl. GST)
Catherine Elvins Strategi Consulting	Family Law pilot evaluation	14,873	14,873	0
Catriona Lowe	Mapping provision of legal aid and services to people who rent report	15,000	15,000	0
CHW Consulting Group	Data centre tender documentation preparation	15,000	15,000	0
Code for Australia	Development of Online Referral Booking and Information Tool (ORBIT)	142,500	142,500	0
Colmar Bruton	Annual client satisfaction survey	83,050	83,050	0
David Caple & Associates Pty Ltd	Personal safety risk assessment project	32,750	29,102	0
Finity Consulting	Actuarial valuation of legal debtors	36,900	36,900	0
FM Essentials	Facilities policies and procedures review	31,140	31,140	0
Galaxy 42	Implementation of Enterprise Budget Module in the financial system	54,250	26,350	27,900
Galaxy 42	Implementation of Asset and Cash Module in the financial system	33,105	33,105	0
Insync Surveys Pty Ltd	Employee engagement and satisfaction survey	29,285	29,285	0
Korn Ferry Hay Group	Workforce planning	24,500	24,500	0
Law and Justice Foundation of NSW	Research and evaluation	200,000	100,000	0
MIP (Aust) Pty Ltd	Licences and implementation of data analytics software	38,778	12,079	26,699
Redpanther	Rethinking Advocacy in Mental Health	20,000	20,000	0
RMIT	Development of the Access to Justice Technology Program	150,000	50,000	0
University of Melbourne	Sector planning and data exploration, statistical consulting	15,000	13,363	0
WM360 Pty Ltd	Implementation, configuration, and support of Intranet and Yammer project	106,000	98,783	0

Details of consultancies under \$10,000

In 2016-17, we engaged 18 consultancies where the total fees payable to the individual consultancies was less than \$10,000. The total expenditure incurred during 2016-17 in relation to these consultancies was \$113,338 (excluding GST).

Information and Communication Technology

For the 2016-17 reporting period, Victoria Legal Aid had a total ICT expenditure of \$3,532,000 with the details shown below.

Business as usual (BAU) ICT expenditure	Non-Business as usual (non-BAU) ICT expenditure Total = Operational expenditure and Capital expenditure	Operational expenditure	Capital expenditure
\$2,661,000	\$871,000	\$0	\$871,000

ICT expenditure refers to Victoria Legal Aid's costs in providing business-enabling ICT services. It comprises Business As Usual (BAU) ICT expenditure and Non-Business As Usual (Non-BAU) ICT expenditure. Non-BAU ICT expenditure relates to extending or enhancing Victoria Legal Aid's current ICT capabilities. BAU ICT expenditure is all remaining ICT expenditure which primarily relates to ongoing activities to operate and maintain the current ICT capability.

Contracts

There were zero contracts entered into during the financial year that require specific disclosure as they were all less than \$10 million in value.

Information and records management

Victoria Legal Aid, as a Victorian Government Agency, must comply with Public Record Office Victoria standards and specifications, as well as other legislative requirements. Staff must make sure they create and maintain full and accurate records (physical or digital) of the business conducted. These records must be managed for specified retention periods and then disposed of in an authorised manner, either by destruction or transferred to the Public Record Office Victoria repository.

This year we improved information and records management by:

- continuing to clear the destruction backlog, halving Victoria Legal Aid's storage costs
- assisting all sections of the organisation by appraising and processing records stored on-site, in preparation for the Melbourne office relocation
- ensuring appropriate records storage and processing facilities were included in the fitout of Victoria Legal Aid's new Melbourne premises
- upgrading our Electronic Document and Records Management System conducting significant preliminary work on digital record keeping for client and case records
- digitisation of physical files
- revising and updating Victoria Legal Aid's Records Disposal Policy, reducing retention periods for many classes of records to achieve consistency and simplify disposal practices and to also further reduce records storage costs in the future.

Information privacy

We take our obligations under the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) seriously and are committed to ensuring our clients understand how we collect and use the private information that they entrust to us.

We received no notifications of complaints lodged with the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection this year. We made one voluntary notification to the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection about a privacy incident.

Information about how we handle personal information is available at www.legalaid.vic.gov.au.

Freedom of information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic) provides a public right of access to certain information that we hold and is an important way of promoting openness and accountability.

This year we received 20 applications. Of these:

- six resulted in documents being released in full
- one resulted in partial release of documents
- two applications that were not processed within the statutory time limits were referred for administrative review
- one request resulted in Victoria Legal Aid confirming that we do not hold documents covered by the request
- four applications were withdrawn
- six are pending.

Freedom of Information Commissioner

Members of the public can complain to the Freedom of Information Commissioner about the way we handle freedom of information requests or our decisions about freedom of information applications.

This year we were not notified of any complaints or review requests from the Freedom of Information Commissioner.

Victoria Legal Aid is committed to transparency in our policy, decision making and service delivery and we look forward to the changes to Victoria's Freedom of Information regime being introduced in September 2017.

Making a request

Access to documents may be obtained through written request, as detailed in section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act. In summary, the requirements for making a request are that it should:

- be in writing
- identify as clearly as possible which document is being requested
- be accompanied by the appropriate application fee (or a request to have the fee waived).

Access charges may also apply once documents have been processed (for example, photocopying and search and retrieval charges).

Freedom of information requests can be made by:

- email to foi@vla.vic.gov.au
- post to:
Freedom of Information
Victoria Legal Aid
GPO Box 4380
MELBOURNE VIC 3001.

Victoria Legal Aid's Complaints and Statutory Compliance team can also be contacted by phone on (03) 9280 3789 for any questions about Freedom of Information requests.

Victorian Ombudsman

The Victorian Ombudsman can investigate complaints about administrative actions taken by Victoria Legal Aid, where the complaint cannot be resolved with us directly. We were notified of three complaints lodged with the Victorian Ombudsman this year, all of which were resolved informally by providing the Ombudsman with further information.

Compliance with the *Building Act 1993* (Vic)

We are exempt from notifying our compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the Building Act because we do not own any buildings.

We continue to refurbish or relocate ageing fitouts to ensure we provide a safe, professional environment that enables mobility for all staff. Our functional design processes allow for an adaptable built environment to enable flexible work practices.

The Bairnsdale office reached the end of defects liability period in March 2017 and we completed the refurbishment of a new office in Shepparton in October 2016.

In 2017, we relocated and consolidated our Melbourne CBD presence, vacating our 338 Latrobe, 390 Latrobe and 350 Queen Street offices into new facilities within 570 Bourke Street.

Compliance with the *Disability Act 2006*

Our *Disability Action Plan 2012–2014* complies with the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic). We are in the final stages of producing an updated Disability Action Plan and expect to publish it at the end of 2017.

Key activities in 2016–17 to help improve access, inclusion and engagement of people with a disability, or who experience a mental health issue, included:

- completing two new modules in the *Learning the law* kit addressing sexting and consent, and we started to roll these out in the community
- delivering four training sessions to 116 special school teachers to assist them in using our *Learning the Law* resource in the classroom and promoted *Learning the Law* at a conference of special schools' principals
- completing research into the impact of the Fines module in *Learning the Law* for special schools' students—the report is due for release in 2017–18
- consulting and co-presenting legal education with Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALiD) self-advocates at the annual Having a Say conference
- supporting and resourcing the Speaking From Experience group who have been involved in a range of work including, consultation regarding the Child Protection Service Review and panel members on Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) staff interviews
- consumer involvement on an IMHA working group to develop consumer information and resources
- offering one student placement to a social work student with a lived experience of mental health system and/or mental health issues
- ongoing IMHA service promotion activities to increase awareness for consumers of the services we offer and how to access us, including translation of IMHA postcard into 11 different languages
- moving all Melbourne CBD staff to 570 Bourke Street, with improved physical access and height-adjustable desks.

Victorian Industry Participation Policy

We are required to apply the Victorian Industry Participation Policy in all tenders over \$3 million in metropolitan Melbourne and \$1 million in regional Victoria. No tenders were awarded over these amounts.

National Competition Policy

We comply with the requirements of the National Competition Policy, where relevant, to ensure competitive neutrality where any services compete, or potentially compete, with the private sector.

Compliance with the *Protected Disclosure Act 2012 (Vic)*

Victoria Legal Aid supports the objectives of the Protected Disclosure Act and the protection of people who disclose improper conduct. Our website contains information about how to make a protected disclosure and affirms our commitment to protection from detrimental action in reprisal for protected disclosures.

Compliance with the *Carers Recognition Act 2012 (Vic)*

We are exempt from reporting on our compliance under the Act because Victoria Legal Aid is not a public service care agency or a funded care agency. As such, the Act does not apply.

Risk management

Our risk management framework is consistent with the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework, the Australian/New Zealand risk management standard AS/NZS ISO31000:2009 and the directions issued under the *Financial Management Act 1994 (Vic)*.

Our strategic risk profile is reviewed annually in line with our risk management policy and is undertaken in accordance with the risk management procedures.

Our risk profile is developed by aggregating risks across the organisation and then identifying the top risks we face. Factors influencing the prioritisation of risks are our strategic priorities, external factors impacting on service delivery and financial commitments.

We developed mitigating strategies and actions to embed planning around identified risks into current activities. Key risk indicators were developed to track and monitor the movement of risks, against likelihood and consequence. The risk profile is approved by the Victoria Legal Aid Board. Quarterly reports against the risk profile are provided to our Audit and Risk Committee.

Identified risks

Risks identified during the year included:

- risk of insufficient funding and capacity to effectively deliver services
- failure to successfully plan and implement key strategic projects
- failure to identify, forecast and respond to service pressures
- failure to provide staff with a safe and supportive work-place and work-environment impacting physical or mental wellbeing
- failure to achieve sufficient service quality and access
- failure to improve staff engagement
- failure to support implementation of Access to Justice recommendations
- failure of information technology capacity.

Attestation of compliance with Ministerial Standing Direction 4.5.5- Risk Management Framework and Processes

I, Andrew Guy certify that Victoria Legal Aid has complied with the Ministerial Standing Direction 4.5.5- Risk Management Framework and Processes. The Victoria Legal Aid Audit Committee verifies this.


Andrew Guy

Chairperson

on behalf of the Board of Victoria Legal Aid


Dated: 29 August 2017

Additional information on request

In compliance with the requirements of the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance, information relating to the 2016–17 reporting period to be made available to ministers, members of parliament and the public on request and subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic) include:

- a statement that declarations of pecuniary interests have been duly completed by all relevant officers of Victoria Legal Aid
- details of shares held by senior officers as nominee or held beneficially in a statutory authority or subsidiary
- details of publications produced by Victoria Legal Aid about our activities and where they can be obtained
- details of changes in prices, fees, charges, rates and levies charged by Victoria Legal Aid for its services, including services that are administered
- details of any major external reviews carried out in respect of the operation of Victoria Legal Aid
- details of any other research and development activities undertaken by Victoria Legal Aid that are not otherwise covered either in the report of operations or in a document which contains the financial statement and report of operations
- details of overseas visits undertaken including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit
- details of major promotional, public relations and marketing activities undertaken by Victoria Legal Aid to develop community awareness of the services provided by it
- details of assessments and measures undertaken to improve the occupational health and safety of employees, not otherwise detailed in the report of operations
- a general statement on industrial relations within Victoria Legal Aid and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes, which are not otherwise detailed in the report of operations
- a list of major committees sponsored by Victoria Legal Aid, the purposes of each committee and the extent to which the purposes have been achieved
- details of all consultancies and contractors.

OUR FINANCES



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Year in review

We finished the year with a \$9.9 million deficit from transactions, our day-to-day business. The result is an \$11.5 million decrease on our prior year surplus of \$1.5 million, and reflects a significant growth in operating expenditure which has resulted from escalating demand for our services.

The comprehensive deficit was \$10.9 million compared to a \$2.7 million surplus last year.

The year-end cash balance was \$44.6 million.

The 2016-17 financial statements record:

- Victorian Government income of \$94.7 million
- Commonwealth Government income of \$50.4 million
- Public Purpose Fund income of \$31.1 million
- \$80.7 million spent on case-related private practitioner payments
- \$16.8 million allocated as direct funding provided to community legal centres with a further \$10.5 million allocated as indirect funding, a total of \$27.4 million funding
- a comprehensive deficit of \$10.9 million.

Five-year financial summary

Financial summary	2016-17 \$'000	2015-16 \$'000	2014-15 \$'000	2013-14 \$'000	2012-13 \$'000
Income from government and the Public Purpose Fund	176,298	169,057	161,535	158,071	147,842
Total income from transactions	181,352	173,877	166,749	162,222	155,990
Total expenses from transactions	(191,297)	(172,337)	(155,774)	(146,903)	(162,473)
Net result from transactions	(9,945)	1,540	10,975	15,319	(6,483)
Net result for the period	(10,917)	2,744	11,006	16,109	(9,332)
Net cash from (used in) operating activities	(2,129)	9,676	13,411	20,493	(1,035)
Cash at 30 June	44,619	48,703	44,201	32,185	12,893
Total assets	84,016	86,798	78,961	67,064	50,048
Total liabilities	50,633	42,498	37,405	36,514	35,609
Total equity	33,383	44,300	41,556	30,550	14,439

Our income

Over 95 per cent of our operating income is provided by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments, and the Legal Services Board administered Public Purpose Fund. The total operating income was \$181.4 million, an increase of \$7.5 million, or four per cent, on last year's income of \$173.9 million.

The Commonwealth Government, through the Council of Australian Governments' *National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services* provided \$48.6 million in funding, a 1.5 per cent increase on the \$47.9 million in 2015-16. In addition, the Commonwealth contributed supplementary funding of \$1.9 million (\$1.5 million in 2015-16) for expensive criminal cases and direct project funds.

Operating grants from the Commonwealth for community legal centres are passed directly to the centres by Victoria Legal Aid and accordingly are not recognised as income in our financial statements.

The State Government provided \$73 million in base funding, an increase of 4.5 per cent on the \$69.9 million funding for 2015-16. Specific-purpose funds were received for community legal centres totalling 16.1 million (\$15.6 million 2015-16) and for the operation of the weekend remand court, equal opportunity, family violence, and state-wide non-legal advocacy services totalling \$5.6 million (\$5.9 million 2015-16). Without these funds Victoria Legal Aid would be unable to provide these services.

Funding from the Public Purpose Fund was \$30.3 million (\$28.3 million in 2015-16), a three per cent increase on base funding plus a one-off amount of \$2 million.

The remaining operating income was \$5.1 million (\$4.8 million in 2015-16) of which the majority is from client contribution and interest income.

Income five-years

Source	2016-17 \$000	2015-16 \$000	2014-15 \$000	2013-14 \$000	2012-13 \$000
Commonwealth grants	50,423	49,401	47,228	49,366	46,875
State grants	94,713	91,343	85,034	83,042	75,304
Public Purpose Fund	31,162	28,313	29,273	25,663	25,663
Client contributions	2,609	2,152	2,025	1,331	5,157
Other income	2,445	2,668	3,189	2,820	2,991
Total income from transactions	181,352	173,877	166,749	162,222	155,990
% income annual growth	4%	4%	3%	4%	1%

Our expenditure

Our total operating expenditure this year was \$191.3 million, an increase of \$19 million or 11 per cent on last year's expenditure of \$172.3 million.

Case-related payments totalled \$80.7 million, an increase of 13 per cent. These funds are paid to private practitioners, barristers, medical experts, and interpreters as well as to third parties for services rendered on in-house cases.

The other major expense was staffing-related costs of \$68.8 million, an increase of 10 per cent on last year. The increase in these costs include annual increments paid to staff as well as salaries for staff employed for service expansion, including:

- frontline Legal Help telephone service roles
- expansion in the Mallee region
- our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy
- our law clerks and graduate programs, and
- additional duty lawyers and legal administrative staff across Victoria.

Other expenditure increased \$4.9 million to \$21.8 million. Much of the increase can be attributed to building costs. We had annual indexation of existing leases and recognition of rent and outgoings for premises that have been vacated, however obligations for payments exist under the lease. This is a one-off payment. Victoria Legal Aid moved premises in 2017 consolidating four separate CBD locations into a single leasehold at 570 Bourke Street. The move represents better value for money, providing greater amenity including improved safety for staff and clients. The move allowed Victoria Legal Aid to reduce its total space requirements by 20 per cent due to occupation of larger and more space efficient floors. The total combined cost of the new lease and fit out, removal and decommissioning costs, overlapping lease payments, was independently assessed as financially beneficial based on total cost and present value analysis.

Expenditure five-years

Source	2016-17 \$000	2015-16 \$000	2014-15 \$000	2013-14 \$000	2012-13 \$000
Case-related payments	80,677	71,169	63,567	61,942	77,461
Community legal centre payments	16,847	18,721	15,481	13,335	12,855
Employee benefits	68,781	62,156	57,465	54,294	53,577
Depreciation and amortisation	3,219	3,463	2,936	2,812	3,304
Other expenditure	21,773	16,828	15,965	14,520	15,276
Total expenses from transactions	191,297	172,337	155,774	146,903	162,473
% expenditure annual growth	11%	11%	6%	(10%)	2%

Our operations and financial position

Operations result

We finished the year with a \$9.9 million deficit from transactions, our day-to-day business. The result is an \$11.5 million decrease on our prior year surplus of \$1.5 million, and reflects a significant growth in operating expenditure which has resulted from escalating demand for our services.

Financial position

Our net financial position for the year was a deficit of \$10.9 million. This result recognises year-end adjustments of \$1 million.

The year-end cash balance was \$44.6 million, which is above our targeted \$22.0 million minimum cash balance which ensures we meet fluctuations in annual payments.

Future planning

The Victorian Government has announced additional funds to support the expansion of family violence duty lawyer services, our legal help service and reforms in the youth justice system. We expect growth to continue for adult criminal law. This demand is likely to result in a deficit on transactions as the additional income did not fund the underlying growth in the criminal justice system.

Understanding the financial statements

The 'Financial statements' detail our financial performance and overall financial position for the year ended 30 June 2017. They are presented in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the requirements set by the Department of Treasury and Finance.

There are four financial statements in this section and notes to the financial statements.

Comprehensive operating statement

This statement is often known as the 'Profit and loss statement' and details the sources of our income or revenue under the headings 'Government' and 'Operating' as well as the expenditure, or expenses, incurred in running Victoria Legal Aid during the financial year. The expenditure is operational in nature and does not include costs associated with the purchase or the building of assets (capital expenditure).

An item that is included in the operational expenditure is 'depreciation', which is the sum of the assets 'used up' during the financial year. The 'Comprehensive operating statement' includes both cash and non-cash items, and all income and expenses for the year are reflected in the statement even though some income may not be received and some expenses may not yet be paid (such as supplier invoices not yet paid for goods or services received).

A key figure in the 'Comprehensive operating statement' is the surplus (or deficit) for the year, which is equivalent to the profit (or loss) of Victoria Legal Aid for the financial year. A surplus indicates that the income was greater than the expenditure. The comprehensive result is also equal to the movement in our net assets or total equity from the prior year.

Balance sheet

This 'Balance sheet' is a snapshot of our financial position as at 30 June 2017 and details what we own (assets) and owe (liabilities). The assets and liabilities are separated into current and non-current. 'Current' indicates that the assets or liabilities are likely to be consumed or fall due within the next 12 months. The 'net assets' value is the residual of assets once the liabilities have been deducted. This represents the net financial worth of Victoria Legal Aid at 30 June 2017.

Statement of changes in equity

The 'Statement of changes in equity' summarises the change in our net financial worth during the financial year. During the course of the year the value of total equity as set out in the balance sheet changes. This statement shows the values of such changes and how these changes arose. The main reason for a change in our equity is from the 'Comprehensive result', or from the operations described in the 'Comprehensive operating statement'.

Cash flow statement

The 'Cash flow statement' summarises our cash receipts and cash payments for the financial year ended 30 June 2017. The values may differ from those shown in the 'Comprehensive income statement' because the income statement is prepared on an accrual accounting basis. This means that income is reported when earned and expenses when incurred, not when the physical cash is transacted. Cash in the 'Cash flow statement' refers to bank deposits and other forms of liquid amounts that can readily be converted to cash. Our cash arises from, and is used in, the following two main areas.

1) Cash flows from operating activities

Receipts include all cash received into our bank account from those who owed money to Victoria Legal Aid. Receipts also include the interest received from our cash investments but do not include the costs associated with the sale of assets. Payments include all cash paid by Victoria Legal Aid from its bank account to staff and payments to legal and trade creditors but do not include the costs associated with purchasing assets.

2) Cash flows from investing activities

This section shows the cash invested in the creation or purchase of assets such as property, plant and equipment and the cash received from the sale of these assets, mainly Victoria Legal Aid pool cars.

Notes to the financial statements

The notes should be read in conjunction with the four financial statements so that a clear picture can be obtained of the financial accounts. They provide greater detail to support the presented figures enabling an understanding of the basis on which the amounts reported in the financial statements are derived.

Victoria Legal Aid

Financial report—30 June 2017

Victoria Legal Aid has presented its audited general purpose financial statements for the financial year ended 30 June 2017 in the following structure to provide users with the information about the agency's stewardship of resources entrusted to it.

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CERTIFICATION OF FINANCIAL REPORT

We certify that the attached financial statements for Victoria Legal Aid have been prepared in accordance with Direction 5.2 of the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance under *Financial Management Act 1994*, the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012*, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Regulations 2013, applicable Financial Reporting Directions, Australian Accounting Standards including interpretations and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.

We further state that, in our opinion, the information set out in the comprehensive operating statement, balance sheet, statement of changes in equity, cash flow statement and accompanying notes, presents fairly the financial transactions during the year ended 30 June 2017 and financial position of Victoria Legal Aid as at 30 June 2017.


At the time of signing we are not aware of any circumstance which would render any particulars included in the financial statements to be misleading or inaccurate.

We authorise the attached financial statements for issue on 29 August 2017.



Andrew Guy
Chairperson

29 August 2017



Bevan Warner
Managing Director
Accountable Officer

29 August 2017



Elizabeth Jennings
Chief Finance and Accounting Officer

29 August 2017

Comprehensive operating statement

For the financial year ended 30 June 2017

	Notes	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
CONTINUING OPERATIONS			
Income from transactions			
Government			
Commonwealth grants	2.2	50,423	49,401
State grants	2.2	94,713	91,343
Public Purpose Fund	2.3	31,162	28,313
		176,298	169,057
Operating			
Client contributions (secured and unsecured)	2.4	2,609	2,152
Costs recovered and Appeals Cost Fund	2.5	1,279	1,271
Interest on investments	2.6	1,151	1,353
Other income	2.7	15	44
		5,054	4,820
Total income from transactions		181,352	173,877
Expenses from transactions			
Case-related professional payments	3.2	(80,677)	(71,169)
Community legal centre payments	3.3	(16,847)	(18,721)
Employee benefits	3.4	(68,781)	(62,156)
Depreciation and amortisation	4.1.2	(3,219)	(3,463)
Other expenditure	3.5	(21,773)	(16,828)
Total expenses from transactions		(191,297)	(172,337)
Net result from transactions (net operating balance)		(9,945)	1,540
Other economic flows included in net result			
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to net result			
Net gains/(losses) arising from other economic flows	8.2	(972)	1,204
Total other economic flows included in net result		(972)	1,204
Net result from continuing operations		(10,917)	2,744
Comprehensive result		(10,917)	2,744

The above comprehensive operating statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Balance sheet

As at 30 June 2017

	Notes	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Financial assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	6.1	46,337	50,524
Accrued income	5.1	888	706
Receivables	5.2	25,623	22,934
Prepayments		1,204	1,147
Total financial assets		74,052	75,311
Non-financial assets			
Property, plant and equipment	4.1	6,313	7,570
Intangible assets	4.2	3,651	3,917
Total non-financial assets		9,964	11,487
Total assets		84,016	86,798
Liabilities			
Payables	5.3	29,215	24,898
Employee related provisions	3.4.2	13,841	13,518
Other provisions	5.4	7,577	4,082
Total liabilities		50,633	42,498
Net assets		33,383	44,300
Equity			
Contributed capital		42,194	42,194
Accumulated surplus/(deficit)		(8,811)	2,106
Total equity		33,383	44,300
Contingent liabilities	7.2		
Commitments for expenditure	6.3		

The balance sheet should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of changes in equity

For the financial year ended 30 June 2017

	Notes	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Equity at start of financial year			
Contributed capital		42,194	42,194
Accumulated surplus/(deficit)		2,106	(638)
Total equity at start of financial year		44,300	41,556
<hr/>			
Comprehensive result for the year		(10,917)	2,744
Total recognised income and expenses for the year		(10,917)	2,744
<hr/>			
Total equity at end of financial year		33,383	44,300

The statement of changes in equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Cash flow statement

For the financial year ended 30 June 2017

	Notes	2017 \$'000 inflow/(outflow)	2016 \$'000 inflow/(outflow)
Cash flows from operating activities			
<i>Receipts from government</i>			
Commonwealth grants		50,198	48,706
		50,198	48,706
State		95,184	93,089
Public Purpose Fund		29,162	28,316
Public Purpose Fund—one-off		2,000	-
		126,346	121,405
<i>Receipts from operating activities</i>			
Client contributions		2,341	2,712
Costs recovered and Appeal Costs Fund		1,286	1,300
Interest on investments		1,166	1,279
Goods and services tax recovered from the ATO		8,033	10,249
Other income		20	44
		12,846	15,584
		189,390	185,695
<i>Payments to suppliers and employees</i>			
Case-related professional payments		(86,559)	(76,659)
Employee benefits		(66,427)	(61,464)
Community legal centre payments		(19,180)	(20,593)
Other expenditure		(19,353)	(17,303)
		(191,519)	(176,019)
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	6.1	(2,129)	9,676
Cash flows from investing activities			
Payments for non-financial assets		(2,064)	(3,311)
Proceeds from sale of non-financial assets		109	137
Net cash from/(used in) investing activities		(1,955)	(3,174)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held		(4,084)	6,502
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		48,703	42,201
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	6.1	44,619	48,703

The above cash flow statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

1 ABOUT THIS REPORT

Victoria Legal Aid is a statutory authority of the state of Victoria. The authority was established under the *Legal Aid Act 1978 (Vic)*.

Its principal address is:

Victoria Legal Aid
570 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

The objectives of Victoria Legal Aid as detailed in the Legal Aid Act are:

- (i) to provide legal aid in the most effective, economic and efficient manner
- (ii) to manage its resources to make legal aid available at a reasonable cost to the community and on an equitable basis throughout the state
- (iii) to provide to the community improved access to justice and legal remedies
- (iv) to pursue innovative means of providing legal aid directed at minimising the need for individual legal services in the community.

A description of the nature of our operations and principal activities is included in the Report of operations which does not form part of the financial statements.

Basis of preparation

These financial statements are in Australian dollars and the historical cost convention is used unless a different measurement basis is specifically disclosed in the note associated with the item. Amounts in the financial statements and accompanying notes have been rounded to the nearest thousand dollars, unless otherwise stated.

The accrual basis of accounting has been applied in preparing these financial statements, whereby assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses are recognised in the reporting period to which they relate, regardless of when cash is received or paid.

In the application of Australian Accounting Standards (AASs) management is required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on professional judgements derived from historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances, the results of which form the basis of making the judgements. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects both current and future periods.

Compliance information

The financial report is a general purpose financial report that has been prepared on an accrual basis in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1994 (Vic)*, the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012 (Cth)*, the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Regulations 2013 and the applicable AASs, which includes Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) and other mandatory professional requirements.

The financial report also complies with relevant Financial Reporting Directions (FRDs) issued by the Department of Treasury and Finance, and relevant Standing Directions (SDs) authorised by the Minister for Finance.

Accounting policies are selected and applied in a manner which ensures that the resulting financial information satisfies the concepts of relevance and reliability, thereby ensuring that the substance of the underlying transactions or other events is reported.

Going concern

The financial report has been prepared on a going-concern basis. Victoria Legal Aid is funded predominantly by regular appropriations from the Victorian Government and the Commonwealth Government. The appropriation for Commonwealth funding under the National Partnership Agreement for the provision of legal services will expire on 30 June 2020. The Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation provides continued support as indicated in the annual Budget Papers.

These financial statements have been prepared in the reasonable expectation that such funding will continue.

2 FUNDING DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICES

Introduction

This section presents the sources and amounts of revenue raised by Victoria Legal Aid.

Revenue from transactions is recognised to the extent that it is probable that the economic benefits will flow to the entity and the revenue can be reliably measured at fair value.

Structure

2.1	Summary of income that funds the delivery of our services	98
2.2	Government grants	98
2.3	Public Purpose Fund	99
2.4	Client contributions	99
2.5	Costs recovered and Appeal Costs Fund	100
2.6	Interest on investments	100
2.7	Other income	100

The organisation

On the 1 July 2015 the Commonwealth and the Victorian Government entered into a National Partnership Agreement for legal assistance services which will expire on 30 June 2020. The agreement specified arrangements for the delivery of Commonwealth-funded services by the state. Funding flows through the Victorian Government to Victoria Legal Aid and is reported as an indirect Commonwealth funding, 2017: \$48.6 million (2016: \$47.9 million).

Victoria Legal Aid continues to be reimbursed for Expensive Commonwealth Criminal Cases directly, 2017: \$0.8 million (2016: \$0.8 million).

Funding is received from the State Budget for supporting legal processes, 2017: \$94.7 million (2016: \$91.3 million).

Funds are provided from the Public Purpose Fund. The amount distributed each year can vary depending on the performance of the fund and when calls on the fund are made.

Community Legal Centres

Each year Victoria Legal Aid allocates a portion of its funding and provides certain administration assistance to Community Legal Centres in Victoria. For the year ended 30 June 2017, Victoria Legal Aid allocated \$15.4 million of direct funds (2016: \$14.9 million) and \$0.7 million of project funds (2016: \$0.6 million)

The organisation has disclosed this transaction in its financial statements as the Board of Victoria Legal Aid has discretionary funding choices over the allocation of state grants.

The Commonwealth provides funding to Community legal centres on a quarterly basis which Victoria Legal Aid receives on their behalf and then distributes as per the funding schedule provided by the Commonwealth. Victoria Legal Aid does not control the allocation of grants received from the Commonwealth Government and consequently does not include these funds in its financial statements as income or expenditure. The total amount received from the Commonwealth for Community legal centres to 30 June 2017 was \$10.5 million (2016: \$9.7 million).

2.1 Summary of income that funds the delivery of our services

	Notes	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Government grants	2.2	145,136	140,744
Public Purpose Fund	2.3	31,162	28,313
Client contributions	2.4	2,609	2,152
Costs recovered and Appeal Costs Fund	2.5	1,279	1,271
Interest on investments	2.6	1,151	1,353
Other income	2.7	15	44
Total income from transactions		181,352	173,877

Amounts disclosed as revenue are, where applicable, net of returns, allowances, duties and taxes. Revenue is recognised for each of Victoria Legal Aid's major activities as listed below under each type.

2.2 Government grants

Grants payable by government are recognised as revenue when Victoria Legal Aid gains control of the underlying assets. For reciprocal grants (i.e. equal value is given back by Victoria Legal Aid to the provider) Victoria Legal Aid is deemed to have assumed control when Victoria Legal Aid has satisfied its performance obligations under the terms of the grant. For non-reciprocal grants, Victoria Legal Aid is deemed to have assumed control when the grant is receivable or received. Conditional grants may be reciprocal or non-reciprocal depending on the terms of the grant.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Commonwealth grants		
Expensive commonwealth criminal cases	847	785
National Partnership Agreement	48,642	47,911
Commonwealth project income	934	525
Community legal centre projects	-	180
Total	50,423	49,401
State grants		
State base grant	72,991	69,840
State project income	5,639	5,915
Community legal centres	15,395	14,984
Community legal centre projects	688	604
Total	94,713	91,343
Total grants	145,136	140,744

2.3 Public Purpose Fund

Monies from the Public Purpose Fund are distributed to the Legal Aid Fund pursuant to section 6.7.9 of the *Legal Profession Act 2004* (Vic) and it is recognised as revenue when received. The Public Purpose Fund comprises interest and investment earnings on clients' funds held in solicitors' trust accounts. The amount of any distribution from the Public Purpose Fund to the Legal Aid Fund can vary from year to year depending on its investment performance and any other calls that may be made on the fund, as set out in the Legal Profession Act.

The Public Purpose Fund—one-off amount represents additional funds provided by the Victorian Legal Services Board for legal related services and activities.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Public Purpose Fund	29,162	28,313
Public Purpose Fund—one-off	2,000	-
Total	31,162	28,313

2.4 Client contributions

Granting of legal assistance

Pursuant to the *Legal Aid Act 1978* (Vic), as amended, the organisation is empowered to make a grant of legal assistance subject to certain conditions. Under section 27 of the Act, Victoria Legal Aid may require a client to:

- a) make a contribution towards the cost of providing assistance
- b) make a contribution in respect of any out-of-pocket expenses incurred in providing assistance
- c) pay contributions in such a manner and within such a time as the organisation directs
- d) provide the organisation with security against costs incurred on their behalf.

In accordance with Victoria Legal Aid's means test and asset guidelines, a client may or may not be required to make a contribution towards the cost of their legal assistance and an assessment is made to determine the amount. Revenue from the provision of legal services to clients is recognised at its recoverable amount. Contributions for services are only recognised when the recoverable amount can be reliably determined. Annually this amount is reviewed for impairment and a provision for impairment raised for estimated irrecoverable amounts. Where contributions are deemed to be irrecoverable they are written off as bad debts when identified. There are two types of contributions that can be imposed, secured and unsecured:

- Secured contributions are established based on expected proceeds from the disposal of property and a client is directed to sign an agreement that will place a caveat over the client's property.
- An unsecured contribution is one where the client is directed to make regular cash payments towards their legal matters.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Client contributions—secured	1,848	1,961
Client contributions—unsecured	761	191
Total	2,609	2,152

2.5 Costs recovered and Appeal Costs Fund

Revenue arising from costs recovered and Appeal Costs Fund is recognised when Victoria Legal Aid gains control of the revenue or the right to receive revenue.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Costs recovered	676	573
Appeal Costs Fund	603	698
Total	1,279	1,271

2.6 Interest on investments

Interest revenue is recognised on a time-proportionate basis that takes into consideration the effective yield on the financial asset.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Interest on investments	1,151	1,353
Total	1,151	1,353

2.7 Other income

Other income includes room hire, reimbursements and other minor income and is recognised when the right to receive payment is established.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Other income	15	44
Total	15	44

3 THE COST OF DELIVERING SERVICES

Introduction

This section provides an account of the expenses incurred by Victoria Legal Aid in delivering the services.

In Note 2, the funds that enable the provision of services were disclosed and in this note the cost associated with provision of services are recorded.

Structure

3.1	Expenses incurred in delivery of services	101
3.2	Case-related professional payments	101
3.3	Community Legal Centre payments	102
3.4	Employee benefits	102
3.5	Other expenditure	105

3.1 Expenses incurred in delivery of services

	Notes	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Case-related professional payments	3.2	80,677	71,169
Community Legal Centre payments	3.3	16,847	18,721
Employee benefits	3.4	68,781	62,156
Other expenditure	3.5	21,773	16,828
Total expenses incurred in delivery of services		188,078	168,874

3.2 Case-related professional payments in the comprehensive operating statement

These are payments made to the organisation's panel members for legal work undertaken on behalf of the organisation. This includes duty lawyers, mediation, interpreter fees, medical reports and conduct monies. Case-related professional payments are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred and fluctuate depending on demand and types of cases funded.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Case-related legal expenditure	76,289	67,591
Duty lawyer expenses	2,965	2,161
Other case-related expenditure	1,423	1,417
Total case-related professional payments	80,677	71,169

3.3 Community legal centre payments in the comprehensive operating statement

Payments made to community legal centres are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Grants to community legal centres	15,844	15,776
Project funds to community legal centres	1,003	2,945
Total community legal centre payments	16,847	18,721

3.4 Employee benefits

3.4.1 Employee benefits in the comprehensive operating statement

Employee benefits include all costs related to employment including wages and salaries, fringe benefits tax, leave entitlements, termination payments and WorkCover premiums.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Employee benefits		
Salaries and overtime	52,788	48,073
Annual leave and long service leave expense	6,503	6,139
Superannuation	5,463	4,966
Staff development	887	510
Workcover	397	281
Temporary employment cover	1,557	1,224
Other	1,186	963
Total employee benefits	68,781	62,156

The amount charged to the comprehensive operating statement in respect of both defined benefit and defined contribution superannuation represents the contribution made by Victoria Legal Aid to the superannuation fund in respect to the current services of current staff of Victoria Legal Aid. Superannuation contributions are made to the plans based on the relevant rules of each plan.

The Department of Treasury and Finance centrally recognises the defined benefit liability or surplus of most Victorian Government employees in such funds.

3.4.2 Employee benefits in the balance sheet

Provision is made for benefits accruing to employees in respect of wages and salaries, annual leave and long service leave for services rendered to the reporting date and recorded as an expense during the period the services are delivered.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Current provisions:		
Annual leave		
Unconditional and expected to settle within 12 months	4,587	4,146
Long Service Leave		
Unconditional and expected to settle within 12 months	711	710
Executive Bonus	-	136
Unconditional and expected to settle after 12 months	5,574	5,487
Provision for on costs		
Unconditional and expected to settle within 12 months	532	488
Unconditional and expected to settle after 12 months	560	552
Total current provision for employee benefits	11,964	11,519
Non-current provisions:		
Employee benefits	1,706	1,816
On-costs	171	183
Total non-current provisions for employee benefits	1,877	1,999
Total provision for employee benefits	13,841	13,518

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Reconciliation of movement in on-cost provision		
Balance at 1 July	1,223	1,144
Additional provisions recognised	40	79
Balance at 30 June	1,263	1,223

Wages, salaries and annual leave

Liabilities for wages and salaries, including non-monetary benefits and annual leave expected to be wholly settled within 12 months of the reporting date, are recognised in the provision for employee benefits in respect of employee services up to the reporting date, classified as current liabilities and measured at their nominal values.

Those liabilities that are not expected to be settled within 12 months are recognised in the provision for employee benefits as current liabilities, measured at present value of the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled using the remuneration rate expected to apply at the time of settlement.

Long service leave

Liability for long service leave (LSL) is recognised in the provision for employee benefits.

Current liability—unconditional LSL (representing seven or more years of continuous service) is disclosed as a current liability even where Victoria Legal Aid does not expect to settle the liability within 12 months because it will not have the unconditional right to defer the settlement of the entitlement should an employee take leave or depart within 12 months.

The components of this current LSL liability are measured at:

- present value—component that Victoria Legal Aid does not expect to settle within 12 months
- nominal value—component that Victoria Legal Aid expects to settle within 12 months.

Non-current liability—conditional LSL (representing less than seven years of continuous service) is disclosed as a non-current liability. There is an unconditional right to defer the settlement of the entitlement until the employee has completed the requisite years of service.

This non-current liability is measured at present value. Gain or loss following revaluation of the present value of non-current LSL liability due to changes in bond interest rates is recognised as another economic flow.

Employee benefits on-costs

Employee benefits on-costs (workers compensation, superannuation, annual leave and LSL accrued while on LSL taken in service) are recognised separately from provision for employee benefits.

3.4.3 Super contributions

The organisation contributes to a number of different superannuation schemes on behalf of staff.

Victorian Government Superannuation

No liability is recognised in the balance sheet for Victoria Legal Aid's share of the state's unfunded superannuation liability. The state's unfunded superannuation liability is reflected in the financial statements of the Department of Treasury and Finance.

This covers former employees of the State Public Solicitor's Office and any employee who joined the organisation after its commencement date and who elected to contribute to superannuation. The Victorian Government operates three schemes for employees.

	Paid contributions for the year		Contribution outstanding at year end		Total	
	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Defined Benefit Scheme	113	137	2	-	115	137
VicSuper Pty Ltd	3,272	3,269	110	5	3,382	3,274
Various other	1,901	1,555	65	-	1,966	1,555
	5,286	4,961	177	5	5,463	4,966

The employer contribution rate is 9.50% for all new employees.

Employees under the Defined Benefit Scheme are entitled to defined lump-sum benefits on retirement, disability or death. This benefit is based on years of service and final average salary.

Funds participating during the period ending 30 June 2017:

Superannuation fund schemes	Employee numbers
Defined Benefit Scheme	20
VicSuper Pty Ltd	586
Various other	362

Outstanding liabilities

The organisation had no amounts outstanding as at the end of the reporting period to any superannuation scheme. No liability is recognised for Victoria Legal Aid's share of the state's unfunded superannuation liability. There were no loans made between any of the superannuation funds and Victoria Legal Aid during the financial year.

3.5 Other expenditure

Other expenditure represents the day-to-day running costs incurred in normal operations. It also includes bad debts expense from transactions that are mutually agreed.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Other expenditure from ordinary activities		
Supplies and services	6,041	6,363
Premises expenses	13,010	8,010
Information management systems	2,661	1,974
Bad debts	61	481
Total other expenditure from ordinary activities	21,773	16,828

Supplies and services

Supplies and services payments represent the day-to-day running costs incurred in the normal operations of Victoria Legal Aid. These items are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred.

Premises expenses

Premises expenditure includes operating lease payments and other costs, including repairs and maintenance, associated with maintaining Victoria Legal Aid offices. For the 2016–17 financial year, 12 months of lease payments relating to an onerous lease contract have been expensed and a subsequent provision raised. Refer to Note 5.4.

Operating leases are those in which the lessor effectively retains all substantial risks and benefits. Payments made in relation to operating leases are charged to the comprehensive operating statement in the periods in which they are incurred, as this represents the pattern of benefits derived from the leased assets.

Maintenance and repairs of assets are required to be refurbished on a regular basis. This is managed as part of an ongoing cyclical maintenance program. The costs of this maintenance are charged as expenses as incurred, except where they relate to the replacement of a component of an asset, in which case the costs are capitalised and depreciated in accordance with Note 4.1.2.

Other routine operating maintenance, repair costs and minor renewals are also charged as expenses when incurred.

Information management systems

Information management systems expense includes internet, video conferencing, equipment and software maintenance and licence fees associated with maintaining Victoria Legal Aid information technology.

Bad debts

Bad and doubtful debts are assessed on a regular basis. Bad debts expense represents client contributions that are not recoverable from the client and are written off when they are identified.

4 KEY ASSETS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT SERVICE DELIVERY

Introduction

Victoria Legal Aid controls property, plant and equipment and intangible assets that are utilised in fulfilling its objectives and conducting its activities.

Fair value measurement

Where the assets included in this section are carried at fair value, additional information is disclosed in Note 7.3 in connection with how those fair values were determined.

Structure

4.1	Property, plant and equipment	106
4.2	Intangibles	109

4.1 Total property, plant and equipment

	Gross carrying amount		Accumulated depreciation		Net carrying amount	
	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Information technology at fair value	4,324	4,179	(3,005)	(2,479)	1,319	1,700
Furniture, fixtures and fittings at fair value	540	802	(444)	(668)	96	134
Leasehold improvements at fair value	24,191	24,077	(19,895)	(18,949)	4,296	5,128
Motor vehicles at fair value	584	599	(155)	(178)	429	421
Office machines and equipment at fair value	1,152	1,193	(1,119)	(1,146)	33	47
Cultural assets at valuation	140	140	-	-	140	140
Net carrying amount	30,931	30,990	(24,618)	(23,420)	6,313	7,570

Initial recognition

Items of plant and equipment are measured initially at cost, and subsequently revalued at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Where an asset is acquired for no or nominal cost, the cost is its fair value at the date of acquisition.

The cost of constructed non-financial physical assets includes the cost of all materials used in construction, direct labour on the project and an appropriate proportion of variable and fixed overheads.

Subsequent recognition

Plant and equipment are subsequently measured at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Fair value is determined with regard to the asset's highest and best use (refer to Note 7.3.2).

Leasehold improvements

The cost of improvements to or on leasehold properties is depreciated over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the improvement to Victoria Legal Aid. Leasehold improvements are measured at cost less accumulated depreciation and impairment.

Where applicable, leasehold improvements include a component for leasehold make-good at the end of the lease. A corresponding provision for decommissioning expense is created based on present value of the expected make-good expense.

Cultural assets

Cultural assets such as artworks that Victoria Legal Aid intends to preserve because of their unique cultural and historical attributes are valued at fair value.

4.1.2 Depreciation and amortisation

	2017	2016
Charge for the period	\$'000	\$'000
Information technology equipment	687	307
Furniture, fixtures and fittings	47	60
Leasehold improvements	1,522	2,163
Motor vehicles	115	113
Office machines and equipment	16	21
Total depreciation	2,387	2,664
Amortisation	832	799
Total	3,219	3,463

Depreciation

Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis to write off the net cost of each item of plant and equipment (excluding cultural assets) over its expected useful life to its estimated residual value. Leasehold improvements are depreciated over the period of the lease or estimated useful life, whichever is the shorter, using the straight-line method. Estimates of useful lives, residual values and depreciation method are reviewed on a regular basis.

The following depreciation rates are used for each major class of depreciable assets for the current and prior years:

Furniture, fixtures and fittings	10%
Information technology equipment	33%
Leasehold improvements	10%
Motor vehicles	20%
Office machines and equipment	15%
Cultural assets	0%

Cultural assets are considered to have an indefinite life and are not depreciated because their service potential has not, in any material sense, been consumed during the reporting period.

Impairment

Non-financial assets are assessed annually for indications of impairment.

If there is an indication of impairment, the assets concerned are tested as to whether their carrying value exceeds their recoverable amount. Where an asset's carrying value exceeds its recoverable amount, the difference is written off by a charge to the operating statement except to the extent that the write-down can be debited to an asset revaluation reserve amount applicable to that class of asset.

The recoverable amount for most assets is measured at the higher of depreciated replacement cost and fair value less costs to sell. It is deemed that, in the event of the loss of an asset, the future economic benefits arising from the use of the asset will be replaced unless a specific decision to the contrary has been made.

4.1.3 Reconciliation of movements in carrying amount of property, plant and equipment

	Information technology	Furniture, fixtures and fittings	Leasehold improvements	Motor vehicles	Office machines and equipment	Cultural assets	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
2017							
Carrying amount at start of year	1,700	134	5,128	421	47	140	7,570
Additions	306	20	715	206	2	-	1,249
Revaluations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	(11)	(25)	(83)	-	-	(119)
Depreciation	(687)	(47)	(1,522)	(115)	(16)	-	(2,387)
Carrying amount at end of year	1,319	96	4,296	429	33	140	6,313
2016							
Carrying amount at start of year	327	189	5,118	405	71	107	6,217
Additions	1,758	6	2,230	248	-	-	4,242
Revaluations	-	-	-	-	-	33	33
Disposals	(78)	-	(57)	(119)	(3)	-	(258)
Depreciation	(307)	(60)	(2,163)	(113)	(21)	-	(2,664)
Carrying amount at end of year	1,700	134	5,128	421	47	140	7,570

Property, plant and equipment is classified as 'Public safety and environment by 'purpose' for which the assets are used, according to one of five 'purpose groups' based upon Government Purpose Classifications

4.2 Intangible assets

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Software at cost	8,874	8,308
Less: accumulated amortisation	(5,223)	(4,391)
	3,651	3,917

Reconciliation

Reconciliations of the carrying amounts of each class of intangible assets at the beginning and end of the current and previous financial year are set out below.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Software		
Carrying amount at beginning of year	3,917	4,657
Additions	572	58
Disposals	(6)	-
Amortisation	(832)	(799)
Carrying amount at end of year	3,651	3,917

Intangible assets represent identifiable non-monetary assets without physical substance.

Purchased intangible assets are initially recognised at cost. When the recognition criteria in AASB 138 *Intangible Assets* is met, internally generated intangible assets are recognised at cost. Subsequently, intangible assets with finite useful lives are carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and accumulated impairment losses. Depreciation and amortisation begins when the asset is available for use, that is, when it is in location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

An **internally generated intangible asset** arising from development is recognised if, and only if, all of the following are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the intangible asset so that it will be available for use or sale
- an intention to complete the intangible asset and use or sell it
- the ability to use or sell the intangible asset
- the intangible asset will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the intangible asset
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the intangible asset during its development.

Where no internally generated asset can be recognised, development expenditure is recognised as an expense in the period incurred.

Intangible assets are measured at cost less accumulated amortisation and impairment, and are amortised on a straight-line basis over their useful lives as follows:

Capitalised software and development costs—3-10 years

Intangible assets with indefinite lives (and intangible assets not yet available for use) are tested annually for impairment and whenever there is an indication that the asset may be impaired.

5 OTHER ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Introduction

This section sets out those assets and liabilities that arose from Victoria Legal Aid's operations.

Structure

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5.1 Accrued income

	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
Expensive commonwealth criminal cases	653	456
Interest accrual	235	250
	888	706

Accrued income represents amounts that Victoria Legal Aid has earned through the provision of goods and services or obtained the right to receive. The amounts are recognised as an asset and income as the income recognition criteria are met but the cash will be received in the new reporting period.

5.2 Receivables

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Contractual		
<i>Secured</i>		
Secured client contributions receivable	19,397	18,990
Provision for secured client contributions	(6,608)	(5,954)
Secured client contributions receivable at net present value	12,789	13,036
<i>Unsecured</i>		
Unsecured client contributions receivable	4,733	4,514
Provision for unsecured client contributions	(2,428)	(1,964)
Unsecured client contributions receivable at net present value	2,305	2,550
Secured client contributions receivable on unfinalised matters	1,580	1,864
Total client contributions	16,674	17,450
Other receivables	12	15
Statutory		
GST receivable	8,937	5,469
Total receivables	25,623	22,934
<i>Represented by:</i>		
Current receivables	10,503	7,111
Non-current receivables	15,120	15,823
	25,623	22,934

Receivables

Include client contributions, GST receivables and other receivables.

Contributions

Client contribution receivables arise as a result of contributions assessed as above and are recorded at their recoverable amount.

Impairment of legal debtors is reviewed on an annual basis. A provision for impairment is raised for estimated irrecoverable amounts, determined by the actuarial assessment. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and also in future periods that are affected by the revision. Bad debts are written off when identified.

Receivables client contributions

Measurement of receivables for secured client contributions is based on an actuarial assessment which makes reference to annual modelling and historical data on debt recovery.

Finity Consulting Pty Limited actuaries perform an annual independent assessment of the net present value of receivables. The analysis undertaken reviews the receivable portfolio, recovery history and the current and forecast financial environment to determine a recoupment pattern. This payment pattern was discounted by 3.20% (2016: 2.65%) for secured receivables which is the forecast earnings rate of the organisation's investment portfolio to determine the net present value. The average repayment time for unsecured receivables is significantly less than that for secured, and therefore a different discount rate of 2.25% was used for 2017 (2016: 2.1%).

Provision for secured client contributions

	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
Provision for secured client contributions		
Balance at 1 July	5,954	7,043
Movements in actuarial assessment of secured client contributions receivable	654	(1,089)
Balance at 30 June	6,608	5,954
Provision for unsecured client contributions		
Balance at 1 July	1,964	2,171
Re-assessments and bad debts written-off		
Increase/(decrease) in provision for re-assessments and bad debt write-downs	61	481
Movements in actuarial assessment of unsecured client contributions receivable	403	(688)
Balance at 30 June	2,428	1,964
Total provision for client contributions	9,036	7,918

A provision is made against secured client contributions, determined by actuarial assessment of the recoverable amount. Secured debtors are long term, therefore the balance is measured at the net present value. The recoverable amount estimates the extent of future debts receivable after adjustments and the discount to net present value

A provision for impairment has been made for unsecured client contributions receivable. The assessment estimates future cash flows receivable after adjustments and bad debts determined by reference to past default experience, and discounts the estimate to the net present value. Actuarial assessment of the recoverable amount is used.

Ageing analysis of contractual receivables

	Carrying amount	Not past due and not impaired	Past due but not impaired				Impairment
			Less than 1 month	1-3 months	3 months -1 year	Greater than 1 year	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
2017							
Receivables ⁽ⁱ⁾	16,686	-	-	-	1,566	15,120	9,036
	16,686	-	-	-	1,566	15,120	9,036
2016							
Receivables ⁽ⁱ⁾	17,465	-	-	-	2,291	15,174	7,918
	17,465	-	-	-	2,291	15,174	7,918

Note: (i) The carrying amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian government and GST recoverable/payable).

No interest is charged on receivables.

5.3 Payables

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Contractual		
Case-related professional creditors	16,789	14,877
Sundry payables	6,045	4,267
Statutory		
GST Payable	4,663	3,933
Monies held in trust	1,718	1,821
Total payables	29,215	24,898
Represented by:		
Current payables	29,215	24,898
Non-current payables	-	-
	29,215	24,898

The average credit period for creditors is 30 days. No interest is charged.

Payables are recognised when Victoria Legal Aid becomes obliged to make future payments resulting from the purchase of goods and services.

Case-related professional payments

Legal creditors represent amounts owing to the organisation's panel members for legal work undertaken on behalf of the organisation. The amount owing to legal creditors for work performed comprises two components:

- (i) amounts certified but not paid
- (ii) amounts incurred but not yet invoiced at balance date.

Measurement of outstanding payments for case-related professional creditors is based on an assessment of outstanding claims. The assessment makes reference to historical data.

An assessment was undertaken by Victoria Legal Aid to identify amounts owing to legal creditors for work performed prior to 30 June 2017 but not yet invoiced. The assessment is based on an analysis of all historical files. These were examined to determine an average cost per file, the average period for finalisation and typical payment profile. We have estimated the value of work in progress by comparing the payments made on each file at balance date with the expected average for the file, and made an adjustment to our legal creditors balance for the difference.

No interest charge is applicable.

Monies held in trust

Victoria Legal Aid receives funding from the Department of Justice and Regulation to provide legal assistance for witnesses examined by the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption (IBAC) Commission. The money is held in trust and drawn down when expenditure is incurred.

Sundry payables

The amounts are unsecured and are usually paid within 30 days of recognition. No interest is charged within the first 30 days. Payables are measured at face value.

The maturity profile of financial liabilities held by Victoria Legal Aid are detailed below.

	Carrying amount	Nominal amount	Less than 1 month	Maturity dates		
				1-3 months	3 months-1 year	1-5 years
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
2017						
Case-related professional creditors	16,789	16,789	6,249	10,540	-	-
Sundry payables ⁽ⁱ⁾	6,045	6,045	412	5,633	-	-
	22,834	22,834	6,661	16,173	-	-
2016						
Case-related professional creditors	14,877	14,877	4,774	10,103	-	-
Sundry payables ⁽ⁱ⁾	4,267	4,267	655	3,612	-	-
	19,144	19,144	5,429	13,715	-	-

Note: (i) The carrying amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian government and GST recoverable/payable).

5.4 Other provisions

Provisions

Provisions are recognised when Victoria Legal Aid has a present obligation, the future sacrifice of economic benefits is probable, and the amount of the provision can be measured reliably.

The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the consideration required to settle the present obligation at reporting date, taking into account the risks and uncertainties surrounding the obligation. Where a provision is measured using the cash flows estimated to settle the present obligation, its carrying amount is the present value of those cash flows.

Other provisions	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
Current provisions		
Onerous lease contract	3,886	-
Decommissioning	2,244	-
Total current provisions	6,130	-
Non-current provisions		
Decommissioning	1,447	4,082
Total non-current provisions	1,447	4,082
Total provisions	7,577	4,082

Reconciliation of movements in provisions	Onerous contracts	Decommission	Total
Balance at 1 July	-	4,082	4,082
Additional provision recognised	3,886	-	3,886
Reductions in payments	-	(247)	(247)
Unwinding of discount and effect of changes in the discount rate	-	(144)	(144)
Balance at 30 June	3,886	3,691	7,577

When some or all of the economic benefits required to settle a provision are expected to be recognised from a third party, the receivable is recognised as an asset if it is virtually certain that recovery will be received and the amount of the receivable can be measured reliably.

The provision for decommissioning represents the present value of future leasehold make-good expense at the end of the lease. The unexpired term of the leases vary from one month to nine years.

The decommissioning provision is recognised in accordance with the lease agreement over the premises. Victoria Legal Aid must remove all leasehold improvements and restore the premises to original condition at the end of the lease term.

For the 2016-17 financial year, an onerous lease contract provision has been raised to recognise payments for a lease that expires at 30 June 2018. Victoria Legal Aid will not use and will derive no benefit from this lease because it moved premises by consolidating four separate CBD locations into a single leasehold at 570 Bourke Street. The move represents better value for money, providing greater amenity including improved safety for staff and clients. The move allowed Victoria Legal Aid to reduce its total space requirements by 20 per cent due to occupation of larger and more space efficient floors. The total combined cost of the new lease and fit out, removal and decommissioning costs, including the onerous lease contract provision, was independently assessed as financially beneficial based on total cost and present value analysis.

6 HOW WE FINANCE OUR OPERATIONS

Introduction

This section provides information on the sources of finance utilised by Victoria Legal Aid during its operations and information on current commitments for expenditure.

Structure

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6.1 Cash flow information and balances

Cash and cash deposits

Cash and deposits, including cash equivalents, comprise cash on hand, cash in banks and deposits at call, and highly liquid investments with an original maturity of three months or less, that are readily convertible to cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Cash at bank and on hand	8,901	9,282
Term deposits	35,718	39,421
Monies held in trust	1,718	1,821
	46,337	50,524

Monies held in trust

Monies held in trust are for the purpose of administering specific matters and are held on behalf of the Department of Justice and Regulation.

The above figures are reconciled to cash at the end of the financial year as shown in the cash flow statement as follows:

Cash at bank and on hand	8,901	9,282
Term deposits	35,718	39,421
Balance as per statement of cash flows	44,619	48,703

Reconciliation of net results from continuing operations to net cash inflow from operating activities

	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
Net result from continuing operations	(10,917)	2,744
Depreciation and amortisation	3,219	3,463
Net (gain) loss on disposal of non-current assets	10	197
Movement in adjustment for recoverable amount	61	140
Change in operating assets and liabilities		
(Increase) decrease in accrued income	(182)	449
Decrease (increase) in receivables	(2,743)	(1,242)
Decrease (increase) in prepayments	286	(282)
Increase (decrease) in trade creditors	2,388	1,960
Increase (decrease) in case-related professional creditors	1,912	1,628
Increase (decrease) in employee provisions	323	619
Increase (decrease) in other provisions	3,514	-
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities	(2,129)	9,676

6.2 Trust account

Victoria Legal Aid as a corporate entity under the *Legal Practice Act 1996* (Vic) maintains a trust account in accordance with that Act.

	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
<i>Victoria Legal Aid</i> <i>Trust account statement of receipts and payments</i> <i>For the year ended 30 June 2017</i>		
Receipts		
Balance at beginning of year	346	225
Amounts received from Legal Practice Board	-	11
Amounts received on behalf of clients	278	294
	624	530
Less Payments		
Amounts paid on behalf of clients	246	184
Balance at end of year	378	346
This amount is represented by:		
Cash at bank	207	175
Deposits with the Legal Practice Board	171	171
	378	346

The trust fund does not form part of the organisation's financial statements. It is included for information purposes only and is audited by a private accounting firm.

6.3 Commitments

Commitments include those operating, capital and other outsourcing commitments arising from non-cancellable contractual or statutory sources and are disclosed at their nominal value and inclusive of GST payable.

Commitments for expenditure

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Capital commitments		
Commitments for the acquisition of plant and equipment contracted for at the reporting date but not recognised as liabilities, payable:		
Within one year	162	154
	162	154
Lease commitments		
Commitments in relation to non-cancellable operating leases for office equipment and rental for premises contracted for at the reporting date but not recognised as liabilities, payable:		
Within one year	5,658	5,970
Later than one year but not later than five years	20,835	22,898
Later than five years	38,257	42,475
	64,750	71,343
Other expenditure commitments		
Commitments for the acquisition of other operations and maintenance contracted for at the reporting date but not recognised as liabilities, payable:		
Within one year	482	618
	482	618
Outsourcing commitments		
Commitments under outsourcing contracts for legal services at the reporting date but not recognised as liabilities, payable:		
Within one year	32,513	21,382
Later than one year but not later than five years	14,828	10,643
	47,341	32,025
Total commitments for expenditure (inclusive of GST)	112,735	104,140
Less GST recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office	10,248	9,467
Total commitments for expenditure (exclusive of GST)	102,487	94,673

7 RISKS, CONTINGENCIES AND VALUATION JUDGEMENTS

Introduction

This section sets our financial instrument specific information (including exposures to financial risks) as well as those items that are contingent in nature or require a higher level of judgement to be applied, which for Victoria Legal Aid related mainly to fair value determination.

Structure

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7.1 Financial instruments specific disclosures

Introduction

Financial instruments arise out of contractual agreements that give rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

Categories of financial instruments

Loans and receivables and cash are financial instrument assets with fixed and determinable payments that are not quoted on an active market. These assets and liabilities are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequent to initial measurement, loans and receivables are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method (and for assets, less any impairment). Victoria Legal Aid recognises the following assets in this category:

- **Cash at bank and on hand** are stated at their principal amount. Interest is recognised in the comprehensive operating statement when earned.
- **Monies held in trust** are not recognised in the comprehensive operating statement, but is offset by related expenditure when incurred.
- **Client contribution receivable** are actuarially adjusted to their net present value.
- **Other receivables including accrued income** is recognised in the comprehensive operating statement when earned, but not yet received.
- **Term deposits** are stated at their principal amount. Interest is recognised in the comprehensive operating statement when earned.

Financial liabilities at amortised cost are initially recognised on the date they are originated. They are initially measured at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequently to initial recognition, these financial instruments are measured at amortised cost with any difference between the initial recognised amount and the redemption value being recognised in profit and loss over the period of the interest bearing liability, using effective interest rate method. Victoria Legal Aid recognises the following liabilities in this category.

- **Case-related professional creditors** liabilities are recognised for amounts to be paid in the future for goods and services received, whether or not billed to the organisation.
- **Monies held in trust** are not recognised in the comprehensive operating statement, but is offset by related expenditure when incurred.
- **Sundry payables** are recognised for amounts to be paid in the future for goods and services received, whether or not billed to the organisation.

Impairment of financial assets: all financial assets are assessed annually for indications of impairment. The allowance is the difference between the financial asset's carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows, discounted at the effective interest rate.

7.1.1 Financial instruments: Categorisation

2017	Contractual financial assets-loans and receivables and cash	Contractual financial liabilities at amortised cost	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Contractual financial assets			
Cash at bank and on hand	8,901	-	8,901
Monies held in trust	1,718	-	1,718
Client contribution receivable	16,674	-	16,674
Accrued income	235	-	235
Other receivables ⁽ⁱ⁾	12	-	12
Term deposits	35,718	-	35,718
Total contractual financial assets	63,258	-	63,258
Contractual financial liabilities			
Case-related professional creditors	-	16,789	16,789
Monies held in trust	-	1,718	1,718
Sundry payable ⁽ⁱ⁾	-	6,045	6,045
Total contractual financial liabilities	-	24,552	24,552
2016			
Contractual financial assets			
Cash at bank and on hand	9,282	-	9,282
Monies held in trust	1,821	-	1,821
Client contribution receivable	17,450	-	17,450
Accrued income	250	-	250
Other receivables ⁽ⁱ⁾	15	-	15
Term deposits	39,421	-	39,421
Total contractual financial assets	68,239	-	68,239
Contractual financial liabilities			
Case-related professional creditors	-	14,877	14,877
Monies held in trust	-	1,821	1,821
Sundry payable ⁽ⁱ⁾	-	4,267	4,267
Total contractual financial liabilities	-	20,965	20,965

Note: (i) The carrying amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian government and GST recoverable/payable).

7.1.2 Financial risk management objectives and policies

Victoria Legal Aid's activities do not expose it to any significant financial risks other than interest rates held on deposit. Victoria Legal Aid does not enter into derivative financial instruments to manage its exposure to interest rate risk.

Details of the significant accounting policies and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement, and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, with respect to each class of financial asset and financial liability.

The main purpose in holding financial instruments is to prudentially manage Victoria Legal Aid's financial risks within government policy parameters.

Victoria Legal Aid's main financial risks include credit risk, liquidity risk and interest rate risk. Victoria Legal Aid manages these financial risks in accordance with its financial risk management policy.

Victoria Legal Aid uses different methods to measure and manage the different risks to which it is exposed. Primary responsibility for the identification and management of financial risks rests with the Audit and Risk Committee.

Financial instruments: Credit risk

Credit risk refers to the risk that a counterparty will default on its contractual obligations resulting in financial loss to Victoria Legal Aid. Victoria Legal Aid has adopted a policy of obtaining sufficient collateral where appropriate, as a means of mitigating the risk of financial loss from defaults. Victoria Legal Aid measures credit risk on a fair value basis.

Victoria Legal Aid has a significant credit risk exposure to its client contributions receivable balance. These receivables are established on the basis of representation provided to clients and their ability to pay for such services following an assessment of their disposable income and net assets held. Services are provided where individuals do not have sufficient funds to afford privately funded legal representation. In this respect, the likelihood and timing of recovery may vary significantly between individual debtors. The services of a qualified actuary are utilised to establish the recoverable amount of these receivables.

The credit risk on liquid funds is limited because the counterparties are banks with high credit ratings assigned by international credit-rating agencies.

The carrying amount of the financial assets recorded in the financial statements, net of any allowances for losses, represents Victoria Legal Aid's maximum exposure to credit risk without taking account of the value of any collateral obtained.

Financial instruments: Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that Victoria Legal Aid will be unable to meet its payment obligations when they fall due. Victoria Legal Aid operates under the Government fair payments policy of settling financial obligations within 30 days and in the event of a dispute, making payments within 30 days from the date of resolution.

Ultimate responsibility for liquidity risk management rests with the Board, who have built an appropriate liquidity risk management framework for the management of Victoria Legal Aid's short, medium and long-term funding and liquidity. This framework takes into consideration that Victoria Legal Aid is prohibited by the *Legal Aid Act 1978 (Vic)* from incurring borrowing costs and, consequently, borrowing funds. Victoria Legal Aid manages its liquidity risk by maintaining adequate cash reserves, and by continuously monitoring forecasts and actual cash flows while matching the maturity profiles of financial assets and liabilities.

Financial instruments: Interest rate risk

Fair value interest rate risk is the risk that fair value of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. Victoria Legal Aid does not hold any interest bearing financial instruments that are measured at fair value, and therefore has no exposure to fair value interest rate risk.

Cash flow interest rate risk is the risk that the future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. Victoria Legal Aid has minimal exposure to cash flow interest rate risks through cash and deposits and term deposits.

Victoria Legal Aid manages this risk by mainly undertaking fixed rate or non-interest bearing financial instruments with relatively even maturity profiles, with only insignificant amounts of financial instruments at floating rate. Management has concluded for cash at bank and bank overdraft, as financial assets that can be left at floating rate without necessarily exposing the organisation to significant bad risk, management monitors movement in interest rates on a daily basis.

The carrying amounts of financial assets and financial liabilities that are exposed to interest rates and Victoria Legal Aid's sensitivity to interest rate risk are set out in the table that follows.

Interest rate exposure of financial instruments

		Weighted average interest rate	Carrying amount	Fixed interest rate	Variable interest rate	Non- interest bearing
2017		%	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
	Notes					
Financial assets						
Cash at bank and on hand	6.1	1.49%	8,901	-	8,901	-
Monies held in trust	6.1	1.63%	1,718	-	1,718	-
Accrued investment income	5.1	0%	235	-	-	235
Term deposits	6.1	1.97%	35,718	35,718	-	-
Receivables ⁽ⁱ⁾	5.2	0%	16,686	-	-	16,686
Total financial assets			63,258	35,718	10,619	16,921
Financial liabilities						
Case-related professional creditors	5.3	0%	16,789	-	-	16,789
Monies held in trust		0%	1,718	-	-	1,718
Sundry payables ⁽ⁱ⁾	5.3	0%	6,045	-	-	6,045
Total financial liabilities			24,552	-	-	24,552

Note: (i) The carrying amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian government and GST recoverable/payable).

2016	Notes	Weighted average interest rate	Carrying amount	Fixed interest rate	Variable interest rate	Non-interest bearing
		%	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Financial assets						
Cash at bank and on hand	6.1	1.93%	9,282	-	9,282	-
Monies held in trust	6.1	2.01%	1,821	-	1,821	-
Accrued investment income	5.1	0%	250	-	-	250
Term deposits	6.1	2.47%	39,421	39,421	-	-
Receivables ⁽ⁱ⁾	5.2	0%	17,465	-	-	17,465
Total financial assets			68,239	39,421	11,103	17,715
Financial liabilities						
Case-related professional creditors	5.3	0%	14,877	-	-	14,877
Monies held in trust	5.3	0%	1,821	-	-	1,821
Sundry payables ⁽ⁱ⁾	5.3	0%	4,267	-	-	4,267
Total financial liabilities			20,965	-	-	20,965

Note: (i) The carrying amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian government and GST recoverable/payable).

Interest rate risk sensitivity

	Carrying amount	2017		2016		
		-25 basis points Net result	+ 100 basis points Net result	Carrying amount	-25 basis points Net result	+ 100 basis points Net result
Contractual financial assets						
Cash at bank and on hand	8,901	(22)	89	9,282	(23)	93

Interest rate analysis is based upon financial assets not exceeding one year which are all fixed interest rates. Minimum and maximum exposures are calculated at shifts of 25 basis points and 100 basis points respectively. A net decrease in interest translates into a fall in revenue as investment income is reduced.

7.2 Contingent liabilities

The organisation does not have any contingent liabilities or claims of a material nature which have not already been disclosed in these financial statements (2016: Nil).

7.3 Fair value determination

Significant judgement: Fair value measurements of assets and liabilities

Fair value determination requires judgement and the use of assumptions. This section discloses the most significant assumptions used in determining fair values. Changes to assumptions could have a material impact on the results and financial position of the organisation.

This section sets out the information on how Victoria Legal Aid determined fair value for financial reporting purposes. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

Consistent with AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement, Victoria Legal Aid determines the policies and procedures for both recurring fair value measurements such as property, plant and equipment, and financial instruments in accordance with the requirements of AASB 13 and the relevant Financial Reporting Directions.

Fair value hierarchy

All assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within the fair value hierarchy, described as follows, based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole:

- Level 1—quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities
- Level 2—valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable
- Level 3—valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

For the purpose of fair value disclosures, Victoria Legal Aid has determined classes of assets and liabilities on the basis of the nature, characteristics and risks of the asset or liability and the level of the fair value hierarchy as explained above.

How this section is structured

For those assets and liabilities for which fair values are determined, the following disclosures are provided:

- carrying amount and the fair value (which would be the same for those assets measured at fair value)
- which level of the fair value hierarchy was used to determine the fair value.

This section is divided between disclosures in connection with fair value determination for financial instruments (refer to Note 7.1) and non-financial physical assets (refer to Note 4.1).

7.3.1 Fair value determination of financial assets and liabilities

The fair values and net fair values of financial instrument assets and liabilities are determined as follows:

- Level 1—the fair value of financial instrument with standard terms and conditions and traded in active liquid markets are determined with reference to quoted market prices
- Level 2—the fair value is determined using inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the financial asset or liability, either directly or indirectly
- Level 3—the fair value is determined in accordance with generally accepted pricing models based on discounted cash flow analysis using unobservable market inputs.

The net fair value of other monetary financial assets and financial liabilities is based upon market prices where a market exists or by discounting the expected future cash flows by the current interest rates for assets and liabilities with similar risk profiles.

On-balance sheet

The Directors and Board consider the net fair value of cash and cash equivalents and non-interest-bearing monetary financial assets and financial liabilities of Victoria Legal Aid approximates their carrying amounts.

The carrying amounts and net fair values of financial assets and liabilities at reporting date are:

	2017			2016		
	Carrying amount	Fair value at end of period using:		Carrying amount	Fair value at end of period using:	
		Level 1 ⁽ⁱ⁾	Level 2 ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾		Level 1 ⁽ⁱ⁾	Level 2 ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾
\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	
On-balance sheet financial instruments						
Financial assets						
Cash at bank and on hand	8,901	8,901	-	9,282	9,282	-
Monies Held in Trust	1,718	1,718	-	1,821	1,821	-
Accrued investment income	235	-	235	250	-	250
Term deposits	35,718	35,718	-	39,421	39,421	-
Receivables ⁽ⁱ⁾	16,686	-	16,686	17,465	-	17,465
	63,258	46,337	16,921	68,239	50,524	17,715
Financial liabilities						
Case-related professional creditors	16,789	-	16,789	14,877	-	14,877
Monies Held in Trust	1,718	1,718	-	1,821	1,821	-
Sundry payables ⁽ⁱ⁾	6,045	-	6,045	4,267	-	4,267
	24,552	1,718	22,834	20,965	1,821	19,144

Note: (i) The carrying amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian government and GST recoverable/payable)
(ii): There is no significant transfers between level 1 and level 2 during the year.

7.3.2 Fair value determination of non-financial physical assets

	2017			2016		
	Carrying amount	Fair value at end of period using:		Carrying amount	Fair value at end of period using:	
		Level 2	Level 3		Level 2	Level 3
\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	
Information technology	1,319	-	1,319	1,700	-	1,700
Furniture, fixtures and fittings	96	-	96	134	-	134
Leasehold improvements	4,296	-	4,296	5,128	-	5,128
Motor vehicles	429	-	429	421	-	421
Office machines and equipment	33	-	33	47	-	47
Cultural assets	140	140	-	140	140	-
	6,313	140	6,173	7,570	140	7,430

There have been no transfers between levels during the period.

Artwork is valued using the market approach, whereby assets are compared to recent comparable sales or sales of comparable assets that are considered to have nominal value. No valuation was performed for artwork for the financial period ending at 30 June 2017.

To the extent that artworks do not contain significant, unobservable adjustments, these are classified as Level 2 under the market approach.

Vehicles are valued at the depreciated replacement cost method. Victoria Legal Aid acquires new vehicles and at times disposes of them before the end of their economic life. The process of acquisition, use and disposal in the market is in accordance with the Victorian Government standard motor vehicle policy.

Plant and equipment is held at fair value. When plant and equipment is specialised in use, such that it is rarely sold other than as part of a going concern, fair value is determined using the depreciated replacement cost method.

There were no changes in valuation techniques throughout the period to 30 June 2017.

For all assets measured at fair value, the current use is considered the highest and best use.

Description of significant unobservable inputs to Level 3 valuations

Asset	Valuation Technique	Significant unobservable inputs
Information technology	Depreciated replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful Life
Furniture, fixtures and fittings	Depreciated replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful Life
Leasehold improvements	Depreciated replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful Life
Motor vehicles	Depreciated replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful Life
Office machines equipment	Depreciated replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful Life

Unobservable inputs to level 3 valuations for the current and prior years.

8 OTHER DISCLOSURES

Introduction

This section includes additional material disclosures required by accounting standards or otherwise, for the understanding of this financial report.

Structure

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8.1 Ex-gratia expenses

Victoria Legal Aid made total ex-gratia payments of \$199,402 during the period to seven former employees upon termination of employment (2016: \$90,019 to two former employees).

8.2 Other economic flows included in net result

Other economic flows are changes in the volume or value of an asset or liability that do not result from transactions.

	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
Other economic flows included in net result		
Net gains/(losses) on non-financial assets:		
Net gains/(losses) on disposal property, plant and equipment	(10)	(197)
Net gains/(losses) on revaluation of cultural asset	-	33
Net actuarial gains/(losses) on receivable amounts:		
Net actuarial gains/(losses) of secured client contributions receivables—net present value	(654)	1,089
Net actuarial gains/(losses) on impairment of unsecured client contribution receivables	(464)	207
Net actuarial gains/(losses) on recognition of outstanding legal receivables	-	-
Total net actuarial gains/(losses) on recoverable amounts	(1,118)	1,296
Net gains/(losses) arising from other economic flows:		
Net gains/(losses) arising from revaluation of long service leave liability due to changes in discount bond rates and staff retention	156	72
Total other economic flows included in net result	(972)	1,204

Net gains/(losses) on non-financial assets and liabilities includes realised and unrealised gains and losses from revaluations, impairments, disposals of all non-financial assets and intangible assets.

Any gain or loss on the sale of non-financial assets is recognised at the date that control of the asset is passed to the buyer and is determined after deducting from the proceeds the carrying value of the asset at that time.

Intangible assets with indefinite lives (and intangible assets not yet available for use) are tested annually for impairment and whenever there is an indication that the asset may be impaired. All other assets are assessed annually for indications of impairment, excluding financial assets (refer to Note 4.1.2).

Net gains/(losses) on financial instruments and statutory receivables/payables includes realised and unrealised gains and losses from revaluations by actuarial assessment of legal payables and receivables.

Net gains/(losses) arising from other economic flows include the gains or losses from reclassification of amounts from reserves and/or accumulated surplus to net result, and from the revaluation of the present value of the long service leave liability due to changes in the bond interest rates.

8.3 Responsible persons

In accordance with the Ministerial Directions issued by the Minister for Finance under the *Financial Management Act 1994* (Vic), the following disclosures are made regarding responsible persons for the reporting period.

Names

The persons who held the above positions in Victoria Legal Aid are as follows:

Responsible ministers

Victorian Attorney-General	The Hon. Martin Pakula MP	1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017
Commonwealth Attorney-General	The Hon. George Brandis QC	1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017

Responsible directors

Chairperson	Mr Andrew Guy	1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017
Managing Director and Accountable Officer	Mr Bevan Andrew Warner	1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017
Managing Director and Accountable Officer	Mr Cameron Hume (Acting)	21 November 2016–25 November 2016
Managing Director and Accountable Officer	Ms Nicole Rich (Acting)	19 December 2016 to 27 December 2017 3 January 2017 to 8 January 2017
Director	Ms Catherine McGovern	1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017
Director	Mr David Thompson	1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017
Director	Ms Jennifer Kanis	1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017
Director	The Hon. Betty King	18 October 2016 to 30 June 2017
Director	Ms Robbie Campo	18 October 2016 to 30 June 2017

Remuneration

Remuneration received or receivable by the Managing Director in connection with the management of Victoria Legal Aid during the reporting period was in the range: \$330,000–\$339,999 (\$310,000–\$319,999 in 2015–16).

8.4 Remuneration of executives

The remuneration of executive officers, other than directors (Board Members) and Managing Director, and their total remuneration during the reporting period are shown in the table below. Total annualised employee equivalents provides a measure of full time equivalent executive officers over the reporting period.

Remuneration comprises employee benefits in all forms of consideration paid, payable or provided by entity, or on behalf of the entity, in exchange for services rendered, and is disclosed in the following categories.

Short-term employee benefits include amounts such as wages, salaries, annual leave or sick leave that are usually paid or payable on a regular basis, as well as non-monetary benefits such as allowances and free or subsidised goods or services.

Post-employment benefits: superannuation entitlements

Other long-term benefits include long service leave, other long service benefits or deferred compensation.

Termination benefits include termination of employment payments, such as severance packages.

	Total remuneration	
	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
Short-term employee benefits	1,534	1,233
Post-employment benefits	147	117
Other long-term benefits	39	34
Termination benefits	-	-
Total remuneration	1,720	1,384
Total number of executives⁽ⁱ⁾	8	8
Total annualised employee equivalents⁽ⁱⁱ⁾	7.7	6.7

Notes: (i) The total number of executive officers includes persons who meet the definition of Key Management Personnel (KMP) of the entity under AASB 124 Related Party Disclosures and are also reported within the related parties note disclosure (refer to Note 8.5).

(ii) Annualised employee equivalent is based on the time fraction worked over the reporting period.

8.5 Related parties

Victoria Legal Aid is a statutory authority and a controlled entity of the state of Victoria.

Related parties of Victoria Legal Aid include all key management personnel and their close family members and personal business interests.

Key management personnel

Key management personnel of Victoria Legal Aid includes:

Key management personnel	Position title
Mr Andrew Guy	Chairperson
Ms Catherine McGovern	Director
Mr David Thompson	Director
Ms Jennifer Kanis	Director
The Hon. Betty King	Director
Ms Robbie Campo	Director
Mr Bevan Andrew Warner	Managing Director and Accountable Officer
Ms Elizabeth Jennings	Chief Financial Officer

Total compensation for key management personnel is detailed below.

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Short-term employee benefits ⁽¹⁾	631	577
Post-employment benefits	62	55
Other long-term benefits	12	12
Total⁽¹⁾	705	644

Notes: (i) Note that KMPs are also reported in the disclosure of remuneration of executive officers (Refer to Note 8.4).

There were no related party transactions that involved key management personnel and their close family members.

8.6 Remuneration of auditors

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Remuneration of auditors comprises:		
Audit of financial reports: Victorian Auditor General's Office	57	56
	57	56

8.7 Subsequent events

Events after reporting date

Assets, liabilities, income or expenses arise from past transactions or other past events. Where the transactions result from an agreement between Victoria Legal Aid and other parties, the transactions are only recognised when the agreement is irrevocable at or before balance date. Adjustments are made to amounts recognised in the financial statements for events which occur after reporting date and before the date the statements are authorised for issue, where those events provide information about conditions which existed at the reporting date. Note disclosure is made about events between the balance date and the date statements are authorised for issue where the events relate to conditions which arose after the reporting date and which may have a material impact on the results of subsequent years.

There are no events that have arisen since 30 June 2017 that have significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations, or results, or state of affairs of Victoria Legal Aid.

8.8 Other accounting policies

Contribution by owners

Consistent with Interpretation 1038 *Contribution by Owners Made to Wholly-Owned Public Sector Entities*, appropriations for additions to net assets have been designated as contributions by owners. Other transfers that are in the nature of contributions or distributions have also been designated as contributions by owners.

Goods and services tax

Income, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of associated GST, unless the GST incurred is not recoverable from the taxation authority. In this case it is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense.

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 taxation authority is included with other receivables or payables in the balance sheet.

Cash flows are presented on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing or financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority are presented as operating cash flow.

8.9 Australian Accounting Standards issued that are not yet effective

New accounting standards and interpretations

Certain new accounting standards and interpretations have been published that are not mandatory for the 30 June 2017 reporting period. The Department of Treasury and Finance assesses the impact of these new standards and advises departments and other entities of their applicability and early adoption where applicable.

As at 30 June 2017, the following standards and interpretations had been issued but were not mandatory for the financial year ending 30 June 2017. Victoria Legal Aid has not adopted these standards early, and does not intend to.

Topic	Key Requirements	Effective date	Impact on public sector entity financial statements
AASB 9 <i>Financial Instruments</i>	The key changes include the simplified requirements for the classification and measurement of financial assets, new hedging accounting model and a revised impairment loss model to recognise impairment losses earlier, as opposed to the current approach that recognises impairment only when incurred.	1 January 2018	The assessment has identified that the amendments are likely to result in earlier recognition of impairment losses and at more regular intervals. While there will be no significant impact arising from AASB 9, there will be a change in the way financial instruments are disclosed.
AASB 2010-7 <i>Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from AASB 9 (December 2010)</i>	The requirements for classifying and measuring financial liabilities were added to AASB 9. The existing requirements for the classification of financial liabilities and the ability to use the fair value option have been retained. However, where the fair value option is used for financial liabilities the change in fair value is accounted as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the change in fair value attributable to changes in credit risk is presented in other comprehensive income (OCI); • other fair value changes are presented in profit and loss. If this approach creates or enlarges and accounting mismatch in the profit or loss, the effect of the changes in credit risk are also presented in profit or loss. 	1 January 2018	The assessment has identified that the financial impact of available for sale (AFS) assets will now be reported through other comprehensive income (OCI) and no longer recycled to the profit and loss. Changes in own credit risk in respect of liabilities designated at fair value through profit and loss will now be presented within (OCI).
AASB 2014-1 <i>Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards [Part E Financial Instruments]</i>	Amends various AASs to reflect the AASB's decision to defer the mandatory application date of AASB 9 to annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2018 as a consequence of Chapter 6 Hedge Accounting, and to amend reduced disclosure requirements.	1 January 2018	This amending standard will defer the application period of AASB 9 to the 2018-19 reporting period in accordance with the transition requirements.
AASB 15 <i>Revenue from Contracts with Customers</i>	The core principle of AASB 15 requires an entity to recognise revenue when the entity satisfies a performance obligation by transferring a promised good or service to a customer.	1 January 2018	The changes in revenue recognition requirements in AASB 15 may result in changes to the timing and amount of revenue recorded in the financial statements. The Standard will also require additional disclosures on service revenue and contract modifications.

AASB 2015-8 <i>Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Effective Date of AASB 15</i>	This standard defers the mandatory effective date of AASB 15 from 1 January 2017 to 1 January 2018.	1 January 2018	This amending standard will defer the application period of AASB 15 for for-profit entities to the 2018-19 reporting period in accordance with the transition requirements.
AASB 2016-7 <i>Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Deferral of AASB 15 for Not-for-Profit Entities</i>	This standard defers the mandatory effective date of AASB 15 from 1 January 2018 to 1 January 2019.	1 January 2019	This amending standard will defer the application period of AASB 15 for not-for-profit entities to the 2019-20 reporting period.
AASB 2016-8 <i>Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Australian Implementation Guidance for Not-for-Profit Entities</i>	This standard amends AASB 9 and AASB 15 to include requirements to assist not-for-profit entities in applying the respective standards to particular transactions and events. The amendments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require non-contractual receivables arising from statutory requirements (i.e. taxes, rates and fines) to be initially measured and recognised in accordance with AASB 9 as if those receivables are financial instruments • clarify circumstances when a contract with a customer is within the scope of AASB 15. 	1 January 2019	The assessment has indicated that there will be no significant impact for the public sector, other than the impacts identified for AASB 9 and AASB 15 above.
AASB 16 <i>Leases</i>	The key changes introduced by AASB 16 includes the recognition of most operating leases (which are currently not recognised) on balance sheet.	1 January 2019	The assessment has indicated that as most operating leases will come on balance sheet, recognition of the right-of-use assets and lease liabilities will cause net debt to increase. Rather than expensing the lease payments, depreciation of right-of-use assets and interest on lease liabilities will be recognised in the income statement with marginal impact on the operating surplus.
AASB 1058 <i>Income for Not-for-Profit Entities</i>	This standard replaces AASB 1004 <i>Contributions</i> and establishes revenue recognition principles for transactions where the consideration to acquire an asset is significantly less than fair value to enable not-for-profit entities to further its objectives.	1 January 2019	The assessment has indicated that revenue from capital grants that are provided under an enforceable agreement that have sufficiently specific obligations, will now be deferred and recognised as performance obligations are satisfied. As a result, the timing recognition of revenue will change.

8.10 Changes to accounting policies

Subsequent to the 2015-16 reporting period, the following new and revised Standards have been adopted in the current period with their financial impact detailed as below.

Australian Accounting Standard AASAB 124 *Related Party Disclosures* commenced on 1 July 2016. This standard extends the scope of related party disclosures to not-for-profit public sector entities, which results in additional disclosures in relation the key management personnel and related party transactions (refer to Note 8.5).

8.11 Glossary of technical terms

Amortisation is the expense that results from the consumption, extraction or use over time of a non-produced physical or intangible asset. This expense is classified as an 'other economic flow'.

Commitments include those operating, capital and other outsourcing commitments arising from non-cancellable contractual or statutory sources.

Comprehensive result is the amount included in the operating statement representing total change in net worth other than transactions with owners as owners.

Depreciation is an expense that arises from the consumption through wear or time of a produced physical or intangible asset. This expense is classified as a 'transaction' and so reduces the 'net result from transaction'.

Effective interest method is the method used to calculate the amortised cost of a financial asset and of allocating interest income over the relevant period. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash receipts through the expected life of the financial asset or, where appropriate, a shorter period.

Employee benefits expenses include all costs related to employment including wages and salaries, fringe benefits tax, leave entitlements, redundancy payments, defined benefits superannuation plans, and defined contribution superannuation plans.

Ex-gratia expenses mean the voluntary payment of money or other non-monetary benefit (e.g. a write-off) that is not made either to acquire goods, services or other benefits for the entity or to meet a legal liability, or to settle or resolve a possible legal liability or claim against the entity.

Financial asset is any asset that is:

- (a) Cash
- (b) a contractual right:
 - to receive cash or another financial asset from another entity; or
 - to exchange financial assets or financial liabilities with another entity under conditions that are potentially favourable to the entity; or

Financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

Financial liability is any liability that is:

- (a) a contractual obligation:
 - to deliver cash or another financial asset to another entity; or
 - to exchange financial assets or financial liabilities with another entity under conditions that are potentially unfavourable to the entity.

Interest income includes unwinding over time of discounts on financial assets and interest received on bank term deposits and other investments.

Leases are rights to use an asset for an agreed period of time in exchange for payment. Leases are classified at their inception as either operating or finance leases based on the economic substance of the agreement so as to reflect the risks and rewards incidental to ownership. Leases of infrastructure, property, plant and equipment are classified as finance leases whenever the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases.

Net result from transactions is a key fiscal aggregate and is revenue from transactions minus expenses from transactions. It is a summary measure of the ongoing sustainability of operations. It excludes gains and losses resulting from changes in price levels and other changes in the volume of assets. It is the component of the change in net worth that is due to transactions and can be attributed directly to government policies.

Non-financial assets are all assets that are not financial assets. It includes plant and equipment, information technology, cultural assets and intangibles.

Non-produced assets are assets needed for production that have not themselves been produced. They include land, subsoil assets, and certain intangible assets. Non-produced intangibles are intangible assets needed for production that have not themselves been produced. They include constructs of society such as patents.

Other economic flows included in net result are changes in the volume or value of an asset or liability that do not result from transactions. In simple terms, other economic flows are changes arising from market remeasurements. They include gains and losses from disposals, revaluations and impairments of non-current physical and intangible assets; fair value changes of financial instruments and agricultural assets; and depletion of natural assets (non-produced) from their use or removal.

Payables includes short and long-term trade debt and accounts payable, grants, taxes and interest payable.

Receivables include amounts owing from government through appropriation receivable, short and long-term trade credit and accounts receivable, accrued investment income, grants, taxes and interest receivable.

Transactions are those economic flows that are considered to arise as a result of policy decisions, usually an interaction between two entities by mutual agreement. They also include flows into an entity such as depreciation, where the owner is simultaneously acting as the owner of the depreciating asset and as the consumer of the service provided by the asset. Taxation is regarded as mutually agreed interactions between the government and taxpayers. Transactions can be in kind (e.g. assets provided/given free of charge or for nominal consideration) or where the final consideration is cash. In simple terms, transactions arise from the policy decisions of the Government.

8.12 Style conventions

Figures in the tables and in the text have been rounded. Discrepancies in tables between totals and sums of components reflect rounding. Percentage variations in all tables are based on the underlying unrounded amounts.

The notation used in the tables is as follows:

- zero, or rounded to zero
- (xxx.x) negative numbers
- 200x year period
- 200x 0x year period



Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of Victoria Legal Aid

Opinion I have audited the financial report of Victoria Legal Aid (the authority) which comprises the:

- balance sheet as at 30 June 2017
- comprehensive operating statement for the year then ended
- statement of changes in equity for the year then ended
- cash flow statement for the year then ended
- notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies
- certification of financial report.

In my opinion the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the authority as at 30 June 2017 and their financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of Part 7 of the *Financial Management Act 1994*, Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2013* and applicable Australian Accounting Standards.

Basis for Opinion I have conducted my audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* which incorporates the Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under the Act are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of my report.

My independence is established by the *Constitution Act 1975*. My staff and I are independent of the authority in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's *APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Australia. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Board's responsibilities for the financial report The Board of the authority is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, the *Financial Management Act 1994* and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2013*, and for such internal control as the Board determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Board is responsible for assessing the authority's ability to continue as a going concern, and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is inappropriate to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on the audit. My objectives for the audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

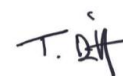
As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit 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 authority's internal control
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Board
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Board's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the authority's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the authority to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Board regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

I also provide the Board with a statement that I have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on my independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.

MELBOURNE
31 August 2017



Travis Derricott
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria



Auditor-General's Independence Declaration

To the Board, Victoria Legal Aid

The Auditor-General's independence is established by the *Constitution Act 1975*. The Auditor-General, an independent officer of parliament, is not subject to direction by any person about the way in which his powers and responsibilities are to be exercised.

Under the *Audit Act 1994*, the Auditor-General is the auditor of each public body and for the purposes of conducting an audit has access to all documents and property, and may report to parliament matters which the Auditor-General considers appropriate.

Independence Declaration

As auditor for Victoria Legal Aid for the year ended 30 June 2017, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

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

MELBOURNE
31 August 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Derricott", with a small superscript "s" above the "t".

Travis Derricott
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Disclosure index

Appendix 2: Justice and law reform submissions

Appendix 3: Sub-program performance report

Appendix 1: Disclosure index

The annual report of Victoria Legal Aid is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislation. This index has been prepared to enable identification of our compliance with statutory disclosure requirements.

Ministerial Directions

Report of operations—FRD Guidance

Charter and purpose

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FRD 24C	Reporting of office-based environmental impacts	83
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SD 3.7.1	Attestation for compliance with Ministerial Standing Direction	82
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Declaration

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SD 5.2.1(a)	Compliance with Australian accounting standards and other authoritative pronouncements	96, 135-137
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Legislation	Requirement	Page
FRD 9A	Departmental Disclosure of Administered Assets and Liabilities by Activity	N/A
FRD 11A	Disclosure of Ex gratia Expenses	127
FRD 13	Disclosure of Parliamentary Appropriations	N/A
FRD 21C	Disclosures of Responsible Persons, Executive Officers and other Personnel (Contractors with Significant Management Responsibilities) in the Financial Report	73-74, 128-130
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Note: (a) References to FRDs have been removed from the Disclosure Index if the specific FRDs do not contain requirements that are of the nature of disclosure.

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Appendix 2: Justice and law reform submissions

Victoria Legal Aid is regularly consulted on a variety of law reform issues. Victoria Legal Aid uses its unique practice experience to engage in consultations and inquiries where this can drive reform that will have a positive impact for our clients and the community. As acknowledged by the Victorian Government's Access to Justice Review, Victoria Legal Aid's input is important to achieve systemic change and 'to help the government to consider the implications of policy and operational decisions'.¹

In the last year, Victoria Legal Aid made 54 justice and law reform submissions. We also cooperated with National Legal Aid on another eight submissions. As well as the public submissions listed in the tables below, VLA also submitted to a range of confidential processes, including in relation to youth justice and the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Victoria Legal Aid made 16 confidential submissions, and cooperated with National Legal Aid on one confidential submission.

Submission	Authority	Date
Submission to the Residential Tenancies Act Review: Dispute Resolution	Victorian Government Department of Justice and Regulation	July 2016
Submission on the Enabling Justice Project Consultation Paper: People living with an acquired brain injury using their experiences of the criminal justice system to achieve systemic change	RMIT Centre for Innovative Justice	August 2016
Submission to family violence information sharing legislation consultation	Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet	August 2016
Submission to the Residential Tenancies Act Review: Regulation of Property Conditions in the Rental Market	Victorian Government Department of Justice and Regulation	August 2016
Submission on the Budget Savings (Omnibus) Bill 2016—Social Security for Forensic Patients	Senate Standing Committee on Economics	September 2016
Submission to the Residential Tenancies Act Review: Alternate Forms of Tenure	Victorian Government Department of Justice and Regulation	September 2016
Submission to investigation into Office of Housing management of maintenance debts	Victorian Ombudsman	October 2016
Response to Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Consultation Paper on Criminal Justice	Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse	October 2016
Submission on the Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Bill	Victorian Government Department of Justice and Regulation	October 2016

¹ Access to Justice Review, Report and Recommendations (Volume 2), August 2016, page 421.

Submission	Authority	Date
Submission on Infrastructure Victoria's Draft 30-year Infrastructure Strategy	Infrastructure Victoria	October 2016
Submission on draft Secure Extended Care Unit Report	Mental Health Tribunal	October 2016
Submission to Commonwealth Risk Management Inquiry based on Auditor-General's Report 18 (2015-2016) 'Qualifying for the Disability Support Pension'	Parliament of Australia Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit	November 2016
Submission on the Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Bill 2016	Victorian Government	November 2016
Submission to inquiry into child protection permanency amendments	Victorian Commission for Children and Young People	November 2016
Submission to inquiry into the use of isolation, separation and lockdowns in the Victorian youth justice system	Victorian Commission for Children and Young People	December 2016
Joint submission regarding an internal appeals division for the Residential Tenancies List	Victorian Government	December 2016
Submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance	United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance	December 2016
Submission on Notices of Hearing in Residential Tenancy matters	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal	December 2016
Submission on the introduction of a new report for Electroconvulsive Treatment hearings	Mental Health Tribunal	December 2016
Submission to the Inquiry into the Migration Legislation Amendment (Code of Procedure Harmonisation) Bill 2016	Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee	January 2017
Submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences	United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences	January 2017
Submission on consultation paper on proposed legislative model for child safety and wellbeing information sharing	Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet	January 2017
Submission to Review of Victoria's Bail System	Review of Victoria's Bail System	February 2017
Joint submission to introduce re-hearing process for Residential Tenancies cases at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal	Victorian Government	February 2017
Submission on Fines Reform Amendment Bill 2017, including proposed new scheme for victims of family violence	Victorian Government Department of Justice and Regulation	February 2017
Submission to the Residential Tenancies Act Review: Heading for Home: Options Discussion Paper	Victorian Government Department of Justice and Regulation	February 2017
Submission on Proposed Activities (Public Amenity and Security) Local Law 2017 affecting people experiencing homelessness	Melbourne City Council	March 2017
Submission on proposed Infringements Act 2006 Work and Development Permit Scheme Guidelines	Victorian Government Department of Justice and Regulation	March 2017

Submission	Authority	Date
Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Youth Justice Centres in Victoria	Victorian Parliament Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues	March 2017
Submission to inquiry into the provision of services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition	Parliament of Australia Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme	March 2017
Submission to inquiry into drug law reform	Victorian Parliament Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee	March 2017
Submission to Review of Lawyers' Practising Certificate Fees	Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner	March 2017
Submission to the inquiry into Centrelink's 'robo-debt' initiative: The design, scope, cost-benefit analysis, contracts awarded and implementation associated with the Better Management of the Social Welfare System initiative	Senate Community Affairs References Committee	April 2017
Submission to 'Shaping our Future: Discussion on Disability Rights'	Disability Discrimination Commissioner	April 2017
Submission on discussion paper on 'Swift, Certain and Fair Approaches to the Sentencing of Family Violence Offenders'	Sentencing Advisory Council	April 2017
Submission on management of migration matters in the Federal Circuit Court	Federal Circuit Court	April 2017
Submission to the Commonwealth parliamentary inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence	Parliament of Australia Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs	May 2017
Submission about access to justice for people with disabilities under Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	May 2017

National Legal Aid submissions that Victoria Legal Aid endorsed

Submission	Authority	Date
Submission to consultation on Australian National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals	Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity	August 2016
Response to Elder Abuse Inquiry Discussion Paper 47	Australian Law Reform Commission	November 2016
Submission to consultation on draft terms of reference for the Australian Law Reform Commission inquiry into the incarceration rates of Indigenous Australians	Legal Assistance Branch of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department	January 2017
Submission to Australian Government Federal Budget 2017-2018	Australian Government Department of Treasury Budget Policy Division	February 2017
Submission on proposed amendments to the Family Law Act 1975 to respond to family violence	Family Law Branch of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department	February 2017
Response to Elder Abuse Inquiry Discussion Paper 83	Australian Law Reform Commission	March 2017
Submission to Commonwealth parliamentary inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence	Parliament of Australia Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs	May 2017

Appendix 3: Sub-program performance report

Civil Justice Program

Our work in civil and administrative law aims to contribute to a more inclusive and rights-respecting community. We deal with matters such as social security, mental health, guardianship and administration, infringements, immigration, tenancy, debt, discrimination, sexual harassment and victims of crime.

Civil Justice program	Number	% change on 2015-16
Unique clients	12,811	-1
Independent Mental Health Advocacy, high intensity occasions of service (advocacy and self-advocacy) *	6,349*	N/A
Independent Mental Health Advocacy, Low intensity occasions of service (information and referral) *	11,281*	N/A
Clients from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds	349	30
Clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	3,933	1
Referrals to external agencies	86,158	3
Legal advice, minor assistance and advocacy services	15,327	0
In-house duty lawyer services	5,669	-4
Grants of legal assistance	1,158	1

* The Independent Mental Health Advocacy service was established 31 August 2015, therefore no variance comparing 12 months of operations is available.

Grants of legal assistance across the mixed service delivery model

	Number	% change on 2015-16
Victoria Legal Aid lawyers	947	0
Private practitioners	146	-8
Community legal centre	65	48

Program operating expenditure

	Expenditure (\$)	% of expenditure
Commonwealth	8.1 million	15.6
State	11.2 million	9.5
Total	19.3 million	11.4 of total expenditure

About our sub programs—Civil Justice

A significant amount of work in the Civil Justice program is done by our in-house staff through work other than on grants of assistance. For example, we assisted at more than 1,000 Mental Health Tribunal hearings, and over 300 hearings for people facing eviction at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, through our duty lawyer service. We also assist people to advocate for themselves, seek reviews of government decisions and resolve disputes with employers and service providers through provision of one-off legal advice and minor work files.

Commonwealth Entitlements—we assist eligible people to access income support and entitlements and challenge unfair administrative decisions by Centrelink and the Department of Veterans' Affairs by providing quality legal advice and representation, and by encouraging agencies to administer systems that treat clients fairly and respectfully. We also assist people to navigate the social security prosecution system, and aim to influence the system to be efficient, fair and respectful to accused people.

Equality—we promote substantive equality by addressing individual and systemic discrimination through casework, legal education and law and policy reform.

Mental Health and Disability Law—we provide advice and representation in relation to laws that impact the liberty, dignity and autonomy of people with a mental health diagnosis or cognitive disability. We work to minimise restrictions on these rights as well as help to ensure the justice and health systems operate fairly.

Independent Mental Health Advocacy—Independent Mental Health Advocacy supports people who are receiving compulsory psychiatric treatment to have as much say as possible about their assessment, treatment and recovery. Our advocates are 'on the side' of people receiving compulsory treatment and are independent from hospitals and mental health services.

Migration—we assist new migrant citizens and asylum seekers and other vulnerable non-citizens by providing community legal education to understand the law, and appropriate legal assistance and other forms of advocacy to obtain just outcomes.

Social Inclusion—we contribute to the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion by providing advocacy to help resolve problems that would otherwise lead to entrenched disadvantage, including problems relating to debt, tenancy, infringements and experience as a victim of crime.

Grants of legal assistance by sub-program

	Number	% change on 2014-15
Commonwealth Entitlements	108	-9
Equality	33	-3
Mental Health and Disability Advocacy	207	0
Migration	86	32
Social Inclusion	724	1

Sub-program operating expenditure

	Operating expenditure (\$)	% of total expenditure
Commonwealth Entitlements	3.4 million	2.0
Equality	2.2 million	1.3
Mental Health and Disability Advocacy	3.6 million	2.1
Migration	2.7 million	1.6
Social Inclusion	5.3 million	3.1
Independent Mental Health Advocacy	2.1 million	1.2
Total	19.3 million	11.4

Top five matters*

Matter type	Number of matters
Infringements	12,434
The law in general**	5,141
Landlord and tenant—resident	4,796
Inpatient treatment order	2,921
Centrelink (other)	2,448

* This includes matters for grants, advice, duty lawyer services and our phone service.

** The law in general includes issues around commercial law, wills and trusts—we do not fund representation for these matters but receive requests for information and advice about them.

Criminal Law Program

We provide high quality legal advice and representation for people charged with criminal offences who cannot otherwise afford it and who meet our eligibility criteria, with a focus on people who are disadvantaged or at risk of social exclusion. We also influence the criminal justice system to:

- provide timely justice, the fair hearing of charges and appropriate outcomes
- ensure that people charged with offences are treated with dignity, are well-informed and are guided appropriately through the criminal justice system
- improve community understanding of criminal justice and behavioural issues.

Client numbers and service outcomes

	Number	% change on 2015-16
Unique clients	51,502	6
Clients from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds	2,709	20
Clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	10,479	2
Legal advice, minor assistance and advocacy services	15,160	5
In-house duty lawyer services	60,715	8
Grants of legal assistance	25,302	11

Grants of legal assistance across the mixed service delivery model

	Number	% change on 2015-16
Victoria Legal Aid lawyers	8,012	0
Private practitioners	17,082	17
Community legal centre grants	208	8

Program operating expenditure

	Expenditure (\$)	% expenditure
Commonwealth	5.2 million	10.0
State	79.1 million	67.4
Total	84.3 million	49.8 of total expenditure

About our sub-programs—Criminal Law

Appellate Crime—(Higher Court and County Court)—Through a small number of higher court appeals we strive to maintain client and public confidence in the criminal justice system by ensuring that cases demonstrating legal errors and miscarriages of justice can be tested by higher courts, through expert representation and by contributing to the development of the law. We also help people who have been found guilty or sentence to imprisonment in the Magistrate's or Children's Court to exercise their right of appeal to the County Court where there are reasonable prospects of success. Whilst making up the vast majority of funded appeals they have little or no precedent value.

Indictable Crime—we provide high quality legal advice and representation to people facing serious State and Commonwealth criminal charges including homicide, sexual offences, terrorism and drug importation. We provide specialist duty lawyer services at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court and expert assistance to people who are responding to applications pursuant to the *Serious Sex Offender (Detention and Supervision) Act 2009* (Vic). We also apply our specialist knowledge and experience to law reform and policy development, to promote fair and just outcomes for all accused people.

Summary Crime—we help people charged with summary crimes to achieve timely and appropriate outcomes based on need, while influencing the criminal justice system to be efficient, fair and respectful to accused people.

Youth Crime—we ensure that children charged with crimes are treated fairly and that outcomes have a therapeutic focus by providing expert legal advice and representation in a way that reflects the unique status and vulnerability of children.

Grants of legal assistance by sub-program

	Number	% change on 2015-16
Appellate Crime	1,131	10
Higher Court appeals*	116	25
County Court appeals**	1,015	9
Indictable Crime (includes sexual offences)	3,548	9
Summary Crime	16,502	13
Youth Crime	4,121	5

*Three per cent of indictable matters go on to receive a grant of aid for an appeal to the higher courts

**Five per cent of summary and youth crime matters go on to receive a grant of aid for appeal to the County Court

Sub-program operating expenditure

	Operating expenditure (\$)	% of total expenditure
Appellate Crime	4.1 million	2.4
Indictable Crime (includes sexual offences)	26.9 million	15.9
Summary Crime	40.9 million	24.2
Youth Crime	12.4 million	7.3
Total	84.3 million	49.8

Top five matters*

Matter type	Number of matters
Breach of family violence intervention order	8,902
Assault	8,866
Other miscellaneous criminal offences**	7,812
Theft	6,206
Drive while licence suspended	5,775

* This includes matters for grants, advice, duty lawyer services and our Legal Help phone service.

** This includes defamation and libel, offences against privacy, public health and safety offences, and illicit drug offences.

Family, Youth and Children's Law Program

We assist people to resolve their family disputes to achieve safe, workable and child-focused parenting and care arrangements. We also assist parents to build their capacity to resolve future disputes without legal assistance.

Client numbers and service outcomes

	Number	% change on 2015-16
Unique clients	32,965	5
Clients from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds	1,659	22.5
Clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	5,982	13
Family Dispute Resolution Conferences	1,044	-5
Legal advice, minor assistance and advocacy services	11,238	2
In-house duty lawyer services	17,336	2
Grants of legal assistance	15,178	5

Grants of legal assistance across the mixed service delivery model

	Number	% change on 2015-16
Victoria Legal Aid lawyers	2,267	-10
Private practitioners	12,507	8
Community legal centre grants	404	38

Program operating expenditure

	Expenditure (\$)	% expenditure
Commonwealth	38.7 million	74.4
State	27.1 million	23.1
Total	65.8 million	38.8 of total expenditure

About our sub-programs—Family, Youth and Children’s Law

Child Protection—we promote the best interests of children by ensuring that people affected by decisions or actions of the child protection system, particularly children, young people and parents, are informed, are supported to participate or have a voice in decisions that affect them, have their rights protected and upheld, and are treated fairly and according to law.

Family Dispute Resolution—we provide timely, legally assisted family dispute resolution services to vulnerable people. We assist separated families to meet the best interests of their children by providing case management, assessment, preparation and referral (including to our child-inclusive Kids Talk program where appropriate), and by holding conferences facilitated by experienced chairpersons.

Child Support—we work to ensure that children of separated parents are financially supported in accordance with the law. In cases where a separated person is unable to adequately support themselves, and their former partner has capacity to pay, we work towards a solution of financial support and the fair distribution of assets and liabilities. We also ensure that liable parents have access to independent legal advice and representation where appropriate.

Family Violence—we contribute to the safety of adults and children impacted by family violence and assist in reducing the incidence of family violence by providing legal information, advice and representation to affected adults and children. This includes acting for clients at the Family Law Courts, the Children’s Court and the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria. We also contribute to public debate about policies and practices of Australian courts and governments in relation to family violence.

Independent Children’s Lawyers—we provide assistance in Family Law Court proceedings to children at risk of harm due to the conduct of one or both parents. We aim to ensure that judicial officers make good decisions based on the best available evidence and that arrangements ordered by the court are in the children’s best interests.

Parenting Disputes—we provide information, advice and representation to separating or separated couples who are in dispute about their children’s living and care arrangements. For high-conflict families who have been unable to resolve children’s issues through family dispute resolution services, we may assist with access to the Family Law Courts. Our aim is to achieve safe, workable and child-focused parenting and care arrangements.

Grants of legal assistance by sub-program

	Number	% change on 2015-16
Child Protection	8,206	6
Family Dispute Resolution	1,742	0
Child Support	471	-11
Family Violence	1,830	4
Independent Children’s Lawyers	1,345	11
Parenting Disputes	1,584	9

Sub-program operating expenditure

	Operating expenditure (\$)	% of total operating expenditure
Child Protection	24.3 million	14.4
Family Dispute Resolution	13.4 million	7.9
Child Support	1.9 million	1.1
Family Violence	3.4 million	2.0
Independent Children’s Lawyers	11.5 million	6.8
Parenting Disputes	11.2 million	6.6
Total	65.8 million	38.8

Top five matters*

Matter type	Number of matters
Responding to a family violence intervention order	16,405
Spending time with children	12,944
Application for a family violence intervention order	8,850
Property settlement	6,747
Who children live with	6,413

* This includes matters for grants, advice, duty lawyer services and our Legal Help phone service.

Victoria Legal Aid Chambers

Victoria Legal Aid maintains a small in-house advocacy practice to ensure it has thorough and practical knowledge of the needs and challenges of jurisdictions in which legal aid services are provided. Victoria Legal Aid Chambers also offers collegiate support to staff to develop their advocacy skills. Victoria Legal Aid Chambers also works with the Victorian Bar to ensure opportunities are created for junior barristers to access trial opportunities and to develop their careers. We provide high quality advocacy for legally aided clients in civil, criminal and family, youth and children's law matters. We also conduct strategic litigation to remedy a legal problem or change a policy or process to benefit an individual client and the broader community.

Our Victoria Legal Aid Chambers works closely with the staff practice to mentor solicitors and provide advocacy training to offices and programs. In the past 12 months, our Chambers formalised mentoring arrangements with all regional offices and implemented a rostered advice service. Under this initiative, solicitors can contact the rostered advocate by telephone, skype or in person to discuss case strategy, settlement options or other advice.

Victoria Legal Aid Chambers represents another facet of the mixed model of service delivery. Advocates from Victoria Legal Aid Chambers appear in approximately 11 per cent of all legally aided criminal trials. The Victorian Bar continues to provide the majority of advocacy services for legally aided clients.

Facts and figures

- Our advocates appeared in court on more than 2,180 occasions (73 per cent criminal, 18 per cent family, nine per cent civil) including 225 County Court pleas, 77 County Court criminal trials (10 in Circuit Courts located in regional centres), six Supreme Court criminal trials (two in regional Victoria), and three Children's Court criminal trials.
- 17 per cent of all hearings were conducted in regional locations.
- Of the criminal matters: 16 per cent were conducted in regional locations. Chambers advocates appeared in all 12 regional County Court circuit locations.
- Of the family matters: 26 per cent were conducted in regional locations. Chambers advocates appeared in Ballarat, Geelong, Mildura, Albury, Bendigo and Shepparton.
- Of the civil matters: eight per cent were conducted in regional locations.
- Our Trial Counsel Development Program funded 12 criminal trials. In 10 of those trials, junior counsel was a female member of the Victorian Bar.

When a Chambers advocate is not available, we assist the assigned staff solicitor to brief an appropriate barrister from the private Bar. Our recommendations take into account diversity, equality and the development of promising advocates.

Facts and figures

- 54 per cent of significant* cases were briefed to female barristers at the private Bar (an increase of 17 per cent). This compares very favourably with the target of 30 per cent by the year 2020 set by the National Model Gender Equitable Briefing Policy.
- Over \$7.5 million was paid to female barristers at the private Bar, up from \$6 million in 2015-16.
- Over \$8.6 million was paid to female barristers in-house and at the private Bar, up from \$6.9 million in 2015-16.
- 60 per cent of advocates employed in Victoria Legal Aid Chambers are female.

* Significant cases includes County and Supreme Court trials, County and Supreme Court pleas, contested committals and serious sex offender supervision contests.

Main reception

570 Bourke Street, Melbourne

Postal – GPO Box 4380, Melbourne Vic 3001

Telephone – (03) 9269 0234

www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Monday to Friday 8.45 am to 5.15 pm

Legal Help

Telephone – 1300 792 387

Monday to Friday 8.45 am to 5.15 pm

Disaster Legal Help

We have a dedicated telephone line for legal help after disasters such as a bushfires or floods.

Telephone – 1800 113 432

For hearing impaired (TTY)

Call the National Relay Service and ask to be put through to Victoria Legal Aid.

TTY/voice – 133 677 or 1800 555 677 (country callers)

SSR/speak and listen – 1300 555 727 or

1800 555 727 (country callers)



In different languages

Arabic	(03) 9269 0127
Bahasa	Ring main Legal Help line and request
Bosnian	(03) 9269 0164
Cantonese	(03) 9269 0161
Mandarin	(03) 9269 0212
Croatian	(03) 9269 0164
Dari	(03) 9269 0534
French	(03) 9269 0541
Greek	(03) 9269 0167
Hebrew	(03) 9269 0542
Hindi	(03) 9269 0487
Hokkien	Ring main Legal Help line and request
Italian	(03) 9269 0202
Korean	Ring main Legal Help line and request
Persian (Farsi)	(03) 9269 0123
Polish	(03) 9269 0228
Russian	(03) 9269 0315
Serbian	(03) 9269 0332
Spanish	(03) 9269 0384
Thai	(03) 9269 0546
Turkish	(03) 9269 0386
Ukrainian	(03) 9269 0390
Urdu	(03) 9269 0389
Vietnamese	(03) 9269 0391

For all other languages, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask to be put through to Victoria Legal Aid.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the delivery of our work throughout the year and to the development of this report.

Feedback

Feedback on this report is welcome. Please write to:

Victoria Legal Aid, Corporate Affairs
GPO Box 4380, Melbourne Vic 3001

