# Collaborative Planning Committee

## 18 November

### Attendance

**Present:** Anna Faithfull (DJCS), Serina McDuff (FCLC), Stuart Webb (LIV), Lynne Haultain (VLF), Louise Glanville (VLA), Simon Moglia (Vic Bar), Moricia Vrymoet (VALS), Francesca Demetriou (Djirra – proxy for Annie Nash)

Agenda 4 (Disaster Legal Help Victoria) only: Chris Povey and Brendan Lacota (Justice Connect), Rowan McRrae (ED CJAE VLA), Jon Cina (AD AE VLA)

**Observer**: Peter Noble (VLA)

**Secretariat**: Marie Baird (VLA)

## Meeting Summary

The Committee met online due to COVID-19 restrictions. The Committee opened with an Acknowledgement of Country and acknowledged the various lands on which Committee members were joining the meeting from.

**Regional Services Statement and Legal Need Assessment**

The Committee received an update on progress of the Regional Services Statement and Legal Need Assessment. The Statement and report are being reviewed by the VLA Board and a response will be considered at the next VLA Board meeting in December. The VLA Board noted the value the work offered for future planning in identifying the areas of greatest unmet demand and offering working principles to guide legal assistance service design and planning responses in regional Victoria.

**Disaster Legal Help Victoria (DLHV)**

The Committee received an update on Disaster Legal Help Victoria (DLHV). The partnership has been very busy for 2020, responding to the NE Victorian and Gippsland bushfires in January andCOVID-19 hard lock-down of public housing in July. Two key priorities have emerged:

* Preparation for bushfire season: making sure the DLHV model responds quickly to the needs of local communities and can be scaled efficiently and effectively
* Service design of the DLHV model:developing a ‘standing’ DLHV service that offers a coordinated response to a range of potential disaster scenarios

The Victorian and Commonwealth governments recently announced funding for disaster legal service delivery, coordination and service design. This funding will help the DLHV partnership to establish a coordinated approach to the bushfire season and to undertake a significant service design project to develop the DLHV standing model. The DLHV partners are working closely with government to make sure the right structures and resources are place so that legal assistance sector can respond quickly and in a coordinated way to disasters.

**Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS)**

The Victoria Law Foundation provided an update on development of the Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS). The questionnaire is currently being developed and will cover legal capability, attitudes, and experience of law in the Victorian community. PULS will be the field around May or June 2021, with the final report due in mid-2022. The impact of COVID-19 is being taken into consideration, both in the questions and administration of the survey.

**COVID-19 impacts**

The Committee reflected on the impacts of COVID-19 that are being seen through their work. These included:

* The long-term mental health impact on the community of the 2020 bushfires and COVID-19 is still emerging and is likely to be present for a long time to come.
* A significant backlog is expected as the court system reopens.
* The full impact of the COVID-19 shutdown on private practitioners is still unclear and economic pressures may leave some firms unsustainable.
* The adoption of new technologies by courts to enable greater remote participation is changing both how courts work and how they are perceived by the public.
* The legal sector workforce has identified both positive aspects, such as greater flexibility, and negative elements, such as difficulty maintaining work/life balance, associated with remote working.
* The ‘long tail’ of COVID-19 impact and how it affects the community and the workers servicing them is expected to continue well in to the future, particularly in regard to civil needs such as employment, tenancy and social security.

**Collaborative Planning Committee meetings**

The Committee agreed to VLA continuing to chair CPC meetings, with the CEO of VLA to again fulfill the role of CPC Chair for 2021.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 10 February 2021.