



# Annual Report 2023

Moonee Valley Legal Service

# OUR COMMUNITY

*Moonee Valley Legal Service provides free legal advice, information and referrals to anyone who lives, works or studies within the City of Moonee Valley.*

**Main Office**  
13A Wingate Ave, Ascot Vale, VIC 3032

## OUTREACH LOCATIONS

**Avondale Heights Library**  
69-79 Military Rd, Avondale Heights, VIC 3034

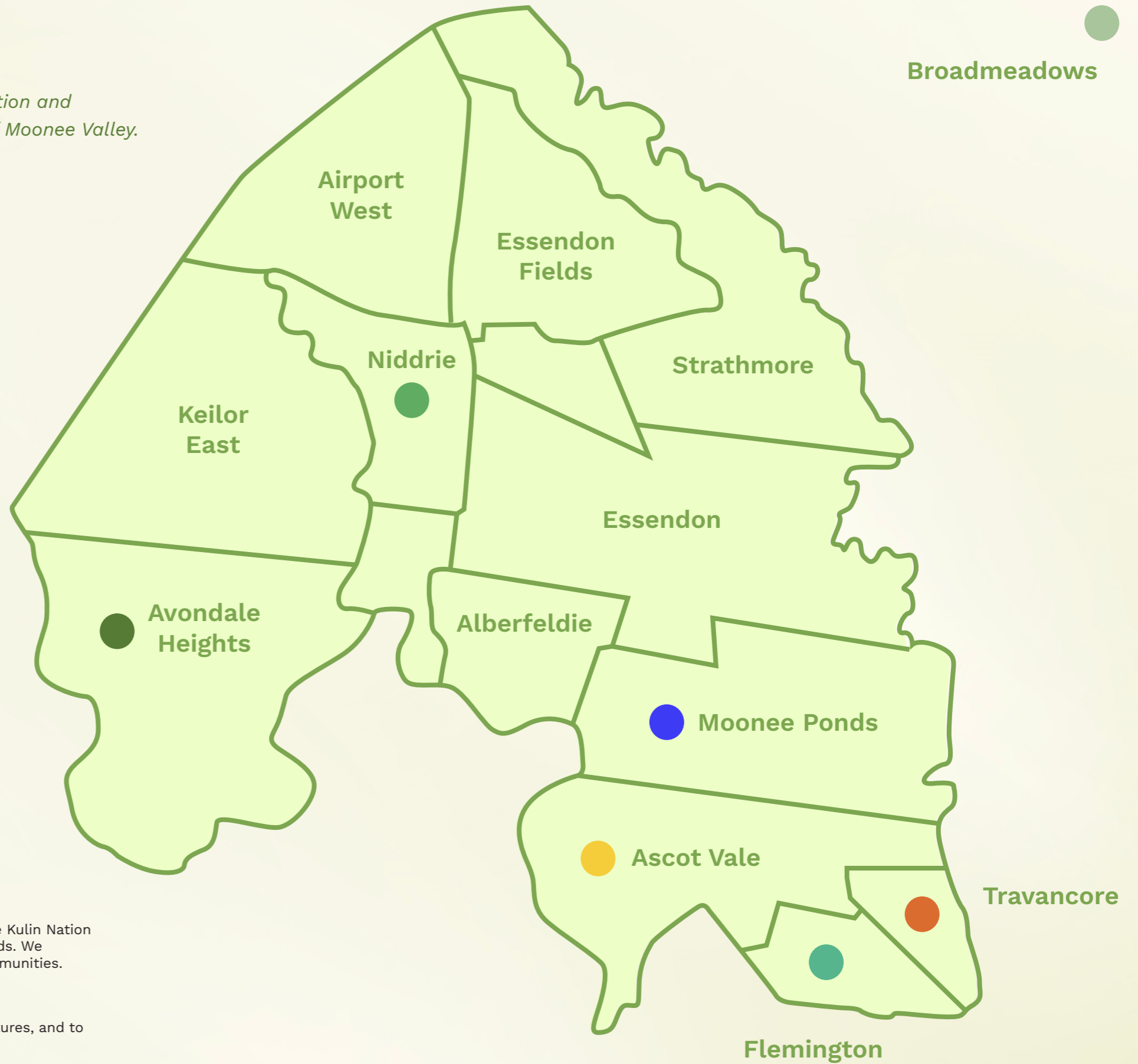
**Broadmeadows Family Relationship Center**  
L1 1/1100 Pascoe Vale Rd, Broadmeadows, VIC 3047

**Niddrie Library**  
483 Keilor Rod, Niddrie VIC 3402

**Travancore PARC**  
50 Flemington St, Travancore, VIC 3032

**Flemington Public Housing**  
29 Crown St, Flemington, VIC 3031  
120 Racecourse Rd, Flemington VIC 3032  
126 Racecourse Rd, Flemington VIC 3032

**Sam Merrifield Library**  
762 Mt Alexander Rd, Moonee Ponds, VIC 3039



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri and Woiwurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our service stands. We recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.

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# OUR BOARD AND STAFF

## Board of Management

**Tim Jeffrie**  
*Chairperson*

**Helene McNamara**  
*Deputy Chair*

**Roy Burrows**  
*Treasurer*

**Margaret Gannon**  
*Secretary*

**Marita Dunbar**  
*Board Member*

**Karen Fogarty**  
*Board Member*

**Stephen Fodrocy**  
*Board Member*

## Leadership

**Daniel Long Nguyễn**  
*Manager*

**Katia Lallo**  
*Interim Manager  
& Community and  
Partnership Lead*

**Joanne Carlton**  
*Principal Lawyer*

**Erin Lockington**  
*Integrated Service Lead*

**Daniel Cashmore**  
*Volunteer and  
Office Coordinator*

## Lawyers

**Anita Khoder**  
**Anthony Graham**  
**Brian Burton**  
**Darren Boon**  
**Luci Williams**  
**Yuka Nishikawa**  
**Kenny Tran**

## Community Engagement

**Sabrina Adem**  
**Najat Mussa**  
**Yasmeen Mussa**  
**Esset Kahsey**  
**Nada Osman**  
**Ester Egal**

## Finance

**Jan Thorpe**

## Grants

**Jen Keene-McCann**

## Administration

**Alanna Doolan**  
**Justin Dao**  
**Razan Balla**

## Graphic Design

**Su Parc**

# ABOUT US



## Our Purpose

We exist for our local community, providing free, accessible services to enhance wellbeing, fairness, equality and social justice within the legal system. We work to empower our clients and to improve legal outcomes. We work with our community to connect people to, and promote, understanding of the law. We work to bring about positive change and to address injustice and inequality in systems and laws.

## Our Values



**Community:** We value, and are part of our vibrant and diverse local community, and we promote empowerment and respect for all. Our clients are at the core of what do.



**Quality:** We are passionate, strive for continuous improvement and are committed to the provision of high quality, responsive legal services.



**Collaboration:** We work in partnership with others to achieve our vision. We are committed to the involvement of community members and volunteers.



## Our Mission

To work with, and empower our diverse community, to improve outcomes by providing high quality, culturally appropriate legal services, community legal education and advocacy.



## Our Vision

To contribute meaningfully to a vibrant community legal sector. To ensure legal help is accessible to all who require it, with a focus on those who would not otherwise be able to get legal assistance. To be recognised by our local community as a reliable and resourceful service that meets the community's needs. To make the most of technological opportunities, build upon our unique service offerings and be adaptive and responsive to social change.

# CHAIRPERSON REPORT



*2023 has been a year of change. I was elected Chair of the **Board of Moonee Valley Legal Service (MVLS)** in December 2022, taking over from the irrepressible Helene McNamara who has led the organisation with incredible commitment and vigour for the last 6 years. Helene has ably assisted me as Deputy Chair this year.*

## Staff Changes

Our other changes have been staff and funding related. After almost 2 years in the role, our manager Daniel Nguyễn decided to move on. Daniel achieved incredible success in his time at the Service, obtaining substantial funding and launching new programs focusing on community development and outreach. We thank Daniel for his service to the organisation.

When one door closes, another opens. With Daniel's departure we have gained a new Manager, Brett Morton. Brett has hit the ground running. His energy is infectious, and the Board is excited to see what Brett brings to the role. I also want to personally thank Katia Lallo for stepping in and acting as interim manager between March and September. It was certainly a difficult time to take the reins with consistent funding uncertainty and Katia went above and beyond.

Unfortunately, much of our non-recurrent funding ended at the end of the last financial year. This has meant that we could not keep on several staff, in particular several who we were employed in the highly successful legal concierge program which used young leaders in the community to engage in outreach to ensure residents in local public housing knew their rights and where they could get legal assistance. We are hopeful that with new grant funding from the Victorian Legal Services Board that we can restart this program in another form.

## Funding

The Service continues to face funding challenges. We are grateful that the joint Commonwealth and State funded Community Legal Services Program (CLSP) allocation to MVLS was confirmed in June of this year for the next two years. That funding included an increase that represents

MVLS's growing role in servicing those in the Flemington community. However, we continue to face funding uncertainty in the long-term and continue to look for sustainable ways to fund our Service.

## Board Changes

The Board has experienced a period of stability this year. We welcomed new Board members Marita Dunbar and Karen Fogarty last year. This year we added Stephen Fodrocy, a Kensington local who has strong connections to the community as well as a helpful background in industrial relations law.

The Board continues to look for new member to join our Board. We acknowledge the importance of having a Board that has a variety of different skill sets as well as geographical and social diversity.

The executive of the Board, including Helene McNamara, Margaret Gannon and Roy Burrows have done a wonderful job this year with keeping the Board operations ticking over. I particularly want to thank Roy and our talented financial controller Jan Thorpe for their extended commitment in drafting and finalising our budget which was a very difficult process.

## Looking forward 2023–2024 and beyond

The Service has been engaged in the work of crafting our strategic plan for 2023–2026. Work for the plan commenced in April of this year with the surveying of community members, stakeholders and clients. The information we received was a fascinating insight into what we do well and what we could do better.

Our team of nurses are eternally grateful for the lawyers at MVLS who are always ready to answer a call.

Staff and the Board had a strategic planning meeting in August and the plan is currently in its final stages of being completed. We are excited to share with you the plan when it becomes available. Importantly, the process of developing this plan has meant that we have sought to re-focus on our key strengths with an emphasis on diversifying our funding sources and continuing our strong connection with the community.

## Staff and Services

There have been several changes in our staffing; some long-standing staff have moved on to explore new opportunities. I would like to thank both Anita Khodher and Brian Burton who have left the Service for their long-term commitment to MVLS.

Jo Carlton, our long-standing Principal Lawyer, has taken long service leave for the next financial year to have a well-earned break. We are excited that Erin Buckley has joined as the interim Principal Lawyer. Erin has worked at various community legal services and has recently been teaching and supervising the student legal clinics at the University of Melbourne while completing her PhD.

The staff team has continued to provide a range of legal and community services to the community, both from our headquarters at Wingate Avenue but also through various outreach services throughout the municipality. This includes community legal education presentations at local libraries, schools and community group. I want to thank our lawyers who work tirelessly in providing their assistance, Yuka Nishikawa, Luci Williams, and Anthony Graham along with a team of law students, paralegals and volunteers. The night-service is still a key part of our work and ensures we are connected both to the community we serve as well as local solicitors who volunteer their time.

The Board knows that we must provide a service to the community that addresses our client's immediate legal issues but also seeks to deal with the underlying causes that often leads our clients coming into contact with the justice system. As such, the Service works closely with various health and justice partners to provide wrap-around services. This work is overseen by Erin Lockington who does an amazing job working with our partners and overseeing our social work students.

Our Finance Officer, Jan Thorpe has provided continuing support and stability this year. The Board is grateful for her dedication and her assistance in helping the Board understand the finances and the challenges we face in relation to ensuring sustainable funding. Another vote of thanks for our Volunteer and Office Coordinator Daniel Cashmore, who staff find very efficient, capable and a friendly face at the front desk for our clients. He supports the volunteers, usually law students.

## Partnerships

Wingate Avenue Community Centre staff have assisted MVLS in making space available when the need arises, and our partnership with them continues to be highly valued. We thank the staff and management of Wingate for their ongoing support and collaboration.

Once again, we thank the Councillors and staff at the Moonee Valley City Council for their support and local connections with our service. We are particularly excited at the recent opening of the Council's Djerring Flemington Hub which will provide the Service with some much-needed outreach space.

We are always grateful to our local Members of Parliament for their long-term commitment, support and encouragement, including:

- The Hon. Danny Pearson, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop and Minister for WorkSafe and TAC.
- The Hon. Ben Carroll, Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Medical Research.
- The Hon. Bill Shorten, Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Minister for Government Services.

We want to acknowledge, in particular, the commitment from Danny Pearson for an additional \$100,000 of funds for the 2023–2024 financial year.

In summary, the service continues to thrive despite the challenges and workload ahead. The staff and Board continue to deliver a range of essential supports and services to those most in need. This work relies on sustaining a sound governance structure to ensure compliance and performance and high standards.

**Tim Jeffrie—Chairperson**

# MANAGER REPORT

## KATIO LALLO - INTERIM MANAGER



*Our little office burst at the seams this year with fun, chaos and activity! The collaborative effort and teamwork displayed by all staff and volunteers this year has been the fuel that has kept me going during these very busy months.*

We expanded our legal practice to include more court representation and complex casework. To complement our Legal Practice, we continued to develop our new practice areas, Community and Partnerships and Integrated Services. Under these areas we embedded a community representative model of community development and expanded our social work support program and co-located services as part of our holistic approach to empowering and supporting the residents of Moonee Valley to access social justice.

We exceeded our advice and casework targets, which speaks to the strength of our legal team and the advancement of our community engagement and integrated services practice.

We saw our pilot Legal Concierge program expanded to hire six young people from local public housing estates to run community engagement and legal education. Funding was received in partnership with Inner Melbourne Community Legal (ICML) to roll out the program across the North Melbourne and Flemington public housing estate.

During one of our reflective practice sessions our team of young people spoke about the opportunity to build self-confidence, the flexibility to adapt to change, growing community trust and mutual support. I think that perfectly sums up 2023 for MVLS.

We have also been incredibly fortunate to receive additional funding from the Legal Services Board to continue this work by reflecting on our lessons learned and developing a robust service model. We look forward to sharing more information on this piece of work in the next Annual report.

“Partnering with MVLS has been an absolute pleasure.”

Our focus on public housing residents and the intersection of reducing harm was seen in our concerted effort to engage seniors at Ormond St and Crown St public housing, and Wintringham Community Housing, to include support for clients who are experiencing elder abuse and are engaging with social support services. Our three Bring Your Bills days for Ascot Vale and

Flemington public housing residents assisted over 123 clients. Our Legal Concierge were the stars of the show, assisting and interpreting for residents.

We improved our online accessibility launching our new website, designing graphics for new marketing and legal education resources, beginning our transition to a new client management system Actionstep and introducing Power Bi for monitoring and evaluation.

A special thank you to outgoing Manager Dan Nguyen. Through his vision and commitment to local residents he grew our service and enabled us to meet the needs of our clients through co-design and place-based responses to justice.

MVLS welcomes our new Manager, Brett Morton. Our team looks forward to working with Brett to lead a vibrant and committed organisation.

Finally, whilst there have at times been challenges as Interim Manager, the staff and volunteer team were always there for me. Answering questions, attending to urgent tasks, teaching me systems and processes, listening to my monologues, picking up where I could not. It was heartwarming and rewarding to be supported through this journey.

Thank you all so much. You are super stars!

**Katia Lallo—Manager**



# LEGAL SERVICE SNAPSHOT

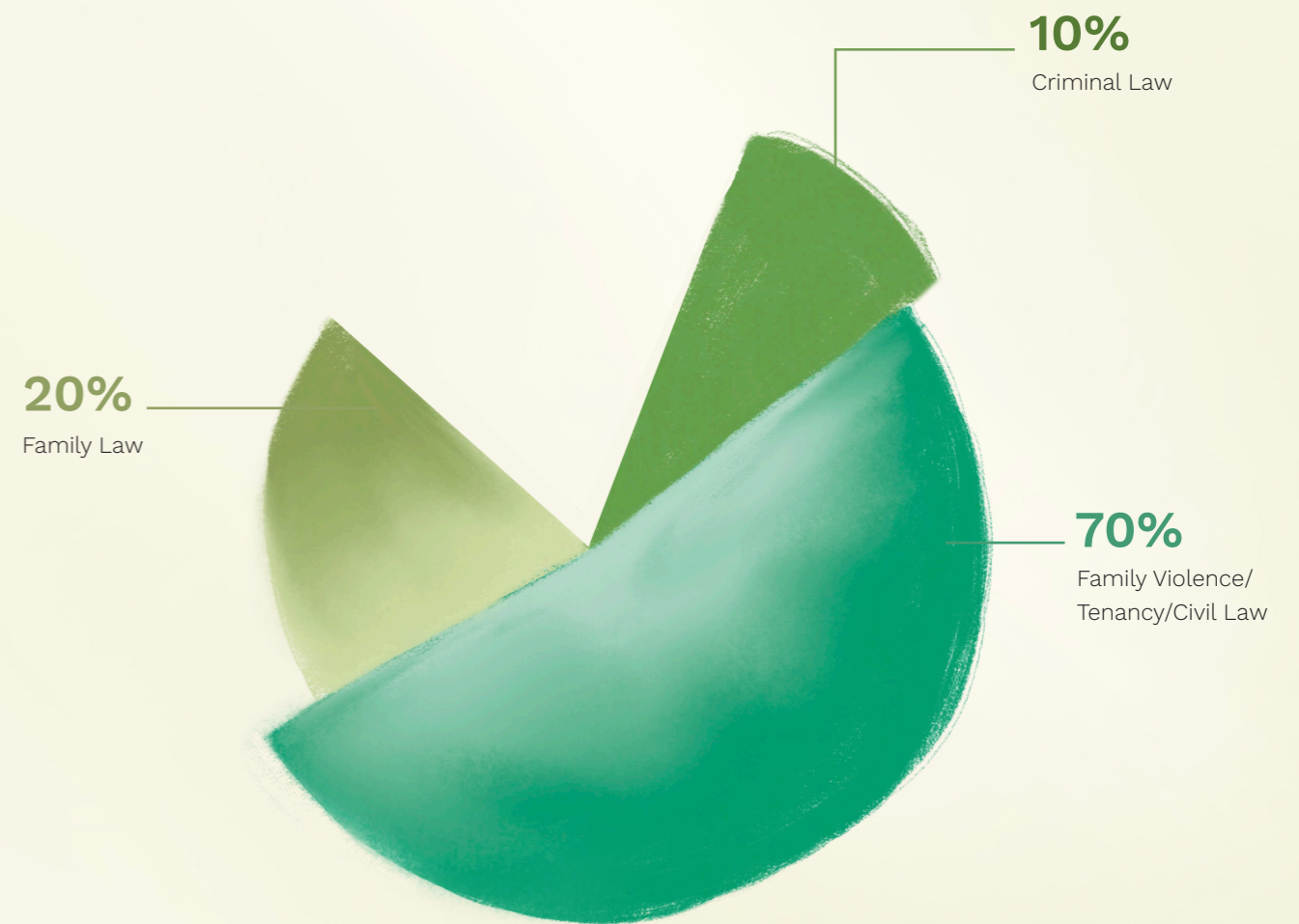
## Our Clients



## Legal Assistance Provided



**249**  
**Community  
 Legal Education  
 Sessions delivered**



## Percentage of Work

# LEGAL SERVICES REPORT

JOANNE CARLTON - PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR



*It was a busy financial year. MVLS received additional funding which enabled us to employ two additional lawyers, so we were able to expand the type and amount of legal advice and casework. In addition, having social workers and a Community Legal Education worker meant we were able to offer a more holistic approach to clients to their issues.*

“The innovation and courage being shown is clearly benefitting your clients.”

MVLS primarily provided appointments in person, but we have been flexible in providing telephone or online when necessary. We also were able to offer a social worker to attend appointments to assist clients to resolve non-legal issues, ideally mitigating or preventing any potential legal issues arising. We are continually looking at ways to be more accessible for our clients.

With our extra resources we were able to attend the Magistrates' Court of Victoria and represent clients in family violence and criminal matters. This has been a great addition to our suite of services as clients consistently request representation when attending appointments.

MVLS remains a generalist gender neutral service that does not income test clients for initial appointment advice and provides ongoing assistance (where there is merit, and it is appropriate) for those that are disadvantaged.

Clients have presented with many issues in addition to their legal needs such as social and financial pressures, addictions, isolation, mental health issues, speaking little or no English and these barriers can lead to, or exacerbate, their legal problems.

MVLS clients required assistance in family law and family violence, parenting issues, fines (often multiple), special circumstances applications, motor vehicle accident claims and debts.

Our lawyers have a mixture of general and specific skills that enable MVLS to assist a broad range of people. While it is not possible to assist everyone, we are able to give initial information and advice in relation to our casework guidelines and refer out to appropriate agencies or private lawyers as required.

We provide appointments to the community during our day service, night services and outreaches. Not all outreaches were able to be operated through the whole year for various reasons such as COVID, sickness, venues not allowing third parties into their buildings and staff shortages. This year, outreach services were provided at Moonee Valley Libraries, Flemington high-rise buildings and Wellways PREVENTION AND RECOVERY CENTRE. We also had Gadens provide pro-bono lawyers one afternoon per week to assist with Tenancy related issues.

During the past financial year our Tenancy and Safe from Harm projects have continued to run successfully, and our Fines Fixer website continues to have good traffic accessing it.

Our collaboration with the Family Relationship Centre continued throughout the year with MVLS providing successful lawyer assisted mediation sessions and appointments by telephone or zoom to their clients.

MVLS participated in Law week by running information sessions, providing free legal health checks and mini appointments to members of the public at Moonee Valley Libraries (Avondale Heights, Niddrie and Moonee Ponds).

Our staff have had challenging times throughout the year however they have worked flexibly in a fast-paced challenging environment as required without complaint. So, I would like to say a big thank you to all of them.

We have had a steady stream of university students. MVLS has given them valuable experience and in return they have assisted the lawyers and enable a larger number of clients to be able to access MVLS.

MVLS also acknowledges and thanks our volunteers, both legal and non-legal, for assisting with both our night service and during office hours.

**Joanne Carlton—Principal Solicitor**





# SAFE FROM HARM/FAMILY VIOLENCE & FAMILY LAW REPORT

LUCI WILLIAMS

*Moonee Valley Legal Service 'Safe from Harm' initiative is a culturally-specific family violence education and legal assistance service for residents in the City of Moonee Valley, Flemington and Kensington.*

The end of the financial year marks eight months since I started working as the family violence/family law lawyer at MVLS. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at the service so far and it's been incredibly rewarding. I have had a large mix of advice and casework clients, providing advice on family violence, family law and child protection matters. I've also completed several victims of crime applications and am awaiting positive financial awards for those clients. I have appeared in many family violence intervention order matters at courts around Victoria, including Broadmeadows, Sunshine, Werribee and Melbourne.

I have established many positive working relationships with external services including Better Places, Safe Steps, The Orange Door, Cohealth, Genwest and CASA House. I have delivered community legal education presentations to members of our local community about family violence intervention orders and victims of crime applications. I've attended two Bring Your Bills Days with Moonee Valley Legal and developed connections with clients through this engagement.

I represent MVLS as an active member of the Moonee Valley Family Violence Network and have thoroughly enjoyed linking in with other family violence services in our catchment area, I hope to continue to develop these links. I have been at the forefront of developing new family violence resources to better assist clients that attend the legal centre seeking advice about family violence support and the court process. The

I couldn't have gotten through that period without your help.

completion of these resources will be an incredible asset to victim-survivors and will streamline what can be an overwhelming experience for our clients.

I am really looking forward to continuing to work in my role and am excited for the future as a family violence/family law lawyer at the service.

## Safe from Harm Clients

# 144 Clients assisted

# 1 in 4

Clients are experiencing or at risk of Homelessness



48% Identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse



38% Living with a disability



Our new partnership is already showing some amazing outcomes.

# TENANCY PROJECT

YUKA NISHIKAWA - TENANCY & SOCIAL HOUSING LAWYER



July 2022 to June 2023 had been difficult in advising clients on transferring or registering for housing. Due to the housing shortage in Victoria, although we were able to assist clients with filling out forms and advising on what they're required to provide to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), we were not able to expedite their applications. There has been an ongoing issue of clients on the waitlist for more than a decade without any offers and unfortunately, this will likely be an issue in the future, as well.

Repair issues ranged greatly throughout the year and the season. For example, urgent repairs would involve extensive mould and major leaking during winter. We were able to provide efficient advice and support by corresponding with DFFH or applying directly to Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). Urgent repair matters were quite successful this year in that DFFH had been more responsive due to several referrals to the Victorian Ombudsman.

# 173

## Clients assisted

Other issues involving tenancy were in relation to rental arrears and evictions. These have been simpler, to resolve, on most occasions where the client was not necessarily underpaying their rent, but rather, a calculation error between Centrelink and DFFH had occurred. Most often, these were resolved after a quick call to their housing officer.

From July 2022, we attended the Flemington public housing estate twice a week at 120 and 126 Racecourse Road. Since March 2023, we started attending 12 Holland Court and 126 Racecourse Road instead.

Through engagement from the legal concierge team, we were able to secure three appointments each outreach session on most days. As clients from these estate towers require further support, we have begun having the social work students attend Flemington appointments to assist, as well. We found that by having the social work students sit in, we were able to flag further issues clients were experiencing and find it has been a great addition.

**Yuka Nishikawa—Social Housing Lawyer**

# 305

Clients living in social housing



From Flemington Estate Outreach

# INTEGRATED SERVICES LEAD



*MVLS's integrated services support has continued to develop over the last year. As mounting pressures around the cost of living are increasingly impacting our community, it has been more important than ever to ensure the support we offer is responsive to the changing social conditions in which people find themselves.*

Strong and integrated connections with community agencies have encouraged streamlined and wraparound support for clients, and the embedding of social work students within our practice has eased the linkages between these services.

Our social work student placement program has continued to grow, with seven placements completed over the 12 months. These students aided in facilitating warm referrals to various social services and offering clients opportunities to improve both legal and non-legal outcomes. Our students have also been pivotal in providing broader community support, such as delivering sessions in partnership with Services Australia to assist people access myGov, and running drop-in sessions to ensure eligible residents receive energy rebates.

The ongoing presence of our co-locating partner services has offered close ties that support this integrated response offered to clients. The resumption of Better Place Australia financial counselling, the commencement of Brotherhood of St Laurence NDIS and disability supports, and the now regular attendance of Centrelink at Wingate Community Centre, have all enhanced the opportunities for clients to easily attain much-needed services at a safe and accessible location.

Our commitment to our Health Justice Partnerships has been further strengthened through MVLS' own outreach to settings where legal need is high. This has included our longer-term partnership at Wellways Prevention and

Recovery Care Unit, as well as our attendance now at Cohealth's Older Persons High Rise in Flemington and Kensington, and Wintringham social housing.

Our continuing commitment to the co-ordination of the Moonee Valley Family Violence Network, alongside Moonee Valley City Council, has also produced a productive year of engagements and events. The Network has continued regular meetings to support updates and awareness of key family violence services and reforms, and has built on its membership to strengthen local agency linkages.

As part of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, MVLS led a family day event on the Flemington housing estate in November last year. This event was in partnership with Paving the Way Forward, Safe and Equal, and other Network organisations to celebrate and promote healthy and happy families. A further forum was also organised for local services of the Network this year, which focused on how to better include and embed the voices of children and young people who have experienced family violence.

As we move into the next 12 months, we will have a continued focus on building the internal capacity, and external partnerships, of MVLS. We anticipate seeing, and responding, to shifting needs within our community, such as public housing redevelopments, that will frame the support and advocacy our community asks from us.

**Erin Lockington—Integrated Service Lead**

# COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIP LEAD



This year we went from one Community Legal Education Lawyer to a dynamic team of 9 staff speaking 8 different languages.

We worked closely with Brotherhood of St Laurence First Jobs Program to place local young people from public housing into paralegal and community development roles. This dynamic group of young people led our Legal Concierge Program, a funded program in partnership with Inner Melbourne Community Legal.

MVLS continue to work closely with and support small grassroots community groups on the Flemington Public Housing estate. We worked collaboratively to build governance skills with local multicultural and multi-faith organisations to lead culturally appropriate services for the community.

We continued to build our schools program connecting with local mainstream and alternative schools to deliver legal education with a harm reduction focus. This included worked closely with GenWest to create a module that talks to young people about sex and the law using pleasure to understand the body and consent. The project has been funded by Victoria Law Foundation and will be launched in 2024.

Our amazing youth project worker Sabrina Adem kick-started our social media presence. The highlight of the year being an Instagram live session with the Victorian Attorney General Jaclyn Symes.

With strategic planning for 2023-2026 underway the community development team hit the ground conducting widespread interviews and vox pops with Moonee Valley residents.

We increased culturally specific engagement with the Vietnamese and Chinese community, in particular the senior's groups. A particular favorite being our Lunar New Year event where our singing lawyer Darren Boon belted out some Mandarin karaoke classics.

A big heartfelt thank you to MVLS community development besties - Barry Berih, Esset Kahsay, Ester Egal, Kenny Tran, Nada Osman, Najat Mussa, Sabrina Adem, Yasmeen Musa. Finally, thanks to Darren Boon who was always an enthusiastic supporter.

**Katia Lallo—Community and Partnership Lead**

“MVLS continues to deliver incredibly responsive services to the community. Keep up the good work!”



## Thank You

The following consists of some of the types of criminal matters that I have assisted with:

- Young Australian People
- Brotherhood of St Laurence, First Jobs Program (Fraol Aliko)
- Flemington Works
- Ubuntu
- Essendon Keilor College
- Victorian Law Foundation
- Mount Alexander College
- Travancore School
- Footscray High School
- Eritrean Community Australia
- The Victorian Attorney General The Hon. Jaclyn Symes
- Cohealth
- Paving the Way Forward
- Inner Melbourne Community Legal

# CRIMINAL/GENERALIST LAWYER

*At the commencement of my time at MVLS, I practised as a generalist solicitor taking on general matters. Since the beginning of 2023, I have almost exclusively practised in criminal lawyer matters, which I love. In that time, I have provided 136 advices and undertaken 65 Casework matters.*

The following consists of some of the types of criminal matters that I have assisted with:

- Stalking
- Misuse of Trade Plates
- Leaving the scene of an accident
- Assault & Unlawful Assaults
- Assault Police
- Resist Arrest
- Driver Unregistered vehicle
- Driving Under the influence
- Soliciting for work (Tow Truck Services)
- Intentionally Cause Injury;
- Burglary
- Attempt to Commit an Indictable Offence;
- Breach of Personal Safety Intervention Order;
- Damage Property
- Drug Possession

I have made in-person appearances at Court, achieving a number of favourable outcomes for our clients, ranging from having criminal charges dismissed, downgraded, Diversion Orders granted and, extension of family violence intervention orders (FVIO) extended.

I have assisted clients from our culturally and linguistically diverse community, many coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, where English is not their first language.

Of the many successes that I have had in my time at MVLS, the most notable is obtaining a 5 year FVIO for a client whom was the victim of systemic family violence, which was also perpetrated against our clients' two daughters by her former husband. The client was elated with the result as she had felt let down by our Courts previously, and now believed she and her daughters could safely move on with their lives.

I have assisted a number of clients by negotiating Diversion Orders, thereby avoiding criminal records which would have been detrimental to their ability to maintain and/or find employment or travel overseas. I consider these outcomes great successes, as generally these clients have been upstanding citizens and do not deserve to have their lives negatively impacted by a criminal record.

I believe we have achieved some outstanding outcomes at MVLS this financial year and I look forward to achieving many more for our clients in 2023-2024.

**Anthony R. Graham—Lawyer**



# VOLUNTEER & OFFICE COORDINATOR



*Assembling the list of volunteers, I am reminded of how many students have been so generous with their time throughout the 2022-23 year. We simply could not deliver the extent of services that we do without them.*

We also continue to host a night service thanks to a very dedicated collection of volunteer lawyers. Many of our volunteer lawyers already work full time –often long hours in the law - and so the time commitment is especially generous and appreciated!

Our paralegals generally volunteer a full day weekly. As students often study full time, generally with other employment, this can be quite a major commitment. We have a diversity of students (and some graduates) from a number of universities –Australian Catholic University, University of Melbourne, Monash University, La Trobe University and many in partnership with Deakin University as part of their Legal Internship program.

Without complaint our paralegals assisted with much needed casework, administrative assistance, events, and attending client outreaches all over town. Throughout the year I was very fortunate to have wonderful administrative support from Razan Balla, Justin Dao and Alanna Doolan, who helped make the client experience easier and more personable.

With the vast majority of clients attending in-person, it was a very busy office. The lack of space was offset by the positive energy brought about by so many of the team, most especially our volunteers.

**Daniel Cashmore—  
Volunteer and Office Coordinator**



# THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS



## Volunteer Paralegals

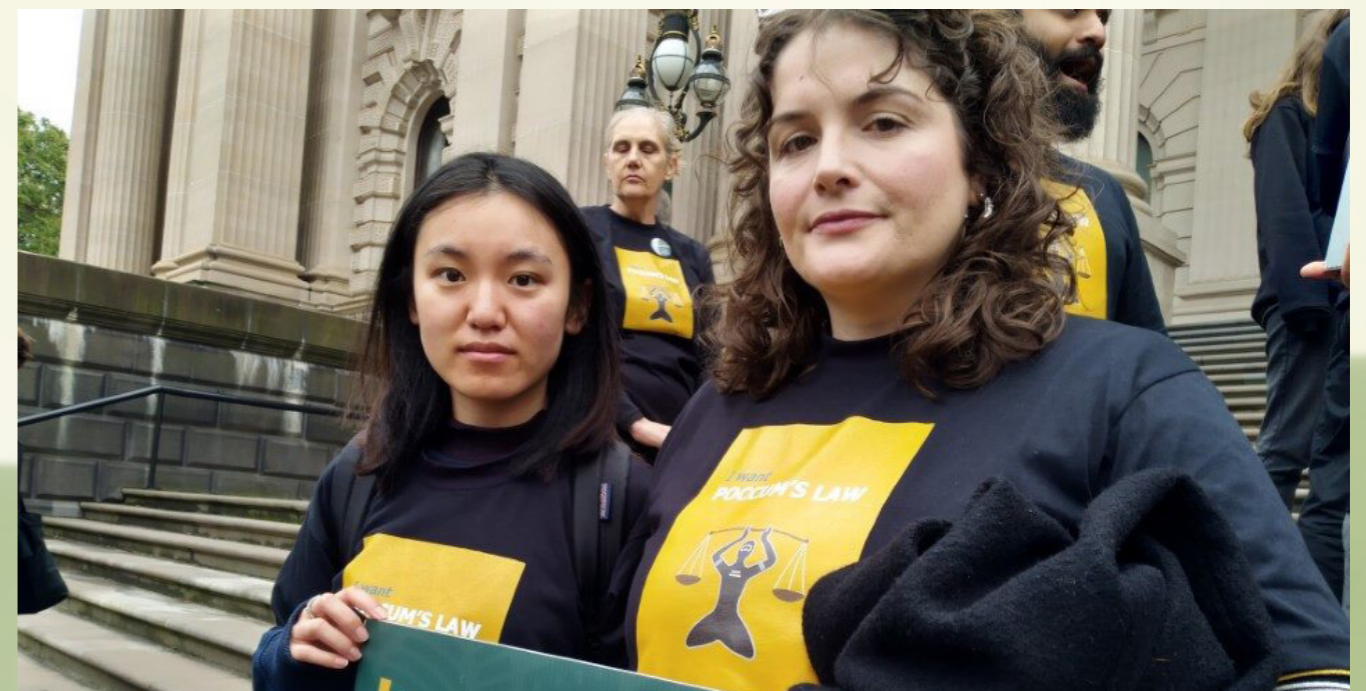
Rocky Gao  
 Mohamed Abdinuur  
 Zainab Raza  
 Braedon Waddell  
 Jarrara Atkinson  
 Maddison Brown-Graham  
 Rebecca Kennedy  
 Razan Balla  
 Tom Collins  
 Hannah Barrazza  
 Alanna Doolan  
 Esdra Sicari  
 Lisa Leng  
 Clarice Wong  
 Esset Kahsay  
 Mia Schaumann  
 Ally Wong

James Vu  
 Domenica Caridi  
 Nikki Di Iorio  
 Scott Hammond  
 Jonas Au  
 Yasmine Taha  
 Omesh Kumar  
 Josh May  
 An Jiang  
 Heidi Benkhauser  
 Nada Osman  
 Corrina Cariaga  
 Matt Spargo  
 William Payton  
 Stasi Romano  
 Kelly Bray  
 Charissa Bennett

## Volunteer Lawyers

Alex La Roca  
 Bianca Baliviera  
 Greg Doran  
 Marcus Boere  
 Jacki Holland  
 Jacqui Paterson  
 Anne Salt  
 Rachel Yard  
 Tugba Cicek  
 Turgut Ozcitti

Benjamin Haber  
 Molly Lynch  
 Ilsa Kuiper  
 Stephen O'Connell  
 Sibel Sidawi (née Islay)  
 Michael Aoun  
 Gary Sullivan  
 Richard Plunkett  
 Janna Baggio



# CASE STUDIES

## Case Study – Tenancy

A client attended MVLS who had been experiencing health deterioration within her family due to significant mold and leaking within her property. During her first appointment, the client noted she had contacted the Department of Fairness, Families, and Housing to have the mold removed. The Department had on numerous occasions sent a painter to paint over the mold. However, she advised us that the mold would reappear in less than two weeks.

MVLS contacted the client's housing officer who advised us that they would send a structural engineer and plumber to investigate whether it was a structural issue rather than a ventilation issue. After they had attended the property, we were advised that there was a pipe leaking and another about to burst within the walls, therefore, the client would need to be relocated immediately.

We were able to organise with the manager at the Ascot Vale housing office a temporary property for the family to move into and have the removalists assist them. Although the client and her family were moved to a smaller property temporarily for a short period of time, she and her family have now secured a larger property that meets the needs of all family members comfortably.

In this case there was a history of family violence perpetrated by the other party towards our client, and her family. The violence consisted of physical violence, verbal threats and property damage. Our client had previously obtained a Full No Contact FVIO against the other party. Since the initial application, there has been multiple applications for extensions made and granted.

The other party persistently breached the FVIO. MVLS appeared on behalf of the client at the Magistrates' Court with respect to an application for an extension to FVIO. The matter went before two Magistrates on the day, it was finally determined that an error of law had been made by the previous Magistrate regarding the previous Application for FVIO Extension, and that Order should never have been made, and as such was unlawful and unenforceable. A new application for a Full No Contact FVIO was made and an Interim Order Granted. The application was heard ex parte and a five-year full no contact FVIO was granted. Our client was elated with outcome as previous applications and extensions had only been granted a term of one year.



# CASE STUDIES

## Case Study – Generalist

A client from social housing had attended our Flemington outreach office regarding an overdue billing issue whereby the utility company would not apply a concession rate on her bills. She had made numerous calls to the company; however, they advised her that she was not eligible and did not provide her with a reason for ineligibility.

We contacted the utility company who advised us that her concession card name did not match her utility company account name. I advised the utility company there was a spelling error on their system. Nevertheless, they had been unhelpful and advised us that it was her concession card as the representative who signed her up would have checked her identification.

After obtaining identification documents from the client including her citizenship documents and passport, we were able to confirm that the utility company had made the spelling error. We lodged a complaint with Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria and we were successful in having her concession applied to her account, which in turn put her overdue account into credit.

In addition to backdating 12 months and crediting her, out of goodwill, the company provided the client with an additional 12-month credit as the client had been with the company for 2.5 years. The client was pleased with the outcome.



# SPOTLIGHT LEGAL CONCIERGE

*In 2021-2022, MVLS established the Legal Concierge program. Modelled after the successful Health Concierge program, designed to address pandemic-related health issues affecting public housing residents, the Legal Concierge program aimed to disseminate legal information to public housing residents through young community leaders.*

In the 22/23 financial year the Legal Concierge program was funded in partnership with IMCL to meet several objectives, including:

- Providing paid professional experience to young public housing residents.
- Building trust within the community.
- Facilitate referrals for legal advice, casework and social support for public housing residents.
- Conducting community development and community legal education training.
- Increase knowledge of legal system within the community.

Our Legal Concierges built their skills and capabilities by:

- Engaging in administration, phone triage, and front office training.
- Attending networking and partnership meetings to enhance stakeholder awareness.
- Conducting reflective practice sessions to evaluate work and provide effective feedback.
- Creating content through podcasting and audio-visual skills development.

Since the introduction of the Legal Concierge program, several notable outcomes have been observed:

- A 25% increase in the number of public housing residents accessing MVLS services.
- Through 30 on-site engagements via pop-up events, special occasions, and “Bring Your Bills Day,” Legal Concierges facilitated 95% of legal appointments from Flemington Estates through referrals.
- Legal Concierges conducted nine informal legal information sessions with women’s and youth groups, engaging 70 residents with MVLS.
- Five young people met with local MP Danny Pearson to discuss program funding and resident issues.
- One young person attended a Victorian Parliamentary Youth Forum.
- One young person interviewed Attorney General Jacqueline Symes on her career via Instagram Live.
- Six young people participated in Muslim Women’s Leadership training.
- Three young people received support to participate in MVLS strategic planning.
- One partnership community meeting was held with IMCL on the class action for the Flemington Housing towers, with 80 residents in attendance.
- Support was provided to build the Not-for-Profit governance of two small grassroots groups from public housing.

We have been fortunate enough to be provided with a grant from the Victorian Legal Services Board to continue to build and develop this program alongside our Community Legal Practice as an innovative model to support stronger social justice outcomes for people at risk of experiencing disadvantage in the City of Moonee Valley.

# TREASURER’S REPORT

We ended the year in a strong financial position thanks to the leadership and sound financial management of our previous Manager (Daniel Long Nguyễn), Acting Manager, Katia Lallo, and our amazing Financial Officer (Jan Thorpe).

The year ended with a surplus of \$6,895, after originally budgeting for a small deficit, which was a pleasing result.

At the end of the Financial Year, we have term deposits totaling \$224,898, which means we are well placed regarding our ongoing financial viability and the ability to support our current programs and future initiatives.

Finally, we continue to be grateful for the support we receive from our core funding sources, administered by CLSP on behalf of the Commonwealth and State Governments, plus City of Moonee Valley, the Federal Office of Bill Shorten MP, the State Office of Danny Pearson MLA, and Victoria Legal Aid.

## Our Funders & Partners

- Australian Government Attorney General’s Department
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Justice, Communities and Safety
- Victorian Legal Aid
- City of Moonee Valley
- Wingate Avenue Community Centre
- Cohealth
- Broadmeadows Family Relationship Centre
- Inner Melbourne Community Legal
- Gadens
- Good Shepherd
- Deakin University
- RMIT University
- Magistrates’ Court of Victoria
- Victorian State Government
- Community Legal Centres Australia
- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Better Place
- Lattitude: Directions for Young People
- Wellways Prevention and Recovery Centre
- Wintringham
- GenWest
- Wombat
- Energy and Water Ombudsman

**Roy Burrows—Treasurer**



# FINANCIALS REPORT

## Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>1,377,472</b>	<b>936,007</b>
Administration expenses	132,823	72,420
Contractor expenses	114,448	73,821
Employee benefits expense	1,115,373	756,145
Depreciation and amortisation expense	7,933	6,787
<b>Surplus before income tax expense</b>	<b>6,895</b>	<b>17,834</b>
Income tax expense	-	-
<b>Surplus after income tax expense for the year attributable to the members of Moonee Valley Legal Service Inc</b>	<b>6,895</b>	<b>17,834</b>
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to the members of Moonee Valley Legal Service Inc</b>	<b>6,895</b>	<b>17,834</b>

## Statement of Financial Positions

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	200,052	320,748
Other financial assets	224,898	219,458
Other	2,629	2,936
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>427,579</b>	<b>543,142</b>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>		
Property, plant and equipment	18,287	17,900
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>18,287</b>	<b>17,900</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>445,866</b>	<b>561,042</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables	45,116	66,437
Employee benefits	33,868	27,977
Other	65,377	163,872
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>144,361</b>	<b>285,286</b>
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>		
Employee benefits	47,558	50,704
<b>Total Non-Current Liabilities</b>	<b>47,558</b>	<b>50,704</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>191,919</b>	<b>313,990</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>253,947</b>	<b>247,052</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Retained surpluses	253,947	247,052
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>253,947</b>	<b>247,052</b>



# OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

*Moonee Valley Legal Service acknowledges and thanks our partners and funders for their ongoing support.*



# THANK YOU FOR



# YOUR SUPPORT

**MOONEE VALLEY  
LEGAL SERVICE**



**Niddrie Community Hub**  
3 - 15 Matthews Avenue Niddrie Vic 3042  
(by Appointment)  
Phone 9376 7929

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**Moonee Valley Legal Service**  
provide an appointment service at  
**Niddrie Community Hub**  
Appointments can be made by calling  
**0276 7020**

**MOONEE VALLEY  
LEGAL SERVICE**

**FREE LEGAL ADVICE & ASSISTANCE  
BY APPOINTMENT**  
Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm  
Monday Night from 6:30pm

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Our services include:

- Family Law (Separation, Parenting and Divorce)
- Family Violence
- Dispute Resolution

