



Moonee Valley
Legal Service

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25





Contents

3	Our community
4	A message from Kate and Tim
6	Our impact in numbers
7	Housing Justice
8	Jane's story
9	Safe from Harm
10	Health Justice Partnership
10	Economic justice
12	Community and Partnerships
14	Nabiha's story
16	Volunteers
16	Max's story
17	Treasurer report
21	Thank you

Our community

Outreach locations

Avondale Heights Library

69-79 Military Rd, Avondale Heights

Broadmeadows Family Relationship Center

L1 1/1100 Pascoe Vale Rd,
Broadmeadows

Djerring Flemington Hub

25 Mount Alexander Road,
Flemington

Flemington Library

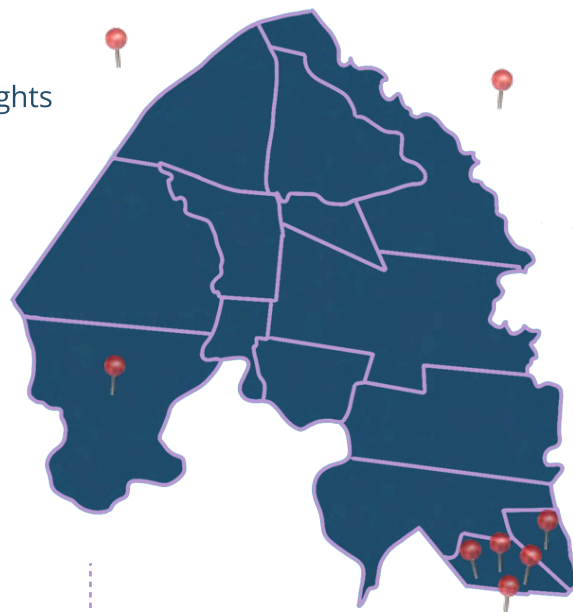
313 Racecourse Rd, Flemington

Flemington Public Housing

29 Crown St, Flemington

Kensington Public Housing

94 Ormond St, Kensington



Sunshine Family Relationship Centre

1 Clarke Street, Sunshine

Travancore PARC

50 Flemington St, Travancore

Acknowledgement of country

Moonee Valley Legal Service acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the perpetual custodians of the lands, waterways, and skies in which our Ascot Vale office stands. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations people.

We acknowledge the decade long path to Treaty and the generations of resistance and activism from First Peoples. We acknowledge the profound injustices of colonisation and look forward to working towards a future informed by self-determination, truth-telling, and representation.

A message from Kate and Tim

The past year we have celebrated our 40-year anniversary. Reaching this milestone has allowed us to reflect on the history of the service but also the incredible strengths of the service. Although we have adapted to meet the growing needs of our community, after 40 years we are still delivering high quality legal assistance.

Our service is only possible because of the dedication of our staff. Their expertise, empathy, kindness and passion make them an incredible asset. We sincerely thank – Katia, Sabrina, Ilo, Laura, Daniel, Alanna, Lokesh, Erin B, Erin L, Yuka, Kowthar, Meron, Nabiha, Yvonne and Jan. We also acknowledge and thank all the volunteers that donate countless hours to ensuring our phones are answered and our night service keeps running.

We thank our board members for their time and insights this year – Marita Dunbar (Deputy Chair), Roy Burrows (Treasurer), Fiona Rothville (Secretary) and Stephen Fodrocy. We also acknowledge the contribution of board members who concluded their service over the last year: Margaret Gannon, Karen Fogarty and Kieran Barns-Jenkins. Special thanks to Helene McNamara who ended her tenure on the board

after 10 years of dedicated service, many of those years as the Chair of the board.

We are proud that our service continues to adapt and evolve by finding innovative ways to better support the needs of our clients, particularly in the space of early intervention and access. A key innovation over this past year has been the expansion of our team to welcome our amazing trio of Bicultural Workers. They have done incredible work connecting with local residents in seven different community languages. Looking towards the next 12 months, we are excited to be building on this integrated program and expanding our presence at outreaches in our catchment through MVLS Connect.

This year, MVLS said goodbye to Brett Morton, Manager, and our Principal Lawyer, Joanne Carlton. MVLS would like to sincerely thank both Brett and Joanne for their leadership and commitment to our community. Brett came to the Service at a time of significant change and made a long-lasting contribution. Joanne has been Principal Lawyer for several years and ensured the Service continues to meet its commitments to the community. We would also like to thank our long-standing Finance

Officer, Jan Thorpe, for her assistance throughout the year.

With the departure of Brett and Joanne, the Service has an opportunity to re-imagine the way we structure our organisation moving forward. This work will take some time, but we are excited at both the challenges of such a task and the opportunities it presents.

Finally we would like to thank our partners. 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, in particular Angie Courtenay, 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.

Gadens have provided ongoing pro-bono assistance to MVLS, this includes providing their offices for professional development days for our staff.

We are always grateful to our local Members

of Parliament for their long-term commitment, support and encouragement, including: The Hon. Danny Pearson, Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs and Minister for Finance (Member for Essendon); The Hon. Ben Carroll, Deputy Premier, Minister for Education Minister for Worksafe and the TAC (Member for Niddrie); and The Hon. Jo Briskey (Member for Maribyrnong).

We extend our thanks to the Commonwealth and Victorian Government for their funding support. We are also grateful to the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner and Victoria Legal Aid for their ongoing support.

We look forward to another busy year in which our service continues to deepen and expand the support we offer to our communities.

With thanks,

Tim Jeffrie
Chair

Kate Fitzgerald
Director



Our impact in numbers

1035

people helped

85%

experienced **financial hardship**

30%

living with a **disability or mental illness**

42%

spoke **English as a second language**

23%

were homeless or at risk of **homelessness**

32%

lived in **public housing**

17%

experienced or were at risk of **family violence**

100 clients provided with **social work support**

How we helped

1,716
legal services

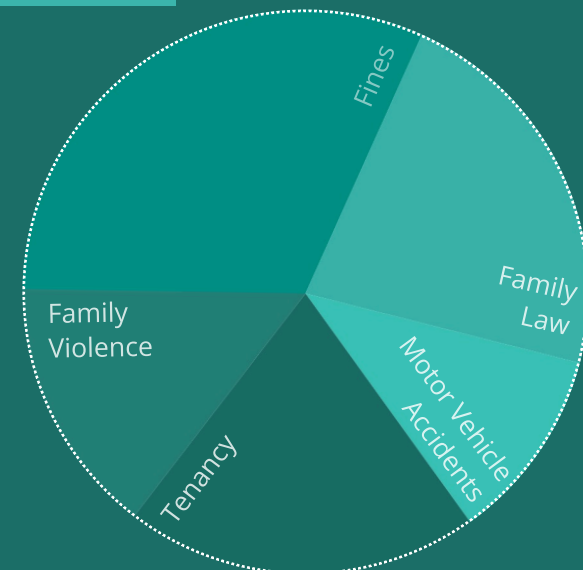
1,368
advices

290
at night service

348
cases

106
information & referral

Top 5 matters



Housing Justice

Our Housing Justice practice has continued to be a corner stone of the work of the service.

Over the last 12 months, as cost of living pressure increases, we have seen an increase in demand in relation to rent arrears, rent increases, evictions and repairs.

We have continued to ensure that our services are accessible by establishing outreaches at the Flemington Library and the Djerring Hub. We have also continued our partnership with coHealth at the public housing high rise buildings at 29 Crown Street and 94 Ormond Street.

To support these outreaches, our Bicultural Workers have developed resources in community languages to strengthen the communities' knowledge of their tenancy rights.

A key focus of the Housing Justice team has been to work closely with the integrated services team to ensure that clients receive wrap around support. This integrated approach has meant that our social workers have been able to address the underlying issues behind the legal problems and in doing so work towards lasting change in clients' lives.

409
legal
advices

102
instances of
legal casework

40
outreach sessions
at Flemington
library

93
legal services
provided

Jane's story

Jane is a community member who came to MVLS at a time when she was at imminent risk of being evicted from her home.

Jane lived in public housing and was thousands of dollars behind in her rent. It was really hard for her to get on top of the rent issue without help because she was also managing complex mental health conditions and was a victim-survivor of family violence. She also did not have her own bank account, or the identification cards/documents needed to open a new one.

Our Integrated Services Lead worked with Jane to get new ID documents which allowed her to open her own bank account. MVLS also supported Jane to apply for funding to pay off the bulk of her rent arrears.

With a lump sum paid, our tenancy lawyer was then able to negotiate a payment plan with the Housing Provider to pay off the remaining debt. This kept Jane in safe and secure housing.

Since this time, MVLS have kept in touch with Jane and supported her to get on top of energy bills and connected her with an employed support service. Jane showed great resilience in enduring these challenges, and in seeking out help to address them.

Jane has not always found it easy to stay engaged with service providers, but the place-based and integrated nature of the MVLS service made it accessible for her.



Safe from Harm

Our Safe from Harm team has been extremely busy over the past 12 months; 31% of all women who accessed our service experienced or were at risk of experiencing family violence.

Many of these women had complex and intersecting needs including speaking English as a second language and experiencing intellectual or physical disabilities. We also saw clients that were experiencing systems abuse or had been misidentified by police.

In partnership with Moonee Valley City Council, MVLS continued to coordinate the Moonee Valley Family Violence Network; a multi-agency forum where local government and community agencies work together to address family violence and improve the safety of women and children.

Our organisation has continued our strong partnership with Broadmeadows and Sunshine Family Relationship Centres to offer fortnightly Legally Assisted Family Dispute Resolution sessions (LAFDRS). Over the last year we assisted 26 families with mediation. This early intervention initiative has been extremely effective in assisting parents to establish effective parenting plans and avoid the stress, time and expense associated with the Family Court.

We are grateful for the support of Women's Legal Service who supported our lawyers through the family law capacity-building program. This support has allowed our lawyers to extend the scope of work offered by the service to family law clients.



31% of all women experienced or were at risk of family violence

15 LAFDRS with Relationships Australia Victoria Sunshine FRC

11 LAFDRS with Mackillop Broadmeadows FRC

Health Justice Partnership

We continued our long-standing relationship with Wellways Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) program in Travancore, which has now entered its seventh year.

PARC offers short-term residential support for people experiencing mental health issues. Our lawyers attend a weekly outreach to offer drop-in support for people with legal concerns. In the last year, we supported 20 clients with a range of issues, including fines, tenancy, separation and criminal matters. Our presence is an important factor in preventing the escalation of legal issues and ensuring that people receive accessible and timely support.

Economic Justice

With 85% of our clients experiencing financial disadvantage, economic justice is a key focus for our legal team and our integrated services team.

For these clients who are already experiencing financial disadvantage, debt associated with a motor vehicle accident or a fine can be debilitating. Over the last year MVLS saw a 35% increase in those seeking legal advice regarding fines and infringements.

MVLS continued to be supported by the co-locating services of Latitude (youth homelessness support), and an Elder Abuse

Specialist Worker and a Financial Counsellor from Better Place Australia. MVLS clients also had access to co-located services at Wingate, including Centrelink, Reconnect employment/education support, counselling and food relief. We are extremely grateful for the ongoing support of these organisations and the material difference they make to the lives of our clients.



CELEBRATING 40 YEARS



Community and Partnerships

The Integrated Services team continued to provide a vital point of connection for community members with non-legal support needs, as well as local service providers, local government and strategic projects.

MVLS clients who received support from the integrated services team very rarely presented with just one non-legal concern. Key themes that emerged this year were around community-led enhancement of community safety, family violence prevention, housing security and severe financial hardship.

MVLS have proudly grown our integrated services team over the last year. In 2024, we launched the Bicultural Worker Program, building on the foundation laid by the Legal Concierge initiative. This program was designed to empower bicultural workers with the skills and confidence to thrive in the legal sector while strengthening connections between MVLS and the diverse communities of Moonee Valley.

We welcomed three exceptional team members—Meron, Nabihah, and Kowthar. Their ability to communicate in multiple languages and their cultural expertise have fostered trust and improved access to legal services for CALD communities in Flemington and Ascot Vale. A key initiative this year was the Storytelling

Project with Flemington public housing communities. MVLS captured powerful stories from residents and former residents of the Flemington flats, offering insight into the proposed redevelopment of public housing towers. Bicultural workers played a pivotal role in interviewing and transcribing these stories, leveraging cultural trust to gather narratives often missed by formal inquiries. The Bicultural Workers have also hosted Bring Your Bills Days, Housing Complaints Clinics and Morning Tea with a lawyer.

Led by our Community Lead, MVLS also helped establish and coordinate the Flemington Residents Action Group (FRAG), originally part of the Flemington Works collective led by Moonee Valley City Council. In collaboration with the Victorian Public Tenants Association and local tenants, FRAG advocates for residents of the Flemington estate. The group has successfully addressed issues such as the loss of communal rooms and facilitated Victoria Ombudsman Days in response to resident complaints.

clients supported

105



family violence
concerns



housing issues



debts causing financial
or emotional stress

71

were women

34

form support
sessions held

182

appointments offered
for community
members and clients



Three Master of Social
Work students completed
500-hour placements

Nabiha's Story

The Bicultural Worker is a role required to connect the culturally and linguistically diverse communities with Australian communities.

The new arrivals who have a language barrier face the most difficulty when settling in Australia. To settle in any country, people require an understanding of the way of living, the education system, workforce, and how to connect with services in the community. Not understanding the rules, not being able to access the justice system and not understanding their rights can put them in challenging circumstances.

Being a Bicultural worker is rewarding because we get to work with people who need support and have experienced trauma and come from both financially and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. We can offer specialised support by communicating with them in their language and a culturally acceptable way. We can help connect them with the services that can help solve their issues, which is a great feeling.

The amazing part is the lived experience I have and ability to speak five languages,

which makes me feel successful in carrying out the job.

Working as a bicultural worker not only gave me the opportunity to help the community but also helped me develop myself. I have become a confident advocator and communicator who can stand for the clients to get results such as their bills waved or reduced, connected to the right services, payment plans.

The community has noticed our presence of bicultural workers. It has made a big difference in the way they receive and communicate with services, and they don't feel judged for not knowing the language. The clients feel that they have unlimited freedom and a sense of belonging.

If the bicultural support is removed from the MVLS service, the community members will lose their confidence to access the service. It will result in difficulty to serve justice and lead to unfairness. The bicultural work is unmeasurable.



Volunteers

43
paralegals

23
lawyers

As always, MVLS is extremely grateful for the assistance of our volunteers. We would like to acknowledge our decade long partnership with Deakin University which allows us to host students every semester.

We give particular thanks to the generosity of our night service volunteers whose commitment meant that we were able to extend our night service to Monday and Tuesday night last year.

Max's Story

As a Volunteer Paralegal at MVLS I have witnessed the importance of access to free legal services. At MVLS the focus is squarely on the people of its community, listening to their issues and helping them navigate a system that is often working against them.

The placement has allowed me to support lawyers in client interviews, draft legal documents, and prepare notes, but the most meaningful part has been talking directly with clients. Many are dealing with issues like family violence, tenancy problems or fines, and often have nowhere else to turn. Helping someone feel heard and supported has been incredibly rewarding.

The work here is vital because it fills a gap for people who may not otherwise have access to legal help. I have witnessed the powerful impact of empathy and clear communication, and not only strengthened my own skills but also reinforced my commitment to ensuring the law serves everyone, not just those who can afford it.

This experience has allowed me to grow, not only as a future lawyer but as a person and I am proud to have contributed, even in a small way, to the important work MVLS does in its community.

Treasurer Report

By Roy Burrows

At the end of the financial year, we remained in a strong financial position after recording an operating surplus of \$10,870 and with a healthy cash reserve. This was thanks to the leadership and careful financial management of our previous Manager, Brett Morton, Acting Manager, Erin Lockington, and the planning and oversight of our Finance Officer, Jan Thorpe.

At the conclusion of the financial year, we had term deposits totaling \$184,009 which means that we are well placed regarding our ongoing financial viability and the ability to continue to support our current programs and future initiatives.

Finally, we were grateful for the support that we received from our core funding sources administered by Community Legal Services Program (CLSP) on behalf of the Commonwealth and State Governments, plus City of Moonee Valley, the Federal Maribyrnong Electorate Office of Bill Shorten (former MP) and Jo Briskey MP, the Essendon State Office of Danny Pearson MLA, the Niddrie State Office of Ben Carroll, Deputy Premier, and Victoria Legal Aid (VLA).



Statement of financial performance for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 \$	2024 \$
REVENUE	2	1,099,232	1,075,055
EXPENDITURE			
Administration expenses		86,501	70,982
Contractor expenses		44,673	82,166
Depreciation and amortisation expense		5,975	8,047
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		951,213	1,033,877
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR		1,088,362	1,195,072
		10,870	(120,017)

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2025

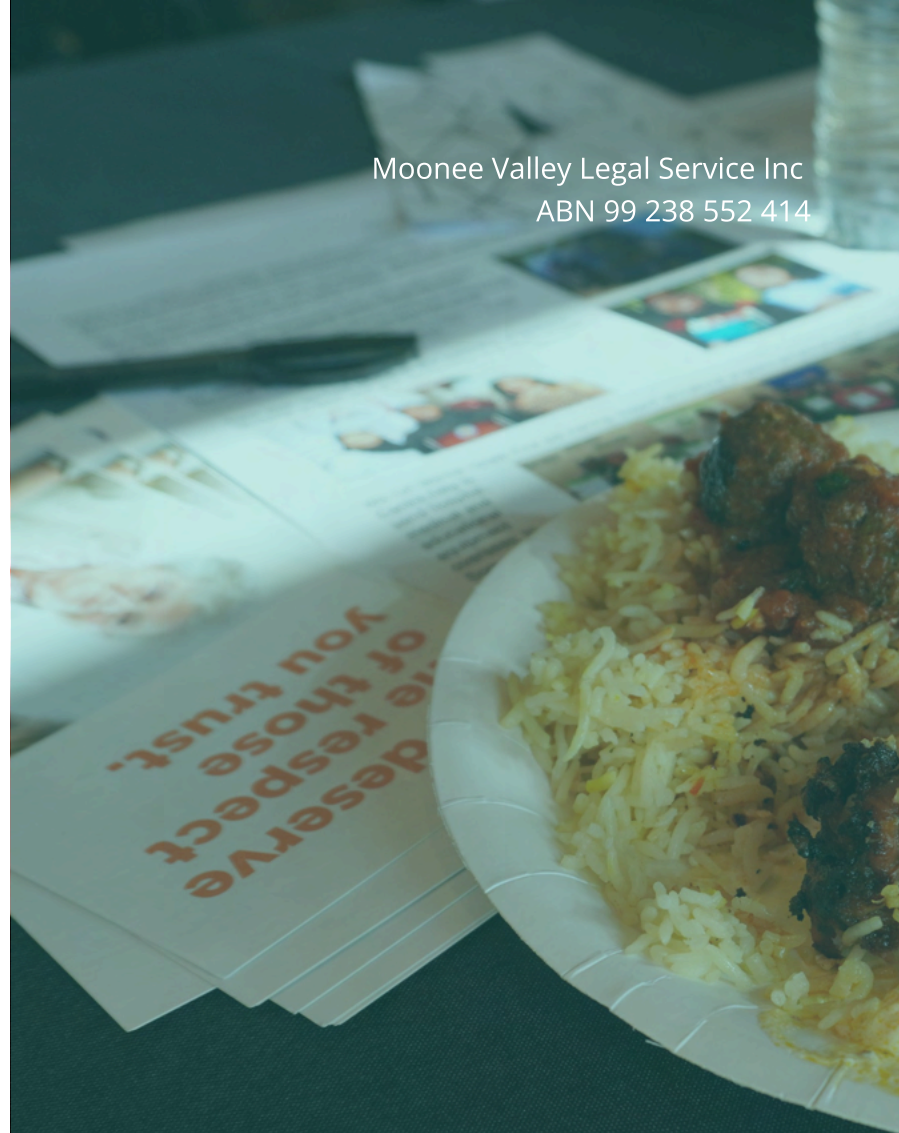
	2025 \$	2024 \$
NET SURPLUS(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	10,870	(120,017)
Other Comprehensive Income for the Year	--	--
NET SURPLUS(DEFICIT) ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION	10,870	(120,017)

"At the end of the financial year, we remained in a strong financial position."

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2025

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2	603,194	194,957
Trade and Other Receivables	3	17,835	9,172
Other Financial Assets	4	184,009	80,000
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		805,038	284,129
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, Plant and Equipment	5	10,755	10,240
Security Deposit			
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		10,755	10,240
TOTAL ASSETS		815,793	294,369
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and Other Payable	6	41,113	30,406
Income Received in Advance	7	573,903	93,500
Employment Entitlement Provisions	8	55,977	36,533
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		670,993	160,439
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Employment Entitlement Provisions	8	--	--
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		-	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES		670,993	160,439
NET ASSETS		144,800	133,930
EQUITY			
Accumulated funds		144,800	133,930
		144,800	133,930

Moonee Valley Legal Service Inc
ABN 99 238 552 414





FARNHAM STREET
NEIGHBOURHOOD
LEARNING CENTRE

Debeney Community
Hub

THE COMMUNITY
ORDER

DEBENEY MEADOWS
PRIMARY

HOMES VIC
↓
COMMUNITY ROOM
33 ALFRED ST

Kensington
Neighbourhood
Centre.
+ Ken Town Hall
IMC

Herron
@ Kensington
town
0431-1297

Rotary Op Shop
444 Racecourse
Road

FLEMINGTON
RACECOURSE

WINGATE
AV. COMMUNITY
CENTRE

ASCOT VALE
LEISURE CENTRE

ARE YOU A
COMMUNITY MEMBER?
ADD YOUR DAILY
LIFE TO THE MAP...

SOCIALISE / SPEND TIME
WITH FRIENDS/FAMILY
or TRAINING/ADULT

KENSINGTON

Thank you

We acknowledge and thank our partners and funders for their ongoing support.

Government and

Statutory Authorities

Moonee Valley City Council

Commonwealth Government of Australia

Department of Justice and Community Safety

Victoria Legal Aid

Victorian Government

Victorian Law Foundation

Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner

Federal Maribyrnong Electorate

Office of Bill Shorten (former MP) and Jo Briskey MP

Essendon State Office of Danny Pearson MLA

Niddrie State Office of Ben Carroll, Deputy Premier

Law Firms

Gadens

Mills Oakley and Everyday Justice

Lacey and Co Legal *with special thanks to Charandeep Singh*

Melinda Walker

Liz Dowling and Associates

Barristers

Andrew Imrie

Adam Chernok

Bonnie Renou

Lauren Bull

Nick Boyde-Cain

Ian Hill KC

Community Legal

Centres

Community Legal Centres Australia

Federation of Community Legal Centres

Justice Connect

Women's Legal Service Victoria

Human Rights Law Centre

Fitzroy Legal Service

Justice Connect

Organisations

Wingate Avenue Community Centre

Latitude

Better Place Australia

Anglicare

Victorian Public Tenants Association

Flat Out and Beyond Survival

RMIT

Monash University
Deakin University

University of Melbourne

The University of Melbourne Indigenous Law and Justice Hub

Melbourne University Law Review Community Service

Melbourne University Law School Clinical Program





**Moonee Valley
Legal Service**

+61 3 9376 7929
mvls.org.au

13A Wingate Ave,
Ascot Vale VIC 3032,
Australia