

2025-26

Annual Report

Moonee Valley Legal Service

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 honour their resilience in the face of ongoing injustice and commit to working as allies towards self-determination.



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Embedded in Our Community

Moonee Valley Legal Service (MVLS) is a place-based community legal centre, co-located with Wingate Avenue Community Centre on the Ascot Vale Public Housing Estate.

For over 40 years, we have provided legal advice and assistance to people who live, work or study within the City of Moonee Valley and beyond.

As an integrated service, our deep connections with the communities we work with allow us to facilitate access to justice and improve understandings of the law, while prioritising early intervention strategies.

At MVLS, we navigate, advocate, educate and collaborate.

We focus our work where our community needs us most. Across four core areas:



Housing Justice



Economic Justice

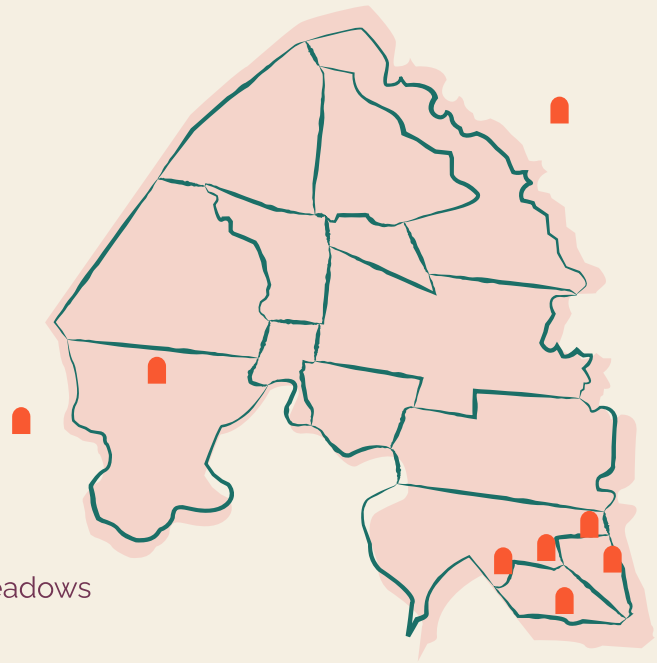


Safe from Harm



Navigating Justice

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 Rd, 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 St, Sunshine

Travancore PARC
50 Flemington St, Travancore

A message from Kate & Tim

MVLS is excited to launch our updated strategic plan for 2026 – 2030. Our updated plan recognises all of the incredible work MVLS has done over the last 40 years and really grapples with who we want to be over the next four years.

Put simply, we want Justice Within Reach for our community. We are proudly place-based on the Ascot Vale housing estate and co-located with the Wingate Avenue Community Centre. Day in and day out we see the benefits of co-locating with a trusted partner and the impact this accessible location has on our community's ability to access the support they need, when they need it.

Our updated plan also puts the work we do in Navigating Justice front and centre. This recognises the integral work our Bicultural Workers, Community Lead and Integrated Services Lead do connecting MVLS with the community. And the important work of getting in early with our community to help them before their legal problems escalate.

In Navigating Justice we recognise that not all legal problems need a lawyer. Through innovative therapeutic justice spaces like Bring Your Bills Days, Housing Days and Ombudsman Days, we bring early intervention services into the community. The aim is to prevent economic hardship from escalating and housing issues from leading to homelessness.

We are proud to navigate, advocate, educate and collaborate alongside our community.

> **We want justice within reach for our community.**

As **a small but mighty CLC,** we have prioritised embedding impact in our strategic plan because we know how important it is for us to be able to tell our story; not just what we do but what impact it has on the lives of the people we help. Over the next 12 months we will continue to improve how we talk about the work we are doing through a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework.

As always, MVLS only exists because of the incredible staff who show up every day with compassion and dedication. We sincerely thank – Natalie, Alanna, Yuka, Erin B, Erin L, Laura, Ilo, Nabiha, Meron, Kowthar, Daniel, Yvonne, Eva and our Finance Officer, Jan. We also acknowledge and thank all the volunteers that donate countless hours to support MVLS.

A big thanks to our board members for their strategic insights and time this year – Marita Dunbar (Deputy Chair), Roy Burrows (Treasurer), Fiona Rothville (Secretary), Stephen Fodrocy, Pierce Tyson and Elisa Buggy.

> **Not all legal problems need a lawyer.**

We extend our thanks to the Moonee Valley City Council, as well as the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments, for their funding and 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 year of improving our services and demonstrating their impact on the people in our community.

With thanks,

Tim Jeffrie
Chair

Kate Fitzgerald
Director



Strategy
2026–2030

OUR WHY

Justice Within Reach

A community where people can access justice early, locally and without barriers.

OUR HOW



OUR WHO

People who navigate:

- cultural & racial marginalisation
- disability
- public & community housing systems
- family & gender-based violence
- the impact of colonialism
- mental ill-health
- alcohol & other drug use

OUR ENABLERS

People Partnerships Resources

Our Goals

An engaged community

Building confidence to identify legal issues and turn to our services.

More access to justice

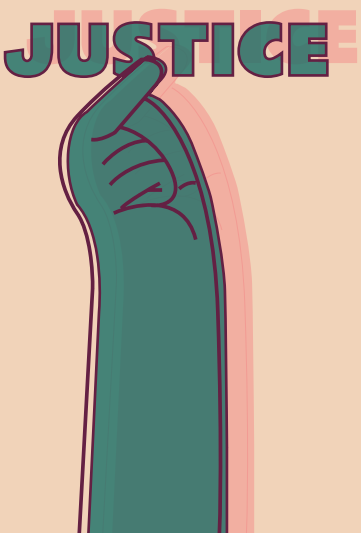
Improving wellbeing by removing barriers to holistic legal help.

Working with others

Strengthening outcomes on complex challenges through partnership.

A sustainable future

Becoming an employer of choice with secure funding and a clear plan for the future.





Our team planning the future

Our Values

Accessible

Community-led and client-centred. We are place-based, embedded, visible, inclusive and trusted.

Innovation

To reach people early and in ways that suit them best, we stay flexible, dynamic and evolving.

Empowering

Respecting our community's agency and strength, we fight alongside clients to remove barriers and deliver material results.

Collaboration

A multidisciplinary team with a shared purpose, working alongside trusted partners to extend reach and impact.

OUR IMPACT
in numbers

995
Moonee Valley locals supported

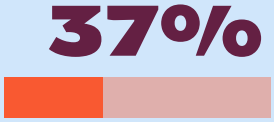
13%
homeless
or at risk



23% experienced or were at risk of **family violence**



37% living with a **disability or mental illness**





39%
spoke English as a second language

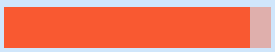
44% **lived in social housing**



52%
women



92% experienced financial hardship



How we helped

1,133
legal advices

157
at our night service

244
casework files opened

209
information & referral services

110
clients provided with social work support

Top 5 Matters



FINES



TENANCY



FAMILY VIOLENCE



DIVORCE



MOTOR ACCIDENTS

Housing Justice

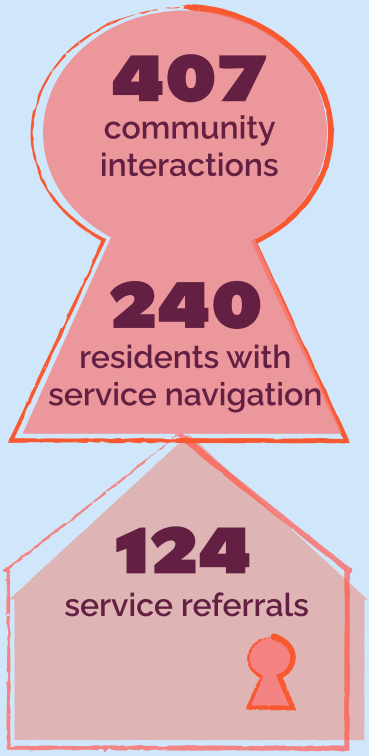
Housing Justice remains a key focus for MVLS with 44% of our clients living in public housing and community housing.

The **Victorian public housing high-rise redevelopment program** continues to impact our clients. Our ongoing partnership with CoHealth has allowed us to provide monthly outreach sessions to the over 55 public housing renters living at 29 Crown Street, Flemington and 94 Ormond Street, Kensington.

Our flagship program, **MVLS Connect,** continues to reach renters early and with wraparound support. Every Thursday at the Djerring Flemington Hub, we held an outreach service that supported residents by bringing together a social worker, bicultural worker and lawyer. This multidisciplinary outreach is key to reaching people early and helping them navigate complex systems.

We continue to co-convene the Flemington Resident Action Group and were proud to support them to provide a submission in response to a proposal to build additional high-rises on the Flemington housing estate.

Our Bicultural Workers supported



This year, we kept our outreaches at places that are close to our community.

Total legal advice appointments:

52
Flemington Library

35
Avondale Heights Library

Hadiya's Story

Hadiya is an older person from a refugee background with a communication disability and no family support. She attended an MVLS outreach seeking legal assistance with her housing situation.

The lawyer quickly identified significant safety and homelessness risks, but legal options were limited due to the nature of the housing arrangement. With Hadiya's consent, a referral was made to the MVLS social worker. Because of Hadiya's circumstances, contact was only possible when she attended the outreach location to prepare meals and access a safe, warm environment.

The social worker assisted Hadiya to apply for social housing, provided information about safer housing options, and facilitated a referral to a specialist housing support service. The social worker's understanding of Hadiya's housing options was supported by ongoing consultation with her MVLS lawyer.

Working collaboratively with MVLS, the specialist service identified a suitable community housing vacancy, while the social worker successfully advocated for the expedited processing of Hadiya's housing application.

Within six weeks of engaging with MVLS, Hadiya moved into secure housing that had been furnished at no cost to her. She went from not being connected with any supports, to being linked in with ongoing support services and a local GP.

Hadiya's story shows the importance of regular outreaches in trusted places and integrated services in achieving the best outcomes for clients.

Safe from Harm

One in four women accessing our service experienced or were at risk of family violence.

Across our service we supported victim-survivors of family violence in housing matters, Intervention Order hearings, fine waivers and Financial Assistance Scheme applications.

Moonee Valley City Council (MVCC) Partnership

A big part of this is coordinating 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.

We are extremely grateful to MVCC for awarding operational funding that allows us to do this important work, and we are excited to continue it in the year ahead.

Attending Magistrates' Court Hearings

100%

of Family Violence Intervention Orders where clients had been misidentified were successfully withdrawn or dismissed



$244,305.29

awarded to clients through the Financial Assistance Scheme

22

divorces granted safely through our Divorce Clinic

Legally Assisted Family Dispute Resolution sessions in partnership with Broadmeadows and Sunshine Family Relationship Centres

27

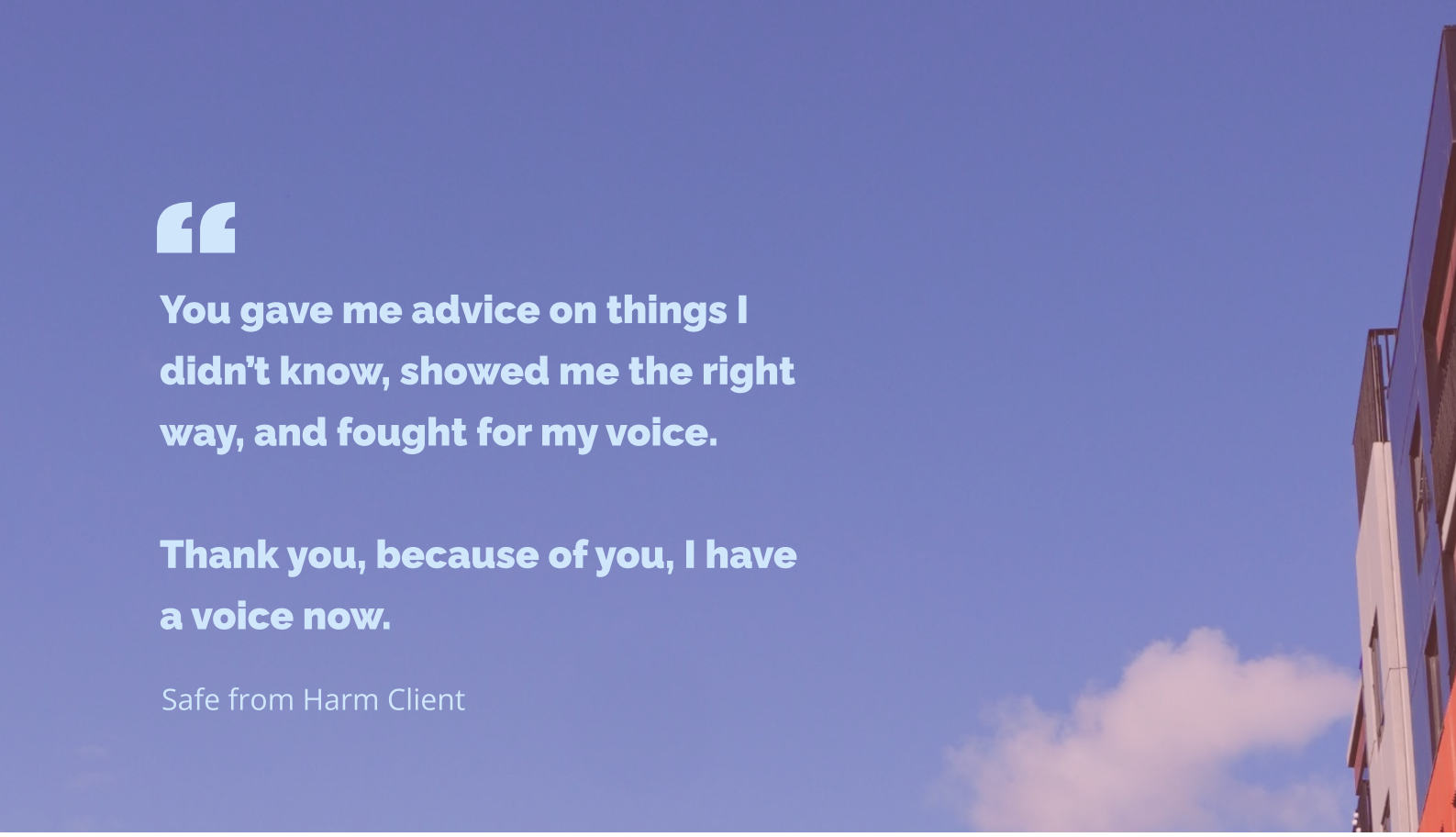
families assisted

Almost 30%

were experiencing or at risk of family violence

85%

of matters reached a partial or final agreement



You gave me advice on things I didn't know, showed me the right way, and fought for my voice.

Thank you, because of you, I have a voice now.

Safe from Harm Client

Mary's Story

Mary is a mother of three children and a victim-survivor of family violence and sexual assault. She first came to MVLS several years ago. During her first visit, we assisted her and her young child to obtain the protection of a Family Violence Intervention Order, while our social worker supported the family to find a new house.

About a year and a half later, the Family Violence Intervention Order was due to expire, something Mary was very worried about. Our lawyers helped Mary secure a further five-year extension of the order and guided her through obtaining a divorce, a process made much more complex by her ex-partner refusing service.

MVLS further supported both Mary and her child to apply to the Financial Assistance Scheme. This year they were awarded the highest payment under this scheme, $36,326.40. This money means the world to Mary and is going to support her on her recovery journey.

Economic Justice

Over the last 12 months, we continued to see the impacts of the cost of living crisis with **92% of our clients experiencing financial hardship.**

MVLS continued to be supported by the co-locating services of Latitude (youth homelessness support), and an Elder Abuse Specialist Worker from Better Place Australia and a Financial Counsellor from Anglicare. MVLS clients also had access to co-located services at Wingate Avenue Community Centre, including Centrelink, Reconnect employment/education support, counselling and food relief. We are extremely grateful for the ongoing support of these organisations.

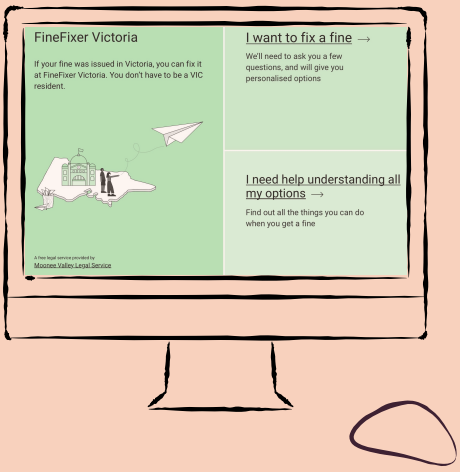
As part of our economic justice work, we have been proud to partner with Everyday Justice to run bi-monthly wills clinics at Wingate Avenue Community Centre. During the clinic, Everyday Justice lawyers prepare wills, Enduring Powers of Attorney and assist with medical treatment decision making forms. Since establishing the clinic at the end of 2025, we held **3 clinics helping 36 people.**

This year, we focused our economic justice efforts on supporting clients who had received infringements. Here's what that looked like:

11 Fines Clinics

$295,619.50 of debt wiped

1000+
Fine Fixer visits every month



Mohammed's Story

Mohammed walked into one of our fines clinics with **over $60,000 in toll fines** hanging over his head, along with significant health, financial, and housing stress. The fines related to a business he ran several years ago, during which employee drivers were obtaining fines in his name.

MVLS were able to help Mohammed have the majority of his fines waived, enter into a repayment plan for the rest and get his licence reinstated.



Navigating Justice

Our Integrated Services Team is a core part of how we support clients at MVLS. It comprises our Community Lead, Bicultural Workers and Integrated Services Lead.

Our **Integrated Services Lead** provided crucial support direct to clients, community members and placement students.

Over the last 12 months:

110 people helped

61% English was not their primary language

41% Living with a disability or mental illness

28% Had family violence concerns

250 form support appointments for clients and community

3 Master of Social Work students

totalling **1,500** hours of integrated social support

To scale community reach and impact, we were involved in:

6 Help Hubs

2 Housing Days

1 Bring Your Bills Day

2 Victorian Ombudsman Complaints Clinics

10 Ascot Vale Estate Coffee Cart pop-ups



Our **Bicultural Workers (BCWs)** provide direct support to community through their weekly outreach at the Djerring Flemington Hub.



Our Community Lead & BCWs

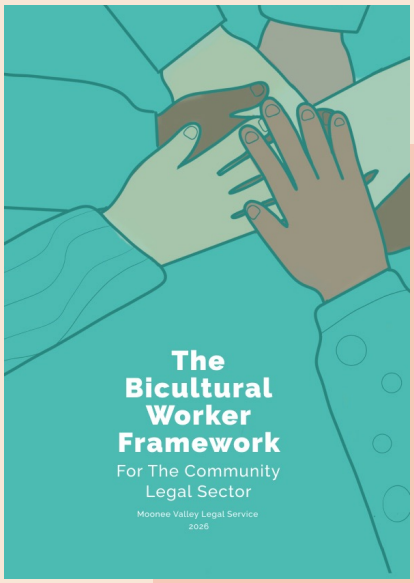
Our BCWs also prepared this parking resource for our community. A simple initiative that reduced confusion and empowered residents to avoid fines.

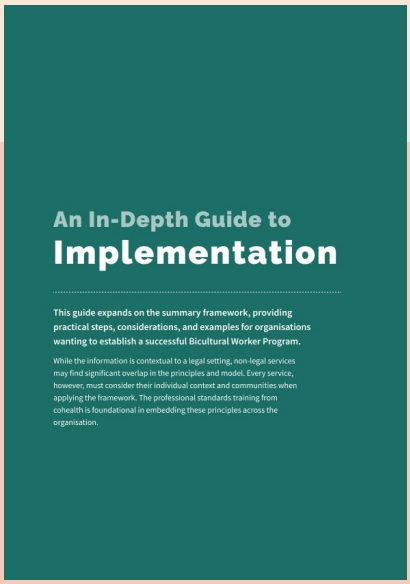


I finally know what the Clearway sign means. And I'll keep this card in my car.

MVLS Community Member

We proudly launched our Bicultural Worker Framework at an Iftar dinner and hope this Framework supports other CLCs in adopting this model.





Aisha's Story

Aisha was living in public housing, a sole parent to multiple children with disabilities. At our MVLS Connect outreach she approached one of our Bicultural Workers and shared that she was experiencing significant overcrowding in her apartment, as well as facing high repair costs that she could not afford.

Our lawyers successfully advocated for the repair costs to be waived, while our social worker supported Aisha to apply for a utility relief grant and held off a disconnection notice. She was also linked in with the Victorian Public Tenants Association to support her in a transfer. Aisha has now been offered a larger property.

MVLS's multidisciplinary team improved Aisha's financial security and housing stability. Together, a Bicultural Worker, lawyer and social worker significantly reduced the stress and challenges facing her and her children.

Aisha's story shows how integrated legal and social support can help families navigate complex challenges and build greater stability.



> Our participants have experienced positive outcomes from connecting with MVLS by gaining legal advice on matters that often cause major anxiety and hinder mental health recovery.
>
> It has also been very reassuring for our team to know we can make referrals to MVLS.
>
> PARC Travancore Team Member

Health Justice Partnership

wellways

Our long-standing relationship with Wellways Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) program in Travancore continued.

PARC offers short-term residential support for people accessing mental health care. Our lawyers attend a weekly outreach to offer drop-in support for people with legal concerns. Our presence is an important factor in preventing the escalation of legal issues and ensuring that people receive accessible and timely support.

Tribute to Yvonne

MVLS is sad to announce the passing on 26 December 2025 of our dedicated supporter and former Board member, Yvonne Kernan.



Yvonne was a champion for social justice, with a big and generous heart, and certainly made the world a better place.

Initially a member of the Essendon Legal Service in the late 1980s, she subsequently joined the Board when we became the Moonee Valley Legal Service in 2007. She stepped down in 2017 after ten years of devoted service and soon after was awarded life membership of MVLS.

A driving force behind the Ascot Vale Residents Action Group (AVRAG), she was also an active member of community organisations in the Moonee Valley district and surrounding areas, including the Essendon and Craigieburn Historical groups, the Royal Agricultural Society and the Springfield CFA in the Macedon Ranges.

Her significant contributions to the City of Moonee Valley were recognised in 2013 when she was named Citizen of the Year. Yvonne is remembered with great affection as a voice of reason and wit, tireless and fearless, warm and welcoming.

To her many friends she was a prescient and determined force for good in the world, advocating relentlessly for the rights of others with her strong sense of social justice and belief in community life. She has made a lasting impact and will be deeply missed.

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

Treasurer Report

Financial Year 2025–26

At the end of the financial year, we remained in a strong financial position, recording an operating surplus of $61,321 and holding a healthy cash reserve. This was thanks to the current leadership and careful financial management of our Director, Kate Fitzgerald, as well as the planning and oversight of our former Finance Officer, Jan Thorpe.

Our term deposits totalled $342,073, which keeps us financially viable going into the new financial year and able to continue supporting our current programs and future initiatives.

Finally, we are grateful for the support of our funders. Our core funding is administered by the Community Legal Services Program (CLSP) on behalf of the Commonwealth and State Governments. We also thank the City of Moonee Valley, the Federal Maribyrnong Electorate Office of Jo Briskey MP, the Essendon State Office of Danny Pearson MLA, the Niddrie State Office of Ben Carroll, Premier, and Victoria Legal Aid (VLA).

Roy Burrows
Treasurer

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2026

	Note	2026 $	2025 $
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2	277,494	603,194
Trade and Other Receivables	3	11,525	17,836
Other Financial Assets	4	343,073	184,009
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		632,092	805,039
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, Plant and Equipment			
Security Deposit	5	14,174	10,755
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		14,174	10,755
TOTAL ASSETS		**646,266**	**815,794**
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and Other Payable	6	41,392	30,406
Income Received in Advance	7	316,079	573,903
Employment Entitlement Provisions	8	82,673	55,977
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		440,144	670,993
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Employment Entitlement Provisions	8	-	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		-	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES		**440,144**	**670,993**
NET ASSETS		**206,122**	**144,801**
EQUITY			
Accumulated funds		206,122	144,801
		206,122	**144,801**

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	Accumulated funds $	Total $
Balance as at 1 July 2024	133,931	133,931
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Association	10,870	10,870
Balance as at 30 June 2025	**144,801**	**144,801**
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Association	61,321	61,321
Balance as at 30 June 2026	**206,122**	**206,122**

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	Note	2026 $	2025 $
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from grants		987,755	1,519,201
Receipts from other sources		34,074	40,772
Payments to suppliers and employees		(1,197,839)	(1,052,236)
Interest received		17,204	10,999
Net cash generated from/(used in) operating activities	11	**(158,806)**	**518,736**
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Payments for property, plant and equipment		(7,830)	(6,490)
Proceeds from/ (Investments in) financial assets		(159,064)	(110,499)
Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities		**(166,894)**	**(110,499)**
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held		(325,700)	408,237
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year		603,194	194,957
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	2	**277,494**	**603,194**

Volunteers

As always, MVLS is extremely grateful for the assistance of our volunteers.

Particular thanks go to our night service volunteers, whose generosity and commitment keep our Monday night service running.

We are proud of our decade-long partnership with Deakin University, which places students with us every semester.

19
lawyers

37
paralegals



Thank you

We deeply appreciate 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 Jo Briskey MP

Essendon State Office of Danny Pearson MLA

Niddrie State Office of Ben Carroll, Premier

Community Legal Centres

Community Legal Centres Australia

Federation of Community Legal Centres

Fitzroy Legal Service

WestJustice

Law Firms and Barristers

Gadens

Mills Oakley and Everyday Justice

Ashurst Perkins Coie

Alice Cooney

Thomas Bell

Samira Gassanova, Cathleen Corridon & Associates

Organisations

Wingate Avenue Community Centre

Latitude

Better Place Australia

Anglicare

Victorian Public Tenants Association

Deakin University

University of Melbourne



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