



**Fitzroy
Legal
Service**

50th
Anniversary

Community driven justice

**Fitzroy Legal Service
Annual Report 2022-2023**

04

About Fitzroy
Legal Service

06

Chair & CEO
Report

08

50 Years
Strong

10

Funding &
Support

12

Our
Services

14

Our
Impact

15

Our
People

18

Legal Practice
Report

28

Projects

30

Fundraising

32

Volunteer
Program

38

Volunteers

40

The Law
Handbook

43

50th Anniversary
Committee

44

Finance,
Risk & Audit

45

Financial
Report

**Fitzroy
Legal
Service**
419 3744

About FLS

The Fitzroy Legal Service is an amalgamation of the **Darebin Community Legal Centre** and **Fitzroy Legal Service**, which took effect on 1 February 2019. The amalgamated entity draws on the significant histories and legal assistance services provided by the Darebin Community Legal Centre (established in 1988) and the Fitzroy Legal Service (established in 1972).

We work towards a fairer Victorian community where our legal and social systems support equality and justice for all.

Our Values

Integrity

Courage
& Passion

Empowerment
& Advocacy

Connection to
Community



Fitzroy Legal Service Inc. is a merger of Darebin Community Legal Centre and Fitzroy Legal Service.

Reg No. A0105338Y
ABN 13 421 440 211



Fitzroy Legal Service acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.



We recognise the importance of the area in which we work to the community. We acknowledge the significance of Fitzroy as a meeting place for First Peoples, and the many First Peoples who reside in Yarra and Darebin. We thank First Peoples for their continued custodianship of this land, and we stand with them in their fight for self-determination and equality.



We are committed to providing safe and inclusive services for people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, disabilities and cultures.

Chair & CEO Report

The 2022-2023 year has been one of consolidation, celebration and growing our impact at Fitzroy Legal Service (FLS). It is with great pride, in this year in which we celebrated our 50th year of delivering access to justice, that we present this report.

LEFT: Claire Febey
(Government House reception)

RIGHT: L-R Claire Febey, Linda Dessau AC CVO,
Tony Howard AM KC (Government House reception)



The report provides a snapshot of some of the many achievements of the last year, made possible by our dedicated staff, volunteers and supporters. Together we have built on our fifty-year commitment to being fearless and feisty - delivering community driven justice through high-quality services, unflinching advocacy and social action - with and for those that need it most.

We were thrilled to celebrate our fifty-year history at a formal reception at Government House hosted by the Honourable Linda Dessau AC CVO (former Governor of Victoria) and at a larger party at The Night Cat in Fitzroy. It was incredible to share the celebrations with so many of you - the staff, volunteers, partner organisations and pro bono supporters who have made FLS all that it is today. This included many of our founders and early contributors who back in 1972 had the vision and courage to stand up for the right to access free legal services - a vision that has laid the foundations for the legal assistance sector that we're so proud to be part of today. We hope you will all continue to be engaged with us over the coming years.

We also secured further funding to consolidate and continue some of our newer services - including our health justice partnership with St Vincent's Health providing legal outreach to those with complex issues including mental health and homelessness, our early intervention family violence legal services in partnership with Yarra City Council, and our Women's Integrated Legal Outreach program providing gender responsive and integrated legal and social support to criminalised women.

Our successful tender to improve access to legal services for the LGBTIQ+ community was a significant highlight of the year, with our new peer led service, Q+Law, receiving funding from the Victorian Government and, in partnership with Queerspace, getting ready to open its doors.

The 2022-2023 year was also one to focus on our staff following the challenges of the pandemic. We showed a strong commitment to training and professional development over the year delivering onsite training on stigma and discrimination, staff wellbeing and vicarious trauma, First Nations cultural training, neurodiversity affirming practice and reflective practice sessions. We also supported a number of our family law and family violence team to attend the National Family Law conference in Adelaide, and were well represented at the National CLC conference in Tasmania. Reflecting our commitment to staff wellbeing we also engaged an external organisation to assist us to develop a workplace wellbeing plan to be implemented over the next five years.

The FLS Board has continued to bring an array of valuable skills and backgrounds to the governance of the organisation, contributing these as well as their time and energy in a voluntary capacity. This year we welcomed two new Board members, Monique MacRitchie and Michelle Batsas, who bring strong legal and governance skills, and a deep passion for our work.

We had two longstanding senior staff leave the organisation over the year, Hui Zhou and Adrian Snodgrass. Both have made outstanding contributions to FLS over many years and we are extremely grateful for their service. As the adage goes, no one ever really leaves FLS, and we are pleased that both Hui and Adrian have maintained their commitment through being contributors to the Law Handbook.

We commend the FLS Annual Report 2022-2023 to you and are sure you will enjoy reading it.

Claire Febey
FLS Chair



Kristine Olaris
FLS CEO



50 Years Strong

When the Fitzroy Legal Service (FLS) opened its doors on 18 December 1972, it became Australia's first non-Aboriginal community legal centre. Launched from the basement of the Fitzroy Town Hall, a small but ferociously passionate group of volunteer lawyers set out to provide what was at the time inconceivable – free legal advice to anyone who needed it.

This was of course also the start of what was to become a thriving community legal sector, dedicated to improving access to the law and improving people's understandings of the law and of their rights.

Since these early days, FLS has undergone significant change. Yet our central focus on breaking down barriers to legal services to those who most need it, educating and enabling the community to assert their rights, and boldly advocating and agitating for social, policy and legislative change have remained core to its ethos and work to this day. Over those 50 years, FLS has provided free legal support to more than 150,000 people, with the invaluable support of over 2,000 dedicated volunteers.

We were delighted to have the opportunity to celebrate our 50th milestone at two special events. The first took place in the grand surrounds of Government House, hosted by the then Governor of Victoria, the Honourable Linda Dessau AC CVO, and attended by our partner organisations and many of our long-standing volunteers and supporters. The second was a less formal event held at The Night Cat in Fitzroy where staff, volunteers and supporters came together for an evening of fabulous food, live music and conversations aplenty.

We acknowledge the great role that The Law Handbook has played in our history, having been produced by Fitzroy Legal Service since 1977, and the numerous volunteer legal experts who have contributed their time and expertise to this incredible resource.

Today we are:



FEARLESS in standing with those that need us most in their greatest time of need



FEISTY in shaping the systems that will create a fairer future for all Australians



FIFTY and proudly shifting our services through constant innovation and growth

May we take this opportunity to send our deepest thanks to everyone who has played a part in FLS over the last 50 years, and to everyone who continues to work tirelessly towards a better and more just future for all.

Here's to another Fearless and Feisty Fifty years!

RIGHT: FLS staff



FIRST, SECOND & THIRD ROW:
Night Cat 50th celebration



FOURTH ROW LEFT: Government House reception
FOURTH ROW RIGHT: CLC sector

Funding & Support

Our core ongoing funding at FLS is provided by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments via Victoria Legal Aid. We thank them for their ongoing support. We would also like to thank the following organisations and individuals for their contributions.

Funders

- **Allens** for pro bono support and funding the trainee lawyer.
- **City of Darebin** for funding support for outreach lawyer services to young people and other people experiencing marginalisation in the City of Darebin.
- **City of Yarra** for funding for the Fitzroy Evening Legal Advice Service.
- **Commonwealth Government** who fund our Work Without Barriers project and enable our auspice of Voices for Change.
- **Court Services Victoria** via the **Neighbourhood Justice Centre** for their contribution towards funding FLS services delivered at the NJC, provision of meeting facilities and support on a range of programs.
- **Ethical Jobs** for their matched funding support.
- **Federation of Community Legal Centres (VIC)** for funding support via the Integrated Services Fund 2021 –2023 for the Darebin Drug Outreach Lawyer Program.
- **Victorian Government** for specific grants that support the Yarra Drug Outreach Lawyer Program, Family Law and Family Violence Health Justice Partnerships, Women's Integrated Legal Outreach and Q+Law. Additionally, we received a grant through the Community Support Fund to improve our infrastructure to enable our continued provision of services.
- **St Vincent's Health** for funding contribution to our health justice partnership.
- **Victoria Law Foundation** for a grant to develop a legal information resource for incarcerated people, as well as to engage a graphic designer to update our Activist Rights website.
- **Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner** for support for our lived experience work.

BELOW: L-R Franky Bain, Shamila Liyonage, Adam Willson, Kat Theophanous MP, A-G Jaclyn Symes MP, Adrian Snodgrass, Kristine Olaris



Partners

- 3CR Done by Law / Breakfast Show
- Access Health & Community
- Archer Magazine
- Better Place Australia
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Burnet Institute
- CoHealth
- Connie Benn Centre
- Council to Homeless Persons
- Darebin Emergency Relief Network
- Disability Justice Australia
- Drummond Street Services, Queerspace
- Fitzroy Learning Network
- Flat Out
- Grata Fund
- Harm Reduction Victoria
- Heidelberg Magistrates' Court
- Health Justice Australia
- Human Rights Law Centre
- International Commission for Jurists, Victoria
- JobWatch
- Justice Connect
- Law & Advocacy Centre for Women
- Lawyers for Animals
- Launch Housing
- Liberty Victoria
- The Living Room
- Mercy Hospital for Women
- Melbourne Activist Legal Support
- NEMA Orange Door
- North Richmond Community Health Centre
- NRCH Medically Supervised Injecting Room
- Northland Youth Hub
- Odyssey House
- PANDA
- Philanthropy Australia
- Reservoir Neighbourhood House
- RMIT Centre for Innovative Justice
- Social Security Rights Victoria
- Self Advocacy Resource Unit
- St Mary's House of Welcome
- Southside Justice
- St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne
- Tenants Victoria
- VAADA
- VALID
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Victoria Legal Aid
- Victorian Pride Centre
- Voices for Change
- Uniting Care ReGen
- Yarra City Council
- Yarra Drug and Health Forum
- Your Community Health
- Youth Projects
- YSAS
- Dr Tamar Hopkins, UNSW
- Scientia Prof Carla Treloar, UNSW
- Assoc Prof Uncle Ted Wilkes AO
- Adjunct Assoc Prof Nico Clark MD
- Aunty Vickie Roach
- Aunty Marjorie Thorpe
- Loxy Lunawhirl
- Jordan Brown
- Judy Kuo

Substantial pro bono support

- Alyse Mobrici, Victorian Bar
- Anjali Griffiths, Victorian Bar
- Anna Dixon, Victorian Bar
- Chris Horan KC, Victorian Bar
- Conrad Banasik, Victorian Bar
- Edwina Smith, Victorian Bar
- Emrys Nekvapil, Victorian Bar
- Felicity Gerry QC, Victorian Bar
- Hannah Douglas, Victorian Bar
- John Blackley, Victorian Bar
- Julian McMahon AC SC, Victorian Bar
- Julian Murphy, Victorian Bar
- Martin Radzaj, Victorian Bar
- Megan Fitzgerald, Victorian Bar
- Simon Thomas, Victorian Bar
- Ron Merkel KC, Victorian Bar
- Tom Wood, Victorian Bar
- Clayton Utz
- DLA Piper
- Dentons
- Gadens
- Hall & Willcox
- Herbert Smith Freehills
- King & Wood Mallesons
- Maurice Blackburn
- Phi Finney McDonald



Thank you for supporting our local community.

Jeremy Bowtell
Supporter and Donor



Our Services

As FLS we provide a range of legal services targeted to those who otherwise would have barriers to justice. We are grateful for the assistance of our many volunteers and ongoing relationships with agency partners which have enabled us to continue to provide these services.

Evening Legal Advice Services

We offer free evening legal advice services by phone and from our premises at the Fitzroy Town Hall and Reservoir.

The free evening legal advice service is conducted year-round with significant pro bono support from members of the legal sector (community members, students and practitioners) who volunteer their services to make the law and legal support accessible to members of the community.

Fitzroy Town Hall

This service is open Monday to Friday evenings by appointment. It is a generalist legal advice service that assists clients with civil, criminal, family, employment and tenancy law.

Reservoir

This service is open every Tuesday evening and fortnightly on Wednesday evenings.

Legal Advice, Casework & Representation (Fitzroy & Reservoir)

We provide legal advice, casework and representation to people experiencing disadvantage in criminal law, family law, family violence, tenancy, infringements, victims of crime, guardianship and administration, and other civil law.

Our family law services include a monthly Divorce Clinic and a Small Property Pilot.

We also have 'private practices' in criminal law and family law, which are funded through grants of legal aid and private client fees with fee structures designed to assist clients ineligible for legal aid.

Outreach Services

We have partnerships with other community organisations to provide legal advice, information and representation services across the Cities of Yarra and Darebin.

Drug Outreach Lawyer Program

The Drug Outreach Lawyer program provides legal services to people who use drugs, assisting with the rehabilitation process and harm minimisation by providing appropriate legal supports to reduce the negative impact of legal problems faced by them. The legal support will vary depending on the needs of the person. One off advice may be necessary for one matter whereas another person may require extensive court work.

Outreach partners in the City of Yarra include YSAS (Youth Support and Advocacy Services), Living Room (Youth Projects), Inner Space (Co-Health), North Richmond Community Health Centre and Odyssey House. Outreach partners in the City of Darebin include Uniting Care ReGen and YSAS (Youth Support and Advocacy Services).

Darebin Community Outreach

The Darebin Community Outreach is provided in partnership with Darebin Council, and incorporates outreach services to the Northland Youth Hub and Reservoir Neighbourhood House.

Family Law and Family Violence Health Justice Partnerships

We provide assistance to victims/ survivors of family violence with family law and family violence matters on an outreach basis through health justice partnerships at:

- North Richmond Community Health Centre
- Drummond Street Services
- Mercy Hospital for Women
- Connie Benn Centre, Fitzroy
- NEMA Orange Door

St Vincent's Hospital Health Justice Partnership

A pilot partnership with St Vincent's ALERT team, providing a holistic service model of legal services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and other systemic disadvantage, requiring intensive allied health support.

Women's Integrated Legal Outreach (WILO)

A pilot program to provide holistic legal services to criminalised women, drawing on our understanding of the common drivers of women's criminalisation and the legal and social needs that women face that either lead to or are a result of their criminalisation. This program provides outreach to agencies who work with criminalised women including Flat Out.

Court Services

Our court-based duty lawyers work closely with the courts to navigate the most effective ways to continue to provide accessible and high-quality legal services to our clients.

Heidelberg Magistrates' Court

We operate the Darebin Intervention Order Service (DIOS) as part of the Specialist Family Violence Court at Heidelberg Magistrates' Court. We provide a duty lawyer service, inclusive of providing legal advice and representation, to individuals with Family Violence Intervention Order matters listed at this Court. Our service primarily assists Affected Family Members who are victim survivors of family violence, however in matters where there is a conflict with the Respondent legal services, we assist Respondents. This duty lawyer service is supplemented with assistance to Affected Family Members through a legal outreach at the NEMA Orange Door.

Neighbourhood Justice Centre

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) is Australia's only community justice centre. It is located in Collingwood and services the City of Yarra. The NJC is committed to resolving disputes by addressing the underlying causes of harmful behaviour and tackling social disadvantage. We provide a range of services including:

- Legal advice and representation in the following jurisdictions: Magistrates' Court (including the Family Violence Intervention Order List, summary crime), Children's Court, VOCAT and Infringement Court matters;
- Assisting with general legal advice to residents from the City of Yarra who attend the NJC. This includes (but is not limited to) advice on matters of criminal law, family law, tenancy, family violence and personal safety; and
- Actively contributing to the multi-agency leadership group, to community engagement, community development, community legal education and progress systemic change where appropriate.

Migrant Employment Law Clinic

The Employment Law Clinic is open to individuals from overseas who have been underpaid or exploited in employment including:

- International students (500 visas);
- People on working holidays (417 and 462 'backpacker' visas);
- Workers invited to Australia through the Temporary Skills Shortage program (TSS visas); and
- Refugee and humanitarian visa-holders.

We assist with issues such as recovery of unpaid wages and entitlements, advice about correct rates of pay, unpaid training, unauthorised deductions from pay, unfair dismissals and breach of general protections laws, sham contracting, workplace bullying, injuries and discrimination. We do not advise on immigration law.

Prison Service & Project

For many years FLS has provided a much-needed advice service to imprisoned people across Victoria. Advocating for imprisoned people to have better access to health, information, property rights and generally better conditions provided the bulk of the service's work. We also collaborate with other community legal centres and community-based groups who work with imprisoned people to share knowledge and coordinate responses for the best outcomes for our clients.

In early 2023, we made the very difficult decision to pause the prison phone line for now. Due to the high level of demand and an increasing number of complex matters, we have not been able to provide a fulsome service with our current resources. The pause on this service is allowing us to rethink the model, particularly how best to have systemic impact given the scale of the problems, and to consider additional resourcing needs and opportunities.

We have been fortunate to secure some funds from the Victoria Law Foundation to develop a user informed legal resource for people in prisons, their families and the people who work with them. This resource will support the rights of people in prison, including humane prison conditions.

Public Interest Work

We work within a community development framework to engage in strategies of empowerment for communities and individuals in their dealings with the law. These strategies include:

- Public interest litigation;
- Advocacy in areas of policy and law reform;
- Partnership building and engagement/ collaboration with stakeholders; and
- A wide-reaching community legal education program.

Our staff work across programs to identify trends, legal literacy needs and law reform priorities for our social justice and advocacy work.

Publications and Online Resources

We publish and distribute a range of hardcopy and online material including:

The Law Handbook – available in a variety of formats, including a hardcopy book, an eBook, as individual PDF chapters and free online at <https://fls.org.au/law-handbook>

Activist Rights – <https://fls.org.au/activist-rights>

Financial Counselling

In partnership with Better Place Australia, financial counselling services are provided via a financial counsellor at our Fitzroy Town Hall office.

Our Impact



4,073
clients assisted



31
law reform and
advocacy efforts



More than
\$770k
recovered for Employment
Law Clinic clients since 2017



279
volunteers contributed their
time and expertise



22
Community Legal Education &
Community Development activities

Our People

Adam Willson
Senior Drug Outreach Lawyer

Adrian Snodgrass
Principal Lawyer, Night Service
(until May 2023)

Amre Levy
Family Lawyer

Amy Kirwan
Project Officer
(until Aug 2022)

Bess Smallwood
Senior Community Lawyer, NJC

Beth Griggs
Client Intake & Admin Officer, Q+Law
(from Jun 2023)

Beth King
Senior Community Lawyer, NJC

Brendan Kelly
Finance & Operations Manager

Candace Johnson
Finance Officer
(from Mar 2023)

Caroline Strum
Admin Officer, WWB
(from Apr 2023)

Cassandra Martin
Project Officer, Prisons Program
(from Sep 2022)

Charlie Brennan
Client Services & Admin Officer,
Fitzroy Office
(from Jul 2022)

Dee Bennett-Spark
Trainee Lawyer
(from Feb 2023)

Deborah Brown
Front Office Administrator,
Reservoir Office

Elli Bicknell
Founding Project Officer,
Voices for Change

Em Collard
Admin Officer, Night Service

Emma Lang
Fundraising & Communications Lead
(from Apr 2023)

Eve Dickenson
Legal Secretary, Family Law
(from Nov 2022)

Franky Bain
Managing Lawyer, COGS
(until May 2023)

Flick Ellis
Social Worker, WILO
(from Oct 2022)

Gatwech Wal
Community Lawyer, FLFV
(from Jun 2023)

Glen Ludbrook
Night Service Coordinator

Hamish McLachlan
Legal Director, Day Practice
(from Apr 2023)

Hui Zhou
Principal Lawyer, Legal Practice
(until Mar 2023)

Jack Erickson
Admin Officer, Night Service
(from Nov 2022 until Dec 2022)

Jade Lane
Program Coordinator, WWB
(until Sep 2022)
Lived Experience Practice Lead
(from Sep 2022)

Jacqui Bampton
Admin Officer, WWB
(from Jan 2023)

James Kempster
Client Services &
Admin Officer, Fitzroy Office
(from Nov 2022)



RIGHT: L-R Bonnie Lang,
Emma Lang, Quinn Hogan,
Kristine Olaris, Joe Ishow
(IDAHOBIT day)

Jenni Hughes
Admin Officer, WWB
(from Jan 2023)

Jess Ness
Volunteer Program Coordinator

Jia Kho
Project Officer, WWB
(from Oct 2022)

Jo Ferrari
Executive Assistant
(from Oct 2022)

Joe Ishow
Community Lawyer, FLFV
(until May 2023)
Senior Community Lawyer, Q+Law
(from May 2023)

Kathleen O'Callaghan
Outreach Lawyer
(until May 2023)
Community Lawyer, FLFV
(from May 2023)

Kelly Cassidy
Principal Lawyer, Q+Law
(from Jun 2023)

Kelly Whitworth
Project Officer, Voices for Change
(from Apr 2023)

Kevin Nguyen
Community Lawyer, NJC
from Apr 2023)

Kristine Olaris
Chief Executive Officer

Laura Gartland
Client Services & Admin Officer
(until Jul 2022)
Legal Practice Manager
(from Jul 2022)

Lauren Gordon
Senior Community Lawyer
(until Jul 2022)
Managing Lawyer, COGS
(from Jul 2022)

Linda Waters
Senior Family Violence Lawyer, FLFV

Madeleine Lynch
Community Lawyer, FLFV
(until Aug 2022)
Senior Lawyer, FLFV
(from Aug 2022)

Matilda Taggart
Lawyer, FLFV
(until May 2023)

Mark Rawlings
Night Service Coordinator (Fri),
Fitzroy Office

Megan Pearce
Managing Lawyer, SAPIL
(until Jul 2022)

Meghan Fitzgerald
Managing Lawyer,
Strategic Litigation

Michelle Welsh
Social Worker, WILO
(from Nov 2022 until May 2023)

Morgan Nyland
Senior Employment Lawyer, MELC

Naomi Saligari
Law Handbook Editor
(until Dec 2022)

Odette Shenfield
Community Lawyer, NJC
(until Mar 2023)

Paul Kidd
Senior Community Lawyer, NJC
(until Dec 2022)

Rafaella Lawrie
Specialist Family Violence
Admin Officer

Rebecca Leighton
Family Law Paralegal
(until Apr 2023)
Community Outreach Lawyer
(from Apr 2023)

Rosie Heselev
Prison Advocacy Lawyer
(until Feb 2023)

Ryan Hsu
Q+Law Service Director
(from Jun 2023)

Sally Krutsch
Senior Lawyer, FLFV

Shamila Liyanage
Managing Lawyer, FLFV
(until May 2023)

Sophie L'Estrange
Community Education &
Projects Officer
(until Mar 2023)
Lawyer, Strategic Litigation &
Social Action
(from Mar 2023)

Tara Suamba
Community Lawyer, Q+Law
(from Jun 2023)


Thea Gibson
Drug Outreach Lawyer
(until Oct 2022)
Senior Women's Criminal Lawyer
(until Jun 2023)

Tristan Brumby-Rendell
Trainee Lawyer
(until Nov 2022)
Drug Outreach Lawyer
(from Nov 2022)


Tuvan Vuong
Finance Assistant

Yasmin Geneva
Senior Criminal Lawyer
(until Jun 2023)


Yu Wang
Employment Lawyer, MELC



Bess was really amazing, always helpful and so responsive with my concerns, updating me all the time with where my case was at.



Client



Board of Directors

Claire Febey
Chair

Mick Sheehy
Deputy Chair

Chanphyna Bou

Jeremy Levine

Karri Walker

Michelle Batsas

Monique MacRitchie

Tony Macvean

Board Sub-Committees

Finance, Risk & Audit Committee

Tony Macvean
Chair

Andrew Webster

Gerry Schembri

Naomi Munga

Peter Loukas

Rebecca Middleton

Roslyn Aikman

50th Anniversary Committee

Mick Sheehy
Chair

Anna Skelton

Ben Rodgers

Julian Gardner AM

Monique MacRitchie

Sam Biondo

Life Members

Brian Collingburn

Brian Wright

Bruce McBain

Henrik Lassen

John Finlayson

Julian Gardner

Michael Kingston


Robin Inglis

Sue Bothman


Tessa Hay

Trevor Williamson

Vu Dang



FLS, always stay fearless and feisty



Vera Boston
Supporter and Donor

RIGHT: L-R Rosie Heselev, Karri Walker, Franky Bain, Megan Pearce, Kristine Olaris (NAIDOC march)



Legal Practice Report

Day Service

2022-23 was a momentous year for FLS's Day Practice as we wished a fond and grateful farewell to my predecessor, Hui Zhou. Hui has been a stalwart of the centre, both at Darebin and Fitzroy, and of the sector more broadly. She oversaw exceptional and sector-leading innovations, particularly in the areas of women's justice, centring lived and living experience, and piloting outreach and integrated legal services. She is and will continue to be much missed, and has left an indelible legacy at FLS. We also farewelled Shamila Liyanage as the Managing Lawyer of Family Law and Family Violence. Shamila consolidated and strengthened our family law and family violence services, particularly at the new Specialist Family Violence Court in Heidelberg, and contributed significantly to policy and advocacy work in the family violence space.

Despite these upheavals the Day Practice continued to provide critical services to our communities, including through our community outreaches, duty lawyer and case work services, community legal education and our systemic advocacy and public interest litigation. Some highlights include the following:

- We received the findings and recommendations in the Inquest into the Passing of Veronica Nelson in which we intervened, and which included ground-breaking developments in relation to the effect of stigma and discrimination against people who use drugs.
- We assisted a Djab Wurrung woman charged with offences associated with defending Country by seeking to protect sacred trees to have her charges withdrawn.
- We established new community outreaches, extending our reach in the Darebin community.
- We received additional funding to enable the continuation of our Women's Integrated Legal Outreach, St Vincent's Health Justice Partnership and Yarra Family Law and Family Violence Outreach.
- We continued our sector-leading work in relation to people with lived and living experience, including through our Work Without Barriers program which harnesses the skills of women with barriers to employment by employing them in the organisation through our continued auspice of Voices for Change, an advocacy run for and by people with lived experience of ABI and the criminal justice system.

- We ran a forum on Women's Lived Experience in Decarceration and Carceral Resistance which showcased projects from a range of organisations that have centred women who have been criminalised and a panel of people with lived experience, aiming to reflect on women's interactions with the justice system. It was extremely well attended with over 100 attendees in person and another 140 joining online.
- We strengthened our Family Law Small Property Pilot assisting clients with intersecting disadvantage obtain fair financial outcomes following relationship breakdowns as well as initiating a Divorce Clinic, channelling the power of our volunteer network to assist clients to apply for a divorce.
- We created an animated video titled When you see a lawyer. The video, codesigned by people with disability, provides clients with an overview of what to expect when seeking legal advice and explains the roles of both the client and lawyer. Production of the video was funded through a grant gratefully received from the Victorian Law Foundation.

Huge gratitude to all our lawyers, support staff and volunteers, past and present, who have enabled FLS to continue to provide vital services to our communities.

BELOW: L-R Nina, Jazz, Jackie, Sarah
(Panel, Women's Lived Experience in Decarceration forum)



Night Service

Our renowned Night Service is now back in full swing and has assisted 2,493 clients in the 2022-23 financial year, either face-to-face at our Fitzroy and Reservoir offices or by phone.

Night Service clients seek help with complex processes at significant times in their lives – family breakdown, eviction, job loss, criminal charges – and the impact of getting the correct advice at the right time can be profound.

In January this year, we relaunched the LGBTQIA+ Legal Advice Clinic, with the support of Hall & Wilcox. Through this collaboration, we have assisted more than 60 clients with a range of legal matters, delivered in a safe and supportive environment. Thank you to Hall & Wilcox for your continued support of this clinic.

In May, principal lawyer Adrian Snodgrass left the Night Service after 17 years at FLS. Adrian is well known to many who have volunteered with the service over the years and was appreciated for his broad knowledge of the law, and his calm and supportive presence for clients, volunteers and colleagues alike. We wish Adrian all the best with his next endeavor.

We are especially thankful to Glen Ludbrook who stepped up into the principal lawyer role while we commenced recruitment and to volunteers, Vu Dang, Moira Raynor and Cam Bloye, who assisted in vital coordination roles. The Night Service could not have continued without you.

As always, we are grateful to our dedicated volunteer base of lawyers, paralegals and administrative assistants who continue to give up their time to support clients by providing advice about civil, criminal and family law. Thank you too to Lawyers for Animals who continue to provide expert legal advice on animal law issues for Night Service clients.

The administrative team of Em Collard, Charlie Brennan, Jess Ness and Laura Gartland continue to go above and beyond in developing new systems for rostering, client intake and fielding enquiries from clients and volunteers.

LGBTQIA+ Legal Advice Clinic

In January, we relaunched the LGBTQIA+ Legal Advice Clinic, with the support of Hall & Wilcox. Through this collaboration, we have assisted more than 60 clients with a range of legal matters, delivered in a safe and supportive environment. Thank you to Hall & Wilcox for your continued support of this clinic.

Migrant Employment Law Clinic (MELC)

Since 2017 the MELC has assisted vulnerable migrant workers with claims regarding unpaid wages, workplace discrimination, sexual harassment, and unfair and unlawful dismissal. In total, the MELC has recovered more than \$770k in unpaid wages, entitlements, compensation and penalties on behalf of its clients.

Operating for one-day per week for the majority of FY2022-23, the MELC recovered over \$170k on behalf of clients. In so doing, the MELC represented clients in proceedings alleging workplace sexual discrimination and harassment, settled multiple underpayment claims, and initiated several ongoing court proceedings claiming compensation and penalties for the underpayment of workplace entitlements.

One of the notable cases that the MELC acted on involved a workplace sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation claim where VCAT awarded our client over \$50k compensation with the case widely reported in mainstream media channels including The Age, Daily Mail and 7News, in specialist labour law publications and on local channels aimed at migrant communities. MELC receives referrals from Anti-Slavery Australia, JobWatch, the Fair Work Ombudsman and FLS's Night Service.

In addition to providing legal representation in court proceedings, the MELC has begun offering debt enforcement services for former clients who have obtained a judgment or settlement which has not been paid. This new service is critical to ensure clients do not go home empty handed after receiving favourable outcomes. As part of this project, the clinic has opened 14 new enforcement files seeking to recover unpaid entitlements worth more than \$120k and has begun initiating court proceedings in these matters. The clinic continues to operate at capacity with matters progressed in a timely manner, all the while maximising the number of matters the clinic can effectively handle.

RIGHT: L-R Thea Gibson, Hui Zhou, Shamila Liyanage, Lauren Gordon, Adam Willson, Kristine Olaris, Tristan Brumby-Rendell



Criminal Outreach and Generalist Services (COGS)

Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC)

In 2022-23 the NJC team worked closely with Victoria Legal Aid to provide duty lawyer and casework services in criminal law, family violence and personal safety intervention order matters, and were supported by lawyers from the Family Law Family Violence team on family violence duty days. We said farewell to longstanding FLS and NJC lawyers and welcomed new staff to the team. We participated in consultations alongside other NJC stakeholders and community groups in the development of a Crime Prevention Strategy for the City of Yarra. We continued to be involved in the NJC Pre-Hearing Clinic and have participated in ongoing reviews as it moves out of its pilot stage. We participated in NJC-based community legal education initiatives and spoke at site visits by a range of community and government organisations.

Through its work at NJC, FLS has provided a high level of assistance to court users while also continuing to advocate for and contribute to the NJC's therapeutic justice model. Working alongside the many staff, stakeholders and services at NJC, we will continue to support the provision of this model to the City of Yarra community, and hopefully beyond.

Case Study

Alex* had a history of family violence, mental health and related substance abuse. She was charged with assault following a physical altercation with police, resulting in a deterioration of her mental health and increase in substance use. She was referred into the WILO program where support could be provided for her legal matters by a lawyer, and she could work together with the social work team to address her social needs. The lawyer and social worker worked together to support Alex helping her to understand and feel able to participate in her legal matter, with the social worker able to provide one on one emotional support at court.

The lawyer was able to negotiate with police around police conduct during the arrest and ultimately Alex's matters were withdrawn. She received a further referral for legal advice relating to police complaints. Because of the efforts made by the team to build a relationship with Alex, alongside legal-related supports, Alex was willing to work with the social work team who supported Alex to engage in positive community activities and address specific medical needs that she had previously neglected such as organising optometrist and dental appointments and treatment. WILO's social work guidelines allowed this support to continue after Alex's legal matters had been finalised.

*not client's real name

St Vincent's Health Justice Partnership (STV HJP)

The FLS-STV HJP continued in 2022-23. With the program now well established after a year of embedded practice, legal services have become an important part of care coordination within the complex care team at STV. In February, we welcomed a new lawyer who carried on the work across the hospital and at related services at the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Sumner House and the Salvation Army, whilst also providing a monthly outreach service at the nearby St Mary's House of Welcome.

Together with the WILO program, the FLS-STV HJP commenced an evaluation process with SVHM and FLS staff participating in consultations around the program's operation since its beginnings.

Women's Integrated Legal Outreach (WILO)

The WILO program began again after a period of hiatus when FLS was successful in obtaining funding to employ a Senior Women's Criminal Lawyer, and for the first time at FLS, two social workers. The team formed a multidisciplinary practice designed to support women and gender diverse clients towards decriminalisation. Legal support was provided in primarily criminal and some infringement matters, with further family law and family violence advice and representation given in partnership with our Family Law Family Violence team.

Our social workers built their practice, developing policies and guidelines and working to provide flexible and creative support for clients by meeting them wherever they were. Court support and support materials were provided along with ongoing assistance outside of legal matters where our social workers assisted clients to re-open bank accounts, begin Centrelink support, source clothing and material items and participate in community activities and supports.

Staffing issues within the team were relieved with the help of a locum lawyer employed for some months towards the end of the pilot period when we were delighted to learn we had funding to continue the project for a further two years.

As mentioned above, WILO (together with the STV program) commenced an evaluation process in which WILO program staff participated in consultations around the effectiveness and value of the multidisciplinary model in this context.

“

Rebecca was extremely supportive. I immediately felt less anxious after I had contact with her.

”

Client

Generalist

The Generalist team continued their work in the Darebin Catchment in the areas of summary crime, infringements, VOCAT and tenancy. Our partnership with the Northland Youth Hub continued with our outreach lawyer attending fortnightly to provide advice and assistance to young people. We obtained further funding to partner with Your Community Health's Your Health Help program, starting a fortnightly outreach to build referrals through Your Community Health's social workers, based at the Reservoir Neighbourhood House. This service was a recommencement of an earlier outreach in Preston which had closed over the COVID pandemic. Staffing shortages later in the year were relieved by a locum lawyer who worked with the team to continue to provide representation and advice to clients in the Darebin area.

Drug Outreach Lawyer (DOL)

The DOL continues to support the most vulnerable people who use drugs within the City of Yarra and City of Darebin. This support is made possible through the relationship with the various health partnerships that include the North Richmond Medically Supervised Injecting Room, Youth Project's Living Room on Hosier Lane, Odyssey House, Youth Support + Advocacy Service, Uniting Care Regen and Inner Space run by cohealth. A major component of the work involves meeting clients and being a presence in the various outreaches across the municipalities whilst another component involves attending the various courts in metropolitan Melbourne.

DOL also works closely with the SAPIL team in the various issues affecting people who use drugs. In the past year, this has involved advocating for bail reform, the human rights of people who use drugs, against the stigma and infringements throughout the Veronica Nelson inquest, advocating for the decriminalisation of cannabis, and supporting the right to protest regarding the decriminalisation of drugs.

Presentations throughout 2022-23 have included appearing on a panel of experts facilitated by the SAPIL team to discuss the Veronica Nelson inquest during the International Harm Reduction Conference, being a guest speaker at the YDHF International Overdose Awareness Day event and presenting at the 2023 VAADA Shifting Landscapes – Building the holistic treatment mosaic conference, VAADA's first state-wide conference since 2019.

Case Study

Michael* was referred to our service whilst remanded. The referral came through a health worker who was concerned that the court was not aware of his current situation with the health service. Michael had an acquired brain injury and was experiencing homelessness at the time. With the assistance of our partner organisation, we were able to ensure a timely and successful bail application and his entrance back into the community receiving supports.

However, the relationship with DOL was only beginning and continued throughout the next two years as there was an initial escalation in charges which correlated with his homelessness, increase in drug use and deterioration in mental health. Several further bail applications also occurred during this time. Finally, Michael's circumstances stabilised with the right treatment alongside housing.

Whilst assisting with his criminal matters, the DOL also assisted him in his guardianship matter, infringements, Victims of Crime matter and intervention order matters. We were able to refer Michael to the appropriate therapeutic court (ARC) that understood his current challenges and recognised his ability to finally address the issues in his life that had led to the criminal charges. His matters within the criminal justice system were finalised without the need to be punished any further in recognition of his turn around. Michael now reports being in the best place he has been for many years.

*not client's real name

Family Law Family Violence (FLFV)

The Family Law Family Violence (FLFV) team has undergone a number of changes in FY2022-23. We said a sad farewell to our Managing Lawyer Shamila Liyanage and deeply thank Shamila for her leadership and guidance during her 18 months in this role. Madeleine Lynch, previously the Senior Lawyer in the team has since been appointed to the Managing Lawyer position.

Two of our Community Lawyers also moved on, with Matilda Taggart becoming a Judge's Deputy Associate and Joe Ishow joining Q+Law as Senior Community Lawyer. We have recruited two new lawyers Gatwech Wal and Chrissie Potts, are currently recruiting for a third and look forward to having a full team!

Throughout these changes, the team has continued to provide high quality legal assistance for FLFV clients. We conducted 1,157 duty lawyer services and 307 advice only appointments across our outreach sites. We were pleased to support four team members to have the opportunity to attend the National Family Law Conference in Adelaide.

We were excited to be back onsite at The Orange Door where we provide weekly appointments to people experiencing family violence. The Orange Door provides a range of assistance to people experiencing family violence and, since FLS began providing an outreach service in 2019, we have seen the demand for our service grow.

The FLFV team also continued to provide a hybrid model for appointments at our health justice partnerships with the Mercy Hospital for Women in Heidelberg and the North Richmond Community Health Centre.

The FLFV team delivered early intervention legal services in partnership with the City of Yarra via onsite fortnightly appointments at the Connie Benn Centre, a family and children's hub and early learning centre in Fitzroy. We worked closely with

Yarra Family Services team members to ensure that clients' legal needs were met in a safe and supported environment. We are also working with the Connie Benn Centre to develop a resource to increase the community's legal literacy and access to legal services. FLS was particularly thrilled to learn that the funding for this outreach was extended for another year.

Our team members regularly appeared at Family Dispute Resolution Service conferences and at the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia. We have assisted clients through a combination of pro bono and grants of legal aid, and also assist clients at contest for FVIO matters.

In addition, the Family Law Small Property Pilot program we launched in 2021 as an initiative to address glaring barriers to legal assistance for those seeking fair financial outcomes in the family law system, continues to provide casework advice to clients experiencing intersectional disadvantage and limited asset pools going through separation. We have assisted 17 clients this financial year.

The FLFV have also set up a Divorce Clinic assisting clients applying for a divorce. We had 34 divorce appointments and assisted 19 clients with their applications. The clinic runs once a month, assisted by volunteers and a supervising lawyer. The clinic aims to assist clients who may experience barriers in making an online application for divorce.

Finally, following the release of proposed amendments to the Family Law Act by the Australian Government in January 2023 which would see, among other things, a simplification of the best interests of the child principles and the removal of the presumption of equal shared parental responsibility, the FLFV team contributed their expertise and prepared a submission on the proposed changes.

Case Study

A distressed elderly client, who spoke limited English, was listed as an Affected Family Member on a police application for a Family Violence Intervention Order. The Respondent, a young adult-child of the client had been excluded from the family home by a safety notice after their aggressive conduct was exacerbated by illicit substance use and extreme anxiety – the Respondent has a history of untreated mental illness. The client had called 000 hoping for help to address the Respondent's escalating behaviour and had not expected or wanted police intervention by way of a Family Violence Intervention Order.

The Respondent did not attend at Court. The police sought to finalise the matter for a period of 12 months with an order that the Respondent not commit family violence which would have enabled the Respondent to return to the family home. The client agreed with the proposed conditions of the Family Violence Intervention Order but did not want the order finalised. The duty lawyer made submissions to the Court that in the context of the Respondent's mental health and attempt to engage with services, as well as the wishes of the Affected Family Member, the matter should not be finalised but instead an adjourned for three months. The police application to finalise was refused and the matter adjourned. The client received advice and referral to an Applicant Support worker. Detailed file notes were taken and the duty service is available to assist the client again on the return date which will prevent the client having to retell their story.



RIGHT: L-R Chrissie Potts, Sally Krutsch, FLS Outreach Lawyers at Connie Benn

Strategic Advocacy & Public Interest Litigation (SAPIL)

Activist Rights website

The new Activist Rights website was relaunched providing a comprehensive and free knowledge bank covering over 200 topics including preparation for protest, legal literacy on common offences and court proceedings, organising tools, surveillance laws impacting protesters, and strategic litigation. FLS thanks all those involved in developing and reviewing the resource, including Dr Tamar Hopkins, Loxy Lunawhirl, Jordan Brown and Judy Kuo for their work on the site.

Yoorrook Justice Commission

FLS was privileged to support two elders in their preparation and giving of evidence to the Yoorrook Justice Commission, Aunty Vickie Roach and Alma Thorpe. Audio visual of their testimonies and copies of their sworn statements can be accessed through the Commission's website.

LEFT: L-R: Alma Thorpe and Meghan Fitzgerald
RIGHT: Relaunched Activist Rights website



420 Picnic in the Park open letter

An open letter outlining human rights and over-policing concerns of the annual political demonstration supporting the legalisation of cannabis was sent to the Minister of Police and Chief Commissioner of Police. The letter was relied on by politicians to ask questions in Parliament regarding the allocation of public resources and operational decisions made that were alleged to adversely impacting the rights to free assembly and engagement in political demonstration. We thank those who shared their witness accounts of the protest with us.

Djab Wurrung trees case

FLS was again privileged to assist with the defence of Teena Moffatt, Djab Wurrung custodian charged in relation to protecting the Birthing Tree. Ms Moffatt's charges had been outstanding for over two years, and she held to the position she could not concede to charges laid against her in defending her own Country. SAPIL requested Victoria Police withdraw the charges on the basis there was no public interest in pursuing the prosecution. The request was buttressed by questions regarding the lawfulness of the interference with the land, and by extension, Ms Moffatt's person, in the absence of a valid cultural heritage management plan, as well as the alleged failure to consider Ms Moffatt's protected human rights pertaining to culture and lands as a Djab Wurrung woman under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic). Victoria Police withdrew charges against Ms Moffatt and the other accused persons. We acknowledge the support of Anna Dixon, Hannah Douglas, Stary Norton and a team of pro bono counsel supporting individuals who had been charged across the state.



Coronial Inquest into the Passing of Veronica Nelson

FLS was granted interested party status on the basis of its harm reduction experience, drug outreach lawyer program, prison program, and working with women with lived experience of the prison and criminal legal processes. Current outcomes of the inquest include imminent reforms to Victoria's bail laws, a review of opiate substitution therapy guidelines in Victorian prisons, funding injection into culturally appropriate health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing alcohol and other drug dependence, and a transfer of health service provision within Dame Phyllis Frost Centre to a public health service provider. We thank our pro bono counsel Julian McMahon SC OA, Megan Fitzgerald and Alyse Mobrici as well as expert witnesses Auntie Vickie Roach, Auntie Marjorie Thorpe, Adjunct Professor Uncle Ted Wilkes, Scientia Professor Carla Treloar, Adjunct Associate Professor Nico Clark MD and FLS Drug Outreach Lawyer Adam Willson. FLS also acknowledges the support of the Grata Fund.

International Harm Reduction Conference 2023

FLS was proud to host a panel of experts to discuss the harm reduction intervention we had led in Veronica's inquest before an international audience at this conference in Melbourne. We were particularly proud to acknowledge the contribution of a lived experience witness in informing the court's contemplation of the issues under investigation within the scope of the inquest - intersectional harms experienced as a result of gender, criminal law antecedents, Aboriginal identity and identification as a drug user. We thank the expert witness panellists and moderator Fiona Patten.

When asked about her experience on the panel, Auntie Vickie Roach explained:



It has been an honour to speak for the voiceless. Without us, it is just theorising.



SAPIL acknowledges the wisdom of knowledge of all the elders and experts who contributed to our work in the inquest and more generally.



ABOVE: Auntie Vicki Roach

Q+Law

Q+Law – Victoria's landmark legal service for LGBTIQ+ communities

Coinciding with the International Transgender Day of Visibility on 31 March, the Victorian Attorney-General the Hon Jaclyn Symes MP confirmed that FLS had been allocated a \$1.6 million grant. This provision is purposed to initiate a comprehensive state-wide legal service tailored for our LGBTIQ+ communities, to be delivered through a partnership with Queerspace. The funding is for a period of 18 months, concluding in October 2024. The 2016 Access to Justice Review underscored the pressing need for enhanced legal access for the LGBTIQ+ communities. It also highlighted the significance of establishing a legal service presence at the Victorian Pride Centre.

Outreach partnerships

Q+Law is delighted with our partnerships with Queerspace and Your Community Health. These alliances enable us to extend our outreach to Carlton and East Reservoir, and in line with our commitment to enhancing accessibility, our Q+Law lawyers will be present at these locations every fortnight. Our overarching objective is to alleviate potential barriers our clients may face in accessing legal services, ensuring an integrated and seamless experience.

Community Governance Group

In line with our commitment to providing a community led service, a Community Governance Group including representation of people from the various intersections of the LGBTIQ+ community ensures community-based decision-making in the strategy, priorities and work of Q+Law.

Staff recruitment

June saw us undertake the recruitment of the Q+Law team. We're proud to have assembled a group of LGBTIQ+ individuals from diverse backgrounds with intersecting identities. Our team possesses a broad spectrum of professional and legal experience dedicated to, advocating for and supporting LGBTIQ+ communities.

Refurbishments at the Victorian Pride Centre

June culminated with the completion of the refurbishment of the Q+Law office at the Victorian Pride Centre. The upgrades include a consultation room coupled with four workstations. The Victorian Pride Centre stands as Australia's inaugural purpose-designed establishment for LGBTIQ+ communities. Housing approximately 17 community organisations, our presence in the centre fosters not only potential collaborations but also facilitates warm client referrals.

RIGHT: L-R Tara Suamba, Beth Griggs, Kelly Cassidy, Ryan Hsu, Khoi Nguyen, Joe Ishow (Q+Law team)

Appointment of evaluators

In accordance with our tender obligations to the Department of Justice and Community Safety, Q+Law has engaged First Person Consulting and Fran Demetriou Consulting as our independent evaluators, following a rigorous tender process. The interim evaluation report was completed in October, with the comprehensive final report slated for completion by October 2024.

Branding

With the support of the Community Governance Group and drawing on the expertise of Archer Magazine, we were thrilled to settle our Q+Law name and branding. The name Q+Law was the idea of Hui Zhou, our former Principal Lawyer, and came about as FLS and Queerspace were planning the service. The Q of course was a shortening of the word 'queer' which has largely been reclaimed by the LGBTIQ+ community, although we recognise is still painful for some in the community. The Q however is also a nod to notions of queerness as politics, with an aim to reveal, disrupt and transform the social and power structures that cause inequalities. The + is about intersectionality – and aims to ensure a message of inclusion for the diversity of identities in LGBTIQ+ communities but also to the variety of other identities that people hold – related to cultural background, disability and Aboriginality for example. The logo represents a sunrise suggesting light, hope and healing. The tag line of justice, equity and pride we think needs no explanation!



Projects

Voices for Change

In its third year, Voices for Change continues its critical work of self-advocacy and community education of Acquired Brain Injury and the justice system. In April, the group was joined by new Project Officer, Kelly Whitworth, who has been developing lived experience videos with members and organising self-advocacy events. Kelly is now leading the group following the departure of founding Project Officer, Elli Bicknell.

Voices for Change extends its deepfelt gratitude to Elli for all her hard work supporting the group since its inception and steering it through the difficulties of COVID-19. Elli will always be a part of the Voices for Change family.

Highlights:

- Two separate consultation workshops with Victoria Legal Aid, developing their Help Before Court application form and their Client-First Strategy
- Interview with Canberra Disability Review
- Attendance at the National Forum on Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment in Detention in Sydney
- Strengthening of members’ self-advocacy skills
- Audience growth through social media presence

Voices for Change would like to thank the Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) for their continued support and to Victoria Legal Aid for their ongoing consultation work with our members.

National Forum on Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment in Detention

In July this year, two Voices for Change members flew to Sydney to provide their lived experience expertise to the National Forum on Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment in Detention at the University of New South Wales.

Attendees came from around the country to provide their expert knowledge on the extent to which Australia is faithful to its commitment to the United Nations Convention against Torture. Voices for Change members heard powerful lived experience accounts by family member advocates on a range of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatments suffered by loved ones in detention.

The main purpose of the forum was to begin to draft a National Action Plan that provides a roadmap for how civil society can hold the Australian Government to account on its treatment of people with disabilities in detention. Lived experience voices will form a significant part of the plan.

The forum was a great opportunity for members to practise their self-advocacy skills on a national stage and they were commended for their skills and the sensitivity they displayed towards their fellow peers’ experiences.

Work Without Barriers (WWB)

The WWB project aims to implement a safe, inclusive and meaningful employment and training program for women who have experienced systemic barriers to their employment, and is committed to using codesign methodologies to ensure that we are centering lived experience voices and expertise throughout the project.

During the design phase of the project, we consulted with women who had lived experiences relevant to our project’s target cohort to better understand the barriers to finding and keeping sustainable employment. Feedback from these consultations have been instrumental to our design process and have been incorporated throughout each phase of the project.

WWB has since welcomed three women into the program who have been offered employment contracts for 18 months to gain skills and experience in a community legal setting. Throughout their employment, these staff members will receive training and support that is tailored to their personal and professional goals. We will also seek their insight and expertise to build organisational capacity and improve on our current processes and infrastructure to build a safer, trauma-informed and inclusive workplace. Before the end of their employment, the project team will work with the staff members to ensure that they graduate with job search, resume writing, interview technique and other essential job-readiness skills.

Since starting at FLS, our WWB staff members have:

- Been working with the project team in group and 1:1 sessions to build on ‘soft’ skills and confidence in a work environment, and to familiarise them with FLS’s IT and administrative processes, policies, procedures, values and organisational context.
- Been participating in 1:1 mentoring and goal setting sessions with the project coordinator.
- Worked with the project team to develop and take the lead on their own tailored work and training plans. These plans are adaptable, depending on how each staff member progresses towards their goals and if they identify any further training needs.
- Been working with our existing legal teams to build on their skills and work experience. Some staff members are awaiting, or have already commenced roles with external stakeholders, who are able to offer further work experience that is relevant to the staff member’s desired career pathways.
- Been enrolled in at least two or more courses based on their professional development and future employment goals, and all staff members have completed at least one of the courses they have enrolled in.

“

I am so grateful to be a part of WWB. I really want to be here for everyday that I am a part of the program – what an opportunity! It [employment] has helped me set up and settle into my new home. This has been really good for me.

Jenni
WWB staff member

”

“

WWB is a group of women who have had strong lived experience surrounding marginalisation. If it was described as a music genre, it would be funk, soul, pop rock, alternative. Plus, we have a crazy zine in the making!

Caroline
WWB staff member

”

“

To hear the power and the struggle of what people are going through was just amazing. People with lived experience are what the world needs.

Jai
Voices for Change member

”



LEFT: Voices for Change member Jai at UNSW

Fundraising

Keeping FLS fearless and feisty

For fifty years, FLS has been fearless in providing some 150,000 people with vital legal assistance, propelling innovative legal justice and championing the systemic change that our community needs.

Powered by over 2000 volunteers and supported by countless allies and passionate individuals throughout Victoria's legal sector, we have only been able to provide this remarkable impact with the unwavering support of our community.

In our 50th year we launched our first dedicated fundraising strategy to provide new and meaningful avenues for FLS supporters to help enrich and further this vital work, and to build a lasting culture of philanthropy across the organisation.

Following consultation with FLS alumni and external guidance, this strategy prioritises increased relationship management, strong supporter communication and clear avenues to support FLS in tangible and high impact ways.

Consistent with our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, these efforts work to directly strengthen our independent voice from government and bring about the financial sustainability necessary to build a thriving service in the years to come.

Charitable appeals inject critical funds

FLS was grateful to be chosen to participate in a matched giving appeal by local social enterprise Ethical Jobs. Promoted across Ethical Jobs networks and communication channels, the campaign raised over \$16,000 for our services with donations ranging from \$20 to \$2,000.

We also ran our first triple matched giving campaign for the end of the financial year with incredible support from long-standing partners Allens and Maurice Blackburn. Demonstrating the commitment and passion of our community, FLS raised over \$42,000 in just a fortnight.

This involved advertising support from 3CR, 6,000 email opens, over 600 site visits, 71 individual donations, many messages of heartfelt support, and cross-promotion from our partner organisations, founding members, former volunteers and alumni, all of whom continue to support our work today.

Again, with donations spanning \$5 to \$2,000 we couldn't be more grateful.

Many donors through both appeals were new to providing financial support to FLS and join our growing circle of core supporters who provide generous regular tax-deductible donations each month.

Supporting our work

This year also marked 25 years of Allens' dedicated Law Trainee program which continues each year to provide emerging lawyers with a diverse program in which to cut their teeth.

Alongside the incredible pro bono support of aligned law firms and barristers, we also forged new relationships with local businesses who generously supported our 50th anniversary and volunteer raffles including Cinema Nova Carlton, CycleBar Fitzroy, Flowers Vasette Fitzroy, Hares and Hyenas St Kilda, Napier Hotel Fitzroy, Marios Café Fitzroy, Minuteman Press Collingwood, Rainbow Hotel Fitzroy, Readings Carlton, Standard Hotel Fitzroy and Urban Climb Collingwood.

We also thank Inner North Community Foundation for assisting us with the opportunity to offer our supporters a safe and secure avenue within which to leave bequests and gifts of significance for our ongoing work.

“

Thank you for your dedication and services to the community

Srey Sen
Supporter and Donor

”

“



Fifty years ago, the opening of the Fitzroy Legal Service revolutionised access to legal help for those unable to afford it.

Fifty years later, the service continues to advocate not only for individuals but also for reforms to laws that disadvantage many more.

It is a shining champion of fairness and justice.

”

Julian Gardner AM

Fitzroy Legal Service Founder and Volunteer 1972-1975
Fitzroy Legal Service Legal Coordinator 1975-1980

“



Community driven justice means that Fitzroy Legal Service reflects the community that it serves. FLS seeks to represent, amplify and empower the voices of First Peoples in line with the principle of self-determination.

We partner with First Peoples organisations to assist in addressing the structural problems with the legal system. We are currently developing a framework which sets out our commitment to walking with First Peoples on the journey to justice and self-determination.

”

Karri Walker

Proud Niyiyaparli woman, FLS Board member 2020-current

Volunteer Program

The heart of FLS

Our amazing volunteer cohort has been powering community-led justice across Victoria since 1972. Volunteers have always been at the heart of the services FLS provides to the community and we rely heavily on their expertise and commitment. We recruit biannually at the commencement and middle of each year, together with specific roles available throughout. And during the year we offer opportunities for our volunteers to connect through events, consultations and various training sessions.

Paralegal Pathway program

This program was put in place after receiving a combination of interest from our admin volunteers about wanting to step into paralegal positions and inquiries from lawyers wanting to volunteer to build up their experience in client facing duties. The law students spend approximately six months in an admin role before progressing to a paralegal role, and the lawyers spend as much time in the paralegal role as they need before transitioning into a lawyer role.



Fitzroy Legal Service has become a vital cog in the machinery of the legal system. In its fifty years, FLS has led reform, challenged abuse of power, and demystified the law.

Countless volunteers have provided immeasurable hours of free advice and assistance to hundreds of thousands of people in need.

Our community and the legal profession are better for its work.

Jon Faine AM

Fitzroy Legal Service Lawyer 1984-87



BELOW: L-R Verena Tan, Hamish McLachlan



ABOVE: L-R Meg Whittaker, Tristan Brumby-Rendell, Em Collard, Laura Gartland, Danielle Masagca, Moniroth Leng

Day Service opportunities

Our Day Service volunteers are often invited to complete short projects or alternate roles with our Day Service lawyers and other programs so they have an opportunity to work across the different areas of law within FLS. For example, we had a number of our drug outreach and criminal law volunteers working alongside our Voices for Change team assisting with the translation of interviews with people suffering from acquired brain injuries.

LGBTQIA+ Legal Advice Clinic

We welcomed a total of 30 volunteer lawyers from Hall & Wilcox to our Night Service providing legal advice for our relaunched LGBTQIA+ clinic. The clinic is a hybrid of face-to-face appointments and phone appointments. The lawyers in this program have a variety of specialist areas including employment, criminal law, civil law and tenancy.

A few staff members attended the Midsumma Festival with Southside Justice Centre to promote the clinic in March. It was a great day mingling with likeminded organisations.

RMIT Summer Internship program

In January, 14 RMIT students participated in our internship program in the Night Service. Students were given the opportunity to volunteer as admin assistants and paralegals. Our volunteer lawyers enjoyed mentoring these students over a three-week period and we were pleased to have many of them continue to volunteer after their internship.

National Volunteer Week 2023

To celebrate National Volunteer Week and to acknowledge peak exam season for law students, a week's long raffle was run with our volunteers 'bidding' online each day for a host of terrific prizes. The week culminated at the Standard Hotel where volunteers and staff came together to celebrate the end of the week and the presentation of prizes. We were delighted with the generosity shown by various sponsors, who are mentioned elsewhere in this report.

Public Interest Law Fair

Staff attended the Melbourne Law School to talk to students about Fitzroy Legal Service's work and its steadfast commitment to the community. It was warming to see current volunteers coming up to say hi as well as inquisitive, newer students asking how to become a volunteer.

Some quotes from our volunteer base:

“

I absolutely love volunteering at FLS. I work with great people, meet interesting clients and am able to learn the law and how to apply it. I am grateful to FLS for the opportunity.

”

“

It brings me great joy to be with people who are nice, who help each other and work hard to help the clients and their problems.

”

“

I'm having a wonderful time here and it feels great to use my skills and give back to the community. It's also cemented that I want to work in community law and gives me something to work towards in my degree.

”

“

Being able to come along to court and watch the lawyers I volunteer with present a case which I've been helping them with is the best feeling, and also receiving the positive feedback from those lawyers and the barristers I've written memos to.

”

“

I'm forever thankful for the opportunity and support I have received volunteering at FLS.

”

“

Thanks, FLS for all you do!

”

BELOW: L-R Jess Ness, Kristine Olaris
(National Volunteer Week)



Volunteer Activity

Category	Activity	Hours	Volunteers	Average
Fitzroy Town Hall Night Service	Junior Admin	961.37	39	24.65
	Lawyer	1427.75	61	31.44
	Observer	44.50	6	7.42
	Paralegal	1002.27	68	20.86
	Senior Admin	91.83	4	22.96
	Total	3527.72		
Drug Outreach Lawyer Program	Paralegal	467.00	6	155.67
	Total	467.00		
Specialist Family Violence	Admin	186.07	5	37.21
	Total	186.07		
Social Action & Public Interest Law	Paralegal	136.00	3	45.33
	Total	136.00		
Women's Integrated Legal Outreach	Paralegal	96.00	1	96.00
	Total	96.00		
Reservoir Night Service	Junior Admin	87.72	5	17.54
	Lawyer	163.25	5	32.65
	Observer	8.00	1	8.00
	Paralegal	127.00	8	15.88
	Total	385.97		
RMIT Interns	Day Service Admin	10.50	3	3.50
	Night Service Admin	74.75	10	7.48
	Paralegal	100.75	9	11.19
	Admin training	40.00	8	5.00
	Total	322.00		

Category	Activity	Hours	Volunteers	Average
Family Law Family Violence	Divorce Clinic Paralegal	79.00	2	39.50
	Paralegal	101.50	3	61.50
	Admin	324.50	4	81.13
	Total	505.00		
Night Service Phone Advice	Lawyers for Animals Lawyer	8.00	1	8.00
	Fitzroy Town Hall Lawyer	305.00	19	16.05
	DLA Piper Tenancy Lawyer	57.00	14	9.75
	Lawyer (WFH)	988.25	64	62.09
	LGBTQIA+ Lawyer (WFH)	60.00	12	30.00
	Total	1406.25		
Criminal, Outreach & Generalist Services	Fitzroy Town Hall Paralegal	48.00	2	48.00
	Neighbourhood Justice Centre Paralegal	376.00	3	125.33
	Reservoir Paralegal	120.00	1	120.00
	Reservoir Night Service Paralegal	24.00	1	24.00
	Total	688.00		
Migrant Employment Law Clinic	Lawyer	4.00	1	4.00
	Paralegal	236.60	26	120.81
	Total	240.60		
Night Service Day Support	Admin	1216.50	25	53.56
	Work Without Barriers Admin	34.42	1	34.42
	Total	1250.92		
Total Hours		9043.43		

Volunteers

We acknowledge all the individuals below and any others who have contributed to Fitzroy Legal Service in a volunteer capacity in 2022–2023

A	Jacob Clancy	Aidan Dummler	Phoebe Gawin	Alex Horder
Dalton Alexander	Kiara Colantuono	Ella Duncan	Emily George	Ross Hutchins
Carol Andrades	Alex Connolly	Julia Duncan	Wendy George	L
Katrin Andreeva	Gordon Cooper	E	Roberto Gerrard-Martinez	Moniroth Leng
Paul Arnold	Phillip Cortes	Daisy Eales	Georgio Giannellis	I
B	Ruby Craven	Tom Egan	John Ginnane	Katryna Induni
Harriet Bailey	Tahli Craven	Alex Ellem	Troy Gittos	J
Yingying Bao	Stephen Cremean	Lucy Ellings	Jai Glennon	Sally Jackson
Jessica Bazina	Julie Cui	F	Chris Goddard	Gagandeep Jassal
Tai Bell-Liu	D	Phillip Faella	Susanna Gourlay	Justine Jawhar
Jack Bennett	Maira Dad	Sam Farfoud	Lisa Grealy	Shannon Jenkins
Jordyn Bethune	Nam Dang	Zoe Farrell	Ella Greedy	Rebecca Johnston-Ryan
Ella Bilton-Gough	Vu Dang	James Farrugia	Holly Gretton	K
Cameron Bloye	Laura D'Aprano	Joan Feng	Philip Gruszka	Jacob Kairouz
Carla Bonifacio	Mark Davidson	Hannah Finzel	H	Lauren Kapp
Alex Bowen	Rhia Davies	Aaneke Fitzgerald	Ben Hall	Celil Kardaslar
Lucinda Brown	Emily Davis	Alice Fletcher	Susan Hamilton-Green	Malek Kazimi
Justin Bruhn	Mary De Guzman	Isabelle Fletcher	Natalie Hamiwka	James Kempster
Jessica Burns	Tanvi Dhariwal	Holly Fredericksen	Jonathan Han	Ella Keogh
C	Julio Di Gregorio	Andrew Frydman	Naomi Hanna	Sinem Ketenci
Hayley Campbell	Eve Dickenson	G	Patrick Hannan	Noah Khan
Sebastian Campbell	Sammy Dixon	Alison Galbally	Ruth Hansen	Joshua Khaw
Jason Chan	Rebecca Dodd	Maggie Gander	Tia Haralabakos	Alex Kim
Ashley Chandler	Alice Donnan	Brittany Garagounis	Katrina Harte	Brittany King
Jasmine Chao	Teresa Drecala	Fiona Garton	Freya Harvey	Maitreyee Kishor
Daniel Chen	Harvey Duckett	Susan Gatford	Alex Hewitt	Tara Korkes
Laine Chew	Perri Dudley		Lisa Higgins	Georgia Koutzoumis

Liliia Kruglova
Anamaria Krunes
Kerry Ktenas
Sanj Kumar
L
Emma Lang
Alex Larocca
Paul Latimer
Edmond Lau
Yeann Law
Georgia Lazarakis
Annie Lee
Simon Lee
Rebecca Leslie
Bill Leung
Claudia Levings
Emily Lewis
Carol Li
Jason Lianto
Raymond Lobo
Nina Lowe
Rosemary Lucadou-Wells
Glen Ludbrook
Peter Lynch
Hanna Lynzaat
M
Angus Mackey
Madeline Macriyiannis
Ananyaa Mahajan
Stephanie Malamas
Danijel Malbasa
Dru Marsh
Angelie (Joy) Marshall
Rebecca Martin
Danielle Masagca
Bruce McBain
Aidan McCarthy
Molly McDonald
Benjamin McGrath
Danie Mellas
Leisha Millanta
Lloyd Miller
Helena Mimigiannis
Sara Mirzaei
Tessa Mitchell
Anna Molihan

Ilyana Moloney
Ella Monaghan
Dhiman Mondal
Simon Moodie
Imogen Mooney
Tiarnne Morgan
Udaii Muhtaseb
N
Gabriel Ng
Kim Vy Ngo
Linh Nguyen
Morgan Nyland
O
Belquis Obura
Isabel O'Connor
Jessica O'Connor
Georgina O'Leary
P
Marcelle Parrot
Amber Paton
Shirley Petrov
Tim Peyton
Etty Philosof
Nicholas Plithakis
Lisa Powell
Max Pratt
Tamara Preuss
Lucy Prowse
Olivia Puglisi
R
Najwa Rachmani
Nabeela Raji
Mark Rawlings
Moirra Rayner
Cate Read
Sabahat Rexhep
Jessica Richardson-Brown
Natalie Rossi
Fiona Rothville
Tom Rowan
Ilia Roytberg
Josh Rutherford
Sharon Ryan
S
Martin Samyia

Adrianna San Jose
Ashvin Sandra Segaran
Karl Schaffarczyk
William Scheidlinger
Cosette Schilling
Connor Shaw
Asheesh Shawel
Kade Sheely
Dylan Shuter
Madhvi Singh
Sofia Skobeleva
Allana Smith
Eugenie Smith
Luke Smith
Bridget Sowersby
Harry Speagle
James Spencer
Rebecca Standfield
Mackenzie Stephan
Jeremiah Stevens
Luke Suhr
David Suric
Eleanor Symon
T
Lara Templeton
Suruthii Thirumavalavan
Genevieve Thomas-Walters
William Tinney
Helen Tiplady
Victoria Tishchenko
Phoebe Tobin-White
Claire Topsom
Cristina Trafficante
Taylor Tran
Benjamin Tria
Adiam Tsegay
U
Bill Unkles
V
Rachel Van Gemert
Kate Vanrenen
Jo Verity
Zachary Vogrig
W
Tori Walker

Kym Wallace
Alan Wang
Howard Wang
Joyce Wang
Leo Wang
Yu Wang
Georgina Warren
Christopher Watt
Meg Whittaker
Joely Wilkinson-Hayes
Marc Willcox
Jess Williams
Holly Woodlock
Georga Wootton
Alexandra Wright
X
Tom Xie
Belinda Xiong
Y
Aisha Yehia
Aylin Yigit
Jane Young
Z
Chennie Zhang
Ruby Zhou
Ned Zvekic

The Law Handbook

An enduring commitment to a highly accessible legal resource

In 2023 FLS published the 45th edition of The Law Handbook (LHB). Each year, the LHB is updated by more than 80 experienced legal practitioners who are specialists in their field. The LHB covers more than 90 common legal topics, including summaries of areas of the law that most impact people in their everyday lives. It also provides up-to-date information on emerging legal issues and changes to the law. The LHB's mission is to provide a comprehensive plain English guide to the law in Victoria. As always, we have ensured the 2023 edition was highly accessible for members of the general public, as well as practising lawyers.

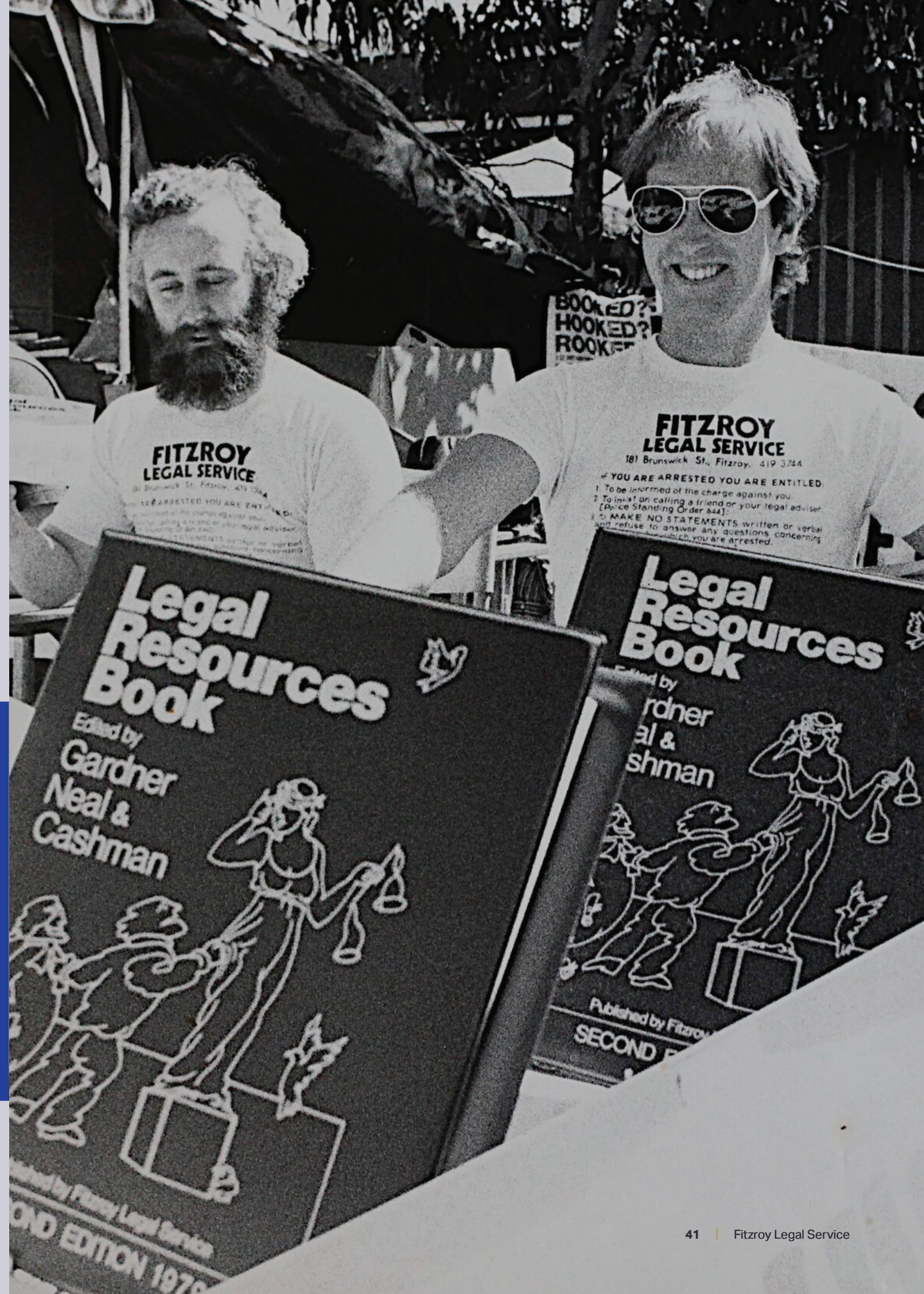
Thank you to our loyal contributors

Producing this book every year would not be possible without the generosity and expertise of our contributors. For this year's edition, our contributors included magistrates, ombudsmen, commissioners, barristers, law lecturers, partners, principal lawyers and accredited specialists in a range of areas. Some contributors have been writing for the book for decades, while others are new recruits. Each year they rewrite, fact-check, revise, review and proofread their individual sections and chapters, building on the work done by many contributors before them. We very much value the outstanding contribution of each and every contributor and their support staff.

The breadth and depth of content in the LHB is reflective of the profession-wide support we receive each year. For example, in this year's edition a large and diverse team of lawyers from Victoria Legal Aid revised chapters on fines and infringements, disability law, social security law, child support, credit reporting and seeking representation in court. The Commonwealth Ombudsman and Victorian Ombudsman reviewed the section on taking a problem to the Ombudsman, while the Victorian Legal Services Commissioner oversaw the chapter on legal representation and the Victorian Health Complaints Commissioner revised the health law section. We also had valued contributions from community lawyers and community legal services including Tenants Victoria, Justice Connect, Senior Rights Victoria, Mental Health Legal Centre and WestJustice. We thank the pro bono contributions of lawyers at private and corporate firms including Allens, Lander & Rogers, Robinson Gill, Nest Legal, Phillips Ormonde Fitzpatrick and Nicholes Family Lawyers. A number of our regular contributors are esteemed members of the Victorian Bar and we are grateful for their contribution too. We also thank the ongoing contributors from among our own staff at FLS.

And thank you, freelancers

Finally, our loyal freelancers! Our specialist freelancers have been with us for many years and we could not produce the book without their help. Our great thanks go to Sandy Cull, gogoGingko (cover design), Carolyn Elliot, Australian Book Connection (print management), Kerry Cooke, Eggplant Communications (typesetting), Darryl Nixon, Sunset Publishing Services (eBook development) and Puddingburn Publishing Services (compiler of the index and the lists of cases and legislation).



50th Anniversary Committee

Established in April 2020, the 50th Anniversary Committee was formed to focus on specific fundraising and events for the FLS 50th anniversary year.

The purpose of the Committee was to assist in developing and implementing a strategy to acknowledge and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Fitzroy Legal Service.

In carrying out this purpose, the Committee's objective was to:

- identify activities for income generation
- identify activities for raising the profile and awareness
- identify events to celebrate the anniversary
- devise a strategy to engage FLS ex-alumni (including ex staff and volunteers) in supporting FLS into the future and advocating on our behalf
- prepare reports and recommendations for presentation to the Board

Key activities overseen by the Committee included:

- Government House 50th Anniversary Official Reception on 16 November 2022
- 50th Anniversary Party on 23 February 2023
- 50th Anniversary FLS Prospectus
- 50th Anniversary Giving Sprint raising over \$42,000

The Committee met five times during 2022-23 and was disbanded in June 2023 following the successful completion of the Committee objectives. Thank you to the 2022-23 Committee members – Sam Biondo, Jo Ferrari, Meghan Fitzgerald, Julian Gardner AM, Monique MacRitchie, Jessica Ness, Kristine Olaris, Ben Rodgers and Anna Skelton.

Mick Sheehy

Chair
50th Anniversary Committee



Visitors at FLS!

BELOW: L-R Kristine Olaris, Hui Zhou, Fiona Patten, Meghan Fitzgerald



BELOW: L-R Jean Hinchcliffe, Aiv Puglielli MP, Hamish McLachlan, Kristine Olaris, Ryan Hsu



ABOVE: L-R Kristine Olaris, Gabrielle De Vietri MP



ABOVE: L-R Nathan Lambert MP, Kristine Olaris, Hui Zhou, Ged Kearney MP

Finance, Risk & Audit Committee

As Chair of the FLS Finance, Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC), I am pleased to table this report on the activities of the FRAC for the 2022/23 financial year.

The purpose of the FRAC as set out in its Charter is to:

assist the Board in fulfilling its corporate governance responsibilities by providing oversight and direction in relation to the [FLS] financial reports and other financial information produced by it, auditing and reporting processes generally, and management of ... risk.

At each of its meetings, a primary function of the FRAC is to review the year-to-date profit and loss statement against budget, together with other financial and management reports including the balance sheet and cash flow statement.

Annually, the FRAC:

- recommends the approval of the audited financial statements and receives the auditor’s report – noting any issues of concern and management’s response;
- provides oversight into the development of the budget and recommends a budget to the Board for approval; and
- receives a separate report into the audit of the FLS Legal Practice Trust Fund.

The FRAC also is responsible for oversight of FLS risk management (financial and other), including regularly reviewing the organisation’s risk register and response to high level and escalating risks.

Last year in my FRAC report I stated that:

“

‘I believe that, under Kristine Olaris’ stewardship, we are making progress in putting FLS in a position of greater financial strength and capacity. We have broadened our sources of funding, and have brought additional rigour to how we make funding applications and account for project revenue and expenses. I am optimistic that the upcoming 50th anniversary celebrations will give us further momentum in increasing revenue to support the fulfillment of our objectives.

”

Pleasingly, the FY23 result demonstrated this to be the case.

From a financial sustainability perspective, FLS had a positive FY23. A combination of more diversified and increased revenue and prudent expense management led to FLS recording an FY23 surplus of \$86,552. This is a much-improved result, reflecting the commitment and discipline of CEO Kristine Olaris, Finance and Operations Manager Brendan Kelly and the whole FLS team.

As at the end of FY23, FLS has healthy reserves of \$456,665. These reserves are important given the uncertainty in the fiscal environment.

Our auditors did not raise any issues of concern in their audit completion report.

The 2023/24 year has also started well from a financial perspective.

I would like to thank all FRAC members for their volunteer commitment to FLS over FY23. I would especially like to acknowledge the contribution of Gerry Schembri, who has resigned from the FRAC after 9 years of excellent service. The following table lists FY23 FRAC members and meeting attendance.

Name	No. of Meetings attended	No. of Meetings held
Ros Aikman	3	5
Peter Loukas	5	5
Rebecca Middleton	4	5
Naomi Munga	3	5
Gerry Schembri	5	5
Andrew Walker	2	5
Tony Macvean	5	5

The financial stability and solvency of FLS is crucial to our ability to provide the access to justice that is so important and valued by the community. Whilst we can never be complacent, we are in a strong position thanks to Kristine, Brendan and the team.

Tony Macvean
Chair
Finance, Risk & Audit Committee



48

Income &
Expenditure
Statement

49

Assets &
Liabilities
Statement

50

Statement of
Cash Flows

51

Statement
Of Changes
In Equity

52

Notes to and
forming part of
the accounts

58

Statement by
Members of
the Board

59

Auditor
Independence
Declaration

60

Independent
Auditors Report

**Fitzroy
Legal
Service**
419 3744

Income And Expenditure Statement

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023	2022
		\$	\$
Income			
Government Grant - VLA	9	2,402,402	2,369,600
Grants		1,981,872	1,515,709
Practice Income		235,142	256,214
Sales		47,142	49,127
Interest Income		39,420	3,601
Membership Income		3,486	3,308
Miscellaneous Income		70,369	74,684
		4,779,833	4,272,243
Expenditure			
Employee benefits expense		3,825,926	3,760,686
Depreciation & Amortisation		28,489	21,601
Rental and premises expense		155,521	169,538
Office administration expenses		609,656	359,379
Publication expenses		73,689	46,087
		4,693,281	4,357,291
Surplus (Deficit) before income tax		86,552	(85,048)
Income tax expense	2	–	–
Surplus (Deficit) after income tax		86,552	(85,048)
Retained Earnings at the beginning of the financial year		370,113	455,161
Retained Earnings at the end of the financial year		456,665	370,113

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Assets And Liabilities Statement

As At 30 June 2023

	Note	2023	2022
		\$	\$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	2,374,927	1,831,572
Trade and other receivables	4	277,997	253,399
Inventory		11,630	9,354
Total Current Assets		2,664,554	2,094,325
Non-Current Assets			
Security Bond		13,126	13,126
Property, plant and equipment	5	159,027	61,074
Total Non-Current Assets		172,153	74,200
Total Assets		2,836,707	2,168,525
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	6	435,870	317,967
Amounts received in advance	7	1,561,594	1,112,896
Provisions	8	275,755	281,824
Total Current Liabilities		2,273,219	1,712,687
Non-Current Liabilities			
Provisions	8	106,823	85,725
Total Liabilities		2,380,042	1,798,412
Net Assets		456,665	370,113
Members' Funds			
Retained Earnings		456,665	370,113
Total members' funds		456,665	370,113

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Statement Of Cash Flows

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023	2022
		\$	\$
Cash Flows From Operating Activities			
Receipts from government grants		2,406,145	2,369,600
Receipts from customers		331,541	139,124
Other Receipts		2,426,827	1,422,242
Payments to suppliers and employees		(4,534,136)	(4,259,794)
Interest received		39,420	3,601
Net Cash provided by operating activities	10	669,797	(325,227)
Cash Flows From Investing Activities			
Payments for purchase of property and equipment		(126,442)	(8,103)
Net Cash provided by (used in) investing activities		(126,442)	(8,103)
Net increase (decrease) in cash held		543,355	(333,330)
Cash at the beginning of the year		1,831,572	2,164,902
Cash at the end of the year		2,374,927	1,831,572

Statement Of Changes In Equity

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

	Retained Earnings	Total
	\$	\$
Balance at 1 July 2021	455,161	455,161
Surplus/(Deficit) attributable to the entity	(85,048)	(85,048)
Balance at 30 June 2022	370,113	370,113
Surplus/(Deficit) attributable to the entity	86,552	86,552
Balance at 30 June 2023	456,665	456,665

Notes To The Financial Statements

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

Note 1: Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

This financial report is special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Australian Charities and Not for profits Commission Act 2012 . The Board has determined that the association is not a reporting entity.

The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take

into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuation of non-current assets. The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in preparation of this financial report.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements of the Australian Accounting Standards And Accounting Interpretations, and the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 Presentation of Financial Statements, AASB 107 Statement of Cashflows, AASB 108 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors and AASB 1054 Australian Disclosures except for AASB 16 Leases

a. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

b. Income Tax

The Association is an Income Tax Exempt Charity in terms of Subdivision 50-5 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

c. Property, Plant and Equipment

Leasehold improvements and office equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all property, plant and equipment is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use. Leasehold Improvements are amortised over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful lives of the improvements.

d. Employee Entitlements

Provision is made for the Association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee benefits have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled.

The Association is bound by the Multipurpose Business Agreement, whereby employees' prior service in other CLCs is recognised for purposes of determining accrual of long service leave entitlement. Accordingly where the employee is known to have served in other CLCs for 5 years or more, provision for long service leave is accrued from the commencement of their employment with the Association.

Provision previously recognised for employees who subsequently leave the Association is not reversed at that time because the Association will be required to contribute the accrued entitlement to the then current employer provided they remain eligible for prior service recognition. Where the Association becomes aware that the ex-employee is no longer entitled to prior service recognition the provision is reversed.

Commencing on 1 July 2019, the Victorian Government introduced the Portable Long Service Scheme, administered by the Portable Long Service Authority (PLSA). It covers all community services workers and as such, the Association covered by the scheme. Effective from 1 July 2019 all future long service leave benefits reside with the PLSA and the Association is required to pay 1.65% of salaries to the PLSA on a quarterly basis. Provisions have been adjusted to include only the portion of leave accrued prior to 30 June 2019 and increased each year to take into account salary movements.

e. Inventories

Inventories consist of publications and are measured at the lower cost and net realisable value. Costs are assigned on a specific identification basis and include direct costs and appropriate overheads, if any.

Notes To The Financial Statements

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

Note 1: Statement of Significant Accounting Policies (cont.)

f. Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the Association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period.

g. Impairment of Assets

At the end of each reporting period, the entity reviews the carrying values of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is an indication that those assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs to sell and value in use, is compared to the asset's carrying amount. Any excess of the asset's carrying value over its recoverable amount is recognised in the income and expenditure statement.

h. Revenue

Grants are recognised on an accrual basis. Any grants received and provided for special purposes are recognised to the extent funds are expended on projects. Grants received for future financial periods are treated as grants in advance under current liabilities to the extent of the unspent grant where there is an obligation to repay the unexpended portion of the grant.

Revenue from membership fees and donations are recognised upon receipt. Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised upon delivery of goods to customers.

Interest revenue is recognised on an accrual basis taking into account the interest rates applicable to the financial assets.

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).

i. Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the assets and liabilities statement.

j. Economic Dependence

The entity is dependent on Commonwealth and State Government funding for a significant portion of its revenue used to operate its business. At the date of this report, the Board have no reason to believe this support will not continue.

k. Related Party Transactions

As at Balance Date there were no related party transactions of a material nature

Notes To The Financial Statements

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

Note 2: Income Tax Expense

The Association is an Income Tax Exempt Charity in terms of Subdivision 50-5 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

	2023	2022
	\$	\$

Note 3: Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cheques on hand	6	80
Cash at Bank	954,792	424,186
Term Deposit	1,420,129	1,407,306
	2,374,927	1,831,572

Note 4: Trade and other receivables

Accounts receivable	280,856	256,258
Provision for doubtful debts	(2,859)	(2,859)
	277,997	253,399

Note 5: Property, plant and equipment

Office Furniture & Equipment - Original Cost	377,743	251,302
Less accumulated depreciation	(218,716)	(190,228)
	159,027	61,074

Note 6: Trade and other payables

Current		
Trade Creditors and accruals	300,172	184,808
Provision for audit fees	7,000	6,800
PAYG and BAS amount Payable	126,406	124,067
SSRV Security Bond Held	2,292	2,292
	435,870	317,967

Notes To The Financial Statements

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Note 7: Amounts received in advance		
VLA Allowable Surplus	105,305	101,562
Unexpended project funds	1,456,289	1,011,334
	1,561,594	1,112,896

Note 8: Provisions

Current		
Employee Entitlements	275,755	281,824
Non-Current		
Employee Entitlements	106,823	85,725

Note 9: Income Government Grant - VLA

Government Grant - VLA Commonwealth	641,423	559,442
Government Grant - VLA State	1,797,084	1,765,588
Government Grant Brought Forward - VLA	(36,105)	44,570
	2,402,402	2,369,600

Notes To The Financial Statements

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Note 10: Reconciliation of Cash Flow from		
Operations with Profit from Ordinary		
Activities after Income Tax		
Surplus after income tax	86,552	(85,048)
Cash flows excluded from operating profit attributable to operating activities		
Non–cash flows in surplus		
– Depreciation	28,489	21,601
Changes in assets and liabilities;		
– (Increase)/decrease in trade and other debtors	(24,598)	(244,207)
– (Increase)/decrease in inventory	(2,276)	(5,758)
– Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	117,903	60,778
– Increase/(decrease) in amounts received in advance	448,698	(93,466)
– Increase/(decrease) in provisions	15,029	20,873
Net cash provided by Operating Activities	669,797	(325,227)

Note 11: Going Concern

The members of the Board believe that the application of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate due to the expected positive cash flows of the association and through the on going support of all funding bodies.

Notes To The Financial Statements

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Note 12: Operating Lease Commitments		
Operating leases contracted for but not recognised in the financial statements		
Payable - minimum lease payments:		
– no later than 12 months	145,780	5,778
– between 12 months and five years	250,217	11,556
– greater than five years	-	-
	395,998	17,334

There is a 5 year equipment lease for 2 printers which was signed 14 May 2020.

The Association has a lease for its office at 279 Spring St, Reservoir which is due to expire on 17 May 2024.

The Association has signed a new lease for its office at Level 4 of the Fitzroy Town Hall commencing on 1 Janaury 2023. The lease term is for 3 years to 31 December 2025. There is an option to extend for a further of 2 years.

The Association has also signed a lease for part of Level 3 at the Victorian Pride Centre commencing on 1 June 2023. The lease term is for 5 years to 31 May 2028. There is an option to extend for a further of 5 years.

Statement By Members Of The Board

For The Period Ended 30 June 2023

The Board has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the board the financial report as set out on pages 48 to 57:

1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of Fitzroy Legal Service Inc. as at 30 June 2023 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Fitzroy Legal Service Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board and is signed for and on behalf of the Board by:

Chair of Board 

Dated: 27/10/23

Board Member 

Dated: 31.10.2023

Auditor Independence Declaration

To The Directors Of Fitzroy Legal Service Inc.

As lead auditor of Fitzroy Legal Service Inc. for the period ended 30 June 2023, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- a. No contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 in relation to the audit; and
- b. No contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.



Stephen Kirtley
Director

Dated this 1st day of November, 2023

Davidsons Assurance Services Pty Ltd
101 West Fyans Street
Geelong, Victoria 3220

Independent Auditor's Report

To The Members Of Fitzroy Legal Service Inc.

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Fitzroy Legal Service Inc. (the association), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the declaration by those charged with governance.

In our opinion the financial report of Fitzroy Legal Service Inc. has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (ACNC Act), including:

- a. giving a true and fair view of the Fitzroy Legal Service Inc's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- b. complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extend described in Note 1 and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Fitzroy Legal Service Inc in accordance with the ACNC Act, the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We confirm that the independence declaration required by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, which has been given to the directors of the Company, would be in the same terms if given to the directors as at the time of this auditor's report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for the purposes of fulfilling the Fitzroy Legal Service Inc. financial reporting responsibilities under the ACNC Act. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our report is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Report

Management is responsible for the preparation of the financial report in accordance with the ACNC Act, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Fitzroy Legal Service Inc's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Fitzroy Legal Service Inc or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Fitzroy Legal Service Inc 's financial reporting process.

Independent Auditor's Report

To The Members Of Fitzroy Legal Service Inc.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: <http://www.auasb.gov.au/Home.aspx>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.



Stephen Kirtley
Director

Dated this 1st day of November, 2023

Davidsons Assurance Services Pty Ltd
101 West Fyans Street
Geelong, Victoria 3220

**Fitzroy
Legal
Service**

50th
Anniversary

Fearless. Feisty. Fifty.

Our Offices

**279 Spring Street
Reservoir VIC 3073**
Ph: (03) 9484 7753

**Level 4, Fitzroy Town Hall
201 Napier Street
Fitzroy VIC 3065**
Ph: (03) 9419 3744

**Neighbourhood Justice Centre
241 Wellington Street
Collingwood VIC 3066**
Ph: (03) 9948 8698

fls.org.au

