

Fitzroy
Legal
Service

Community driven justice

Fitzroy Legal Service
Annual Report 2024-2025



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Cover photo: FLS staff and Voices for Change member Michael Mayne at Bakehouse Studios to record the group's All Been Inside podcast

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 Fitzroy Legal Service (established in 1972).



Fitzroy Legal Service acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung Peoples 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 areas in which we work to Community.

We acknowledge the significance of Fitzroy as a meeting place for First Peoples, and the many First Nations people who reside in Yarra, Darebin and St Kilda. We thank First Nations peoples for the 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.

About Fitzroy Legal Service

Our Vision



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

Our Purpose



We provide access to justice for individuals and communities and drive positive systemic change.

Our Values



Integrity



Courage & Passion



Empowerment & Advocacy



Connection to Community

Our Structure



Our Services

Place-based services

- Health Justice Partnerships
- Drug Outreach Lawyer Program
- St Vincent's Hospital
- Mercy Hospital
- Connie Benn Centre
- North Richmond Community Health
- Darebin Community Outreach
- Advice and casework
- Community Legal Education
- Migration Law Program
- Duty Lawyer Services
- Heidelberg Magistrates' Court
– *Specialist Family Violence Court*
- Neighbourhood Justice Centre
– *Criminal law and family violence*

Specialist and statewide services

- Night Service
- Q+Law
- Prisoners' Legal Service
- Women's Integrated Legal Outreach
- Public interest litigation
- Advocacy and law reform
- Voices for Change
- Law Handbook

Chair and CEO Summary

Fitzroy Legal Service's 2024-2025 was characterised by fearless advocacy, legal service consolidation, and organisational renewal in the context of continued increases in community need.

This annual report provides a snapshot of our collective achievements over the last year, made possible by our dedicated staff and volunteers, and our valued members, supporters and funders. Together we continued to build on our long history of delivering community-driven justice through community-embedded, holistic legal services and fearless advocacy, with and for those who need it most.

This year was a busy one on the advocacy front, facilitated by our creation of a new Policy, Advocacy and Community Engagement (PACE) directorate. Our increased work in this area included advocating for reform to drug driving laws to include a legal defence for people with a medical cannabis prescription, responding to unwelcome reforms relating to youth justice and bail, presenting a submission to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Inquiry into family violence orders to better protect victim-survivors, advocating for the decriminalisation of possession of cannabis, securing the inclusion of some important additional safeguards in the new anti-vilification legislation, standing up against the dislocation of our communities residing in public housing, and of course, championing the country's first Treaty with First Nations people.

We consolidated a number of our newer legal services, including our Women's Integrated Legal Outreach, Q+Law and our Migration Law Program, each of which provides tailored legal services to communities facing marginalisation, expanded our outreach in the City of Darebin, re-established our legally-aided and low cost criminal law practice for the 'missing middle', and made several improvements to our iconic Night Service. A major piece of work in the Legal Practice area involved the reintegration of the Night Service with the rest of the Legal Practice, improving client experience and staff connection across the organisation.

Our work in the legal information and community legal education space included providing community outreach to people affected by the towers redevelopment, and commencing work on enhancing the online version of the Law Handbook with AI to make it more user-friendly for a wider range of readers.

In the operational space, we continued our focus on staff wellbeing, facilities improvement and financial systems with the development of a financial reserves policy, a streamlined budgeting process and application of a consistent management fee, and returned a positive financial result, including a small surplus.

We were delighted to complete the formation of our senior leadership team, welcoming Amy Frew as Director - Legal Practice in August 2024, Caroline Adler as COO in October 2024, Verena Tan as our inaugural Director - PACE in April 2025 and Rach Chapman as Director - Q+Law in July of this year. We are grateful to have such a focussed and committed team to drive our mission forward. We farewelled long-term employee Lauren Gordon – thanks, Lauren for your many years championing access to legal support, particularly for those in Darebin.

Members of the FLS Board and the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC) continued to contribute their skills, perspectives, time, and energy to the organisation, providing particular assistance with Board and FRAC recruitment, risk management, and strategy development. We were pleased to welcome three new Board members – Lisa Ward, Prashanti Manchikanti and Michael Kingston – who offer a broad range of skills, experience, and a deep commitment to social justice. We farewelled long term Board member Jeremy Levine and thank him for his energy and expertise over many years.

The legal assistance sector faces continued challenges and opportunities, and as an organisation we are mindful of the responsibility we have, now more than ever, to lead the drive for positive change with and for our communities. Work has commenced on developing our next strategic plan, as we seek to set this beloved organisation up to continue to successfully serve our communities in 2030 and beyond. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff, volunteers, members, supporters and stakeholders who have all generously engaged in this process.

We commend the FLS Annual Report 2024-25 to you, and as always, thank you for your support.



Mick Sheehy
Chair



Hamish McLachlan
CEO

Snapshot of our year



4,136
clients assisted



Our clients:



3%

were Aboriginal or
Torres Strait Islander



7%

were children or
young people



6%

were trans or
gender diverse



21%

were experiencing or at
risk of homelessness



28%

spoke a language other than
English at home



33%

had a disability or
mental health issue



41%

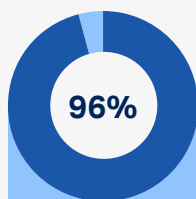
were experiencing or at
risk of family violence



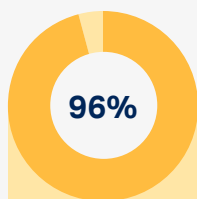
55%

were women

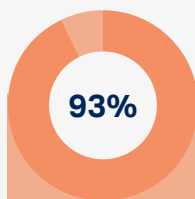
How our clients experienced our service:



felt welcome
and safe



felt our
service was
responsive to
their needs



felt more
confident to
seek legal help
in the future

7,000

services delivered,
including:



3,842

legal advice
appointments

1,482

duty lawyer
appearances

387

legal
tasks

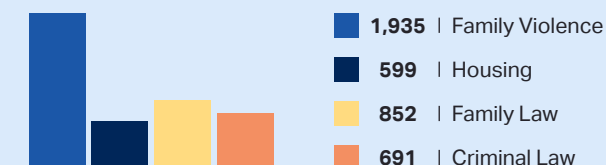
476

referral
services

364

casework
services

Our clients' top four problem types:



Community services:

We provided **199** secondary
consultations

We engaged in **143** stakeholder activities

We delivered **100** law reform services

We provided **16** community legal
education sessions

We produced **12** community legal
education resources

Migration Law program

The Migration Law program, generously funded by a grant from the VLSB+C, has grown over the last 12 months to meet the needs and demands of our community.

In October 2024 we established a citizenship clinic, with the help of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre and Gadens to provide advice and assistance to permanent residents living in the City of Yarra.

The clinic has assisted more than **40 applicants to apply for Australian citizenship** and at least **eight applicants have been approved**.

The Migration Law program has also seen more than 100 clients and provided them with advice and/or assistance in relation to a range of visa applications, including partner visas, child visas, protection visas, offshore humanitarian visas and citizenship applications.

The program has also partnered with Living Positive Victoria to provide a series of community legal education sessions for people living with HIV. The sessions seek to explain the effect that living with HIV can have on people's migration status.

Case Study

Marty's story - Road to citizenship

Marty* a single New Zealand citizen in his 60s, had lived in Australia on and off for more than 30 years. He was referred to the Migration Law Program for assistance with an application for Australian citizenship by his support worker at the Living Room in late 2024. Marty has been unhoused for several years and sleeping in his car after a series of incidents caused him to lose his work and previous rental properties. Marty had long wanted to apply for citizenship but lacked the necessary identification documents and the money to pay for the application.

Working with Marty and his support worker at the Living Room, the Migration Law Program was able to help Marty obtain New Zealand identification documents, police clearances from three different countries, and lodge an application for Australian citizenship. The Migration Law Program was also able to work with a housing agency to cover the cost of the application for Marty, removing another procedural hurdle in his quest to become a citizen. Throughout 2025 the Migration Law Program helped Marty to respond to a series of requests for further information and in August 2025 Marty's citizenship application was approved and he recently attended his citizenship ceremony.

As a citizen, Marty is now able to access many of the essential support services, including Centrelink and housing support.

*Name changed to protect privacy

Case Study

Jack's story – Returning home for the first time in 12 years

Jack*, an older Australian permanent resident living in public housing in the City of Yarra, came to Fitzroy Legal Service requesting help to apply for a copy of his original Australian visa, which had been approved more than 30 years ago, so that he could try to get a passport from his home country. Jack had been trying for more than 10 years to get a passport but could not do so without a copy of his visa.

The Migration Law Program assisted the client to obtain a copy of his visa grant through a Freedom of Information request, which enabled him to apply for a passport from his home country. During this process Jack mentioned how he had recently been married and that he would like to try and sponsor his wife to stay in Australia but he did not know how to do this. In September 2024, the Migration Law Program helped Jack and his wife Emily* to apply for an onshore partner visa, assisting with the drafting of the application and preparing the supporting documents. Jack and Emily had managed to save the money required for the application but they could not afford the cost of a private lawyer and would not have been able to lodge the application without the assistance of the Migration Law Program.

The Migration Law Program then helped both Jack and Emily apply for permission to exit and return to Australia on their respective visas and they were able to travel overseas and meet each other's families for the first time. For Jack it was the first time he had been able to return to his home country and see his parents and siblings in more than 12 years.

*Names changed to protect privacy

Voices for Change

Now in its fifth year, Voices for Change (VfC) continued its critical work of self-advocacy and community education on the relationship between acquired brain injuries and the justice system.

The group secured a further 12-months funding through a federal government information, linkages and capacity building grant to continue its vital lived-experience led work in the sector.

VfC has grown its membership and continued making a name for itself, becoming a trusted and looked-to lived-experience group across the criminal-justice and disability advocacy space in Victoria.

This year the group presented at the Reintegration Puzzle Conference in Mparntwe-Alice Springs, where First Nations member Jai Haines co-facilitated a workshop on culturally-relevant responses to Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The group also delivered several key sector consultations across Victorian legal and justice organisations, and delivered educative sessions in health spaces such as the Melbourne Safe Injecting Room. This work continues to strengthen their professional and community networks across the sector.

Adam Willson and VfC member Jai Haines recording the All Been Inside podcast



All Been Inside

In 2025, Voices for Change developed a self-advocacy podcast series titled 'All Been Inside'. The 4-part series features members' disability-justice led stories, related policy reform recommendations and expert interviews. The podcast was launched via a webinar with 80 attendees from across the justice and social services sectors.

The podcast attracted significant media attention, highlighting the members' stories and the broader systemic issues regarding ABI and criminal justice in outlets such as The Guardian Australia, 4ZZZ Brisbane Radio, 3CR Melbourne Radio and the About Time prison newspaper. The podcast reached currently incarcerated peoples which has begun an exchange of letter-writing and peer-support between VfC members and people currently incarcerated who may have an ABI.

A member's advocacy regarding Victoria Legal Aid's Assessment and Referral Court in their podcast episode has since contributed to VLA's review on what is and isn't working with this service after a VLA staff member attended the webinar.

VfC's public advocacy platform continues to make **key contributions to the design and delivery of courts and sentencing in Victoria.**

The group continued to develop their skills in group-work and self-advocacy through participating in a 2-day workshop on positive teamwork and peer support which led to the initial development of a code of conduct for the group. The code of conduct sets goals regarding positive group-work and respectful relationships.



Listen to All Been Inside [HERE](#)

“

It's so easy to stay at home or just shut the door, whatever, and not face things. I did not know a thing, [but now] I have travelled all over Australia, I've spoken at Parliament. I have changed laws. We have done things that are amazing and make your soul feel good. It's a place where you can be honest, open and able to share, and you will not be judged by our members.

VfC member Francesca Lee



VfC members Michael Mayne and Jai Haines with Stan Winford, recording the All Been Inside podcast

“

Hearing directly from people with an ABI and about their personal experiences and challenges was invaluable.

Webinar attendee

FLS staff and VfC member Jai Haines recording the All Been Inside podcast



“

I love the place, you know, it's grown to be like my second family, and what I do, with Voices for Change, it's helping people. I can't pay back what I've done, all the wrongs I've done in my life. This is one way where I know if I'm helping someone that's got an ABI, I'm doing good. I'm not doing bad.

VfC member Michael Mayne

Women's Integrated Legal Outreach

The Women's Integrated Legal Outreach (WILO) program provides integrated legal and social work support to criminalised women, trans and gender diverse people who have significant and multiple complex needs.

The program brings together a lawyer and social workers to provide assertive outreach and cross-referral pathways to relevant services to provide holistic support for clients with the aim of breaking the cycle of incarceration, improving wellbeing and addressing factors that contribute to gendered experiences of criminalisation.

This year, WILO assisted **32 clients with 61 legal services**, including casework files, legal advice and legal tasks across multiple program types including criminal law, family violence, infringements and personal safety matters. Our social worker assisted clients with casework, advocacy, referrals and comprehensive planning.

“

Thank you so much for all your help, seriously I am so thankful, you're both weapons and it warms my heart to know there are people out there who genuinely care. I need you to know you have given me hope and I haven't felt that in such a long time. I felt shackled with invisible cuffs, so alone and unheard. Today is my first day of life again! Thanks to you.

Text from a WILO client



Sophie Jest with a client's dog at Sumner House providing legal advice

Case Study

Supporting Eloise to fight for her children following criminal charges due to misidentification

Eloise* self-referred to the WILO program. She was aware of WILO as she had been a previous client. Eloise is a 25-year-old Yorta Yorta woman. She is mother to two very young children.

At the start of the year, Eloise was charged with multiple charges of assault, resist police and use indecent language in public, and was placed on bail following arrest with a residential condition. The alleged offending occurred following an incident with police at her home, where they had attended in response to a series of violent attacks on Eloise, by the father of her children.

Police attended her residence to arrest the alleged perpetrator and check on our client as a victim, as part of their investigation and follow up.

Our client's two children were at our client's home with other family members. Our client had been facing financial hardship and as a result, the power wasn't on and the house unkept. Police formed a view it wasn't a safe environment for children and that there was inadequate appropriate supervision. Our client returned home and tried to access her house to see her children.

Police then proceeded to exclude our client from entering her own residence (and being able to see her children) in circumstances where it is unclear what powers (if any) the police had to enforce that exclusion. Our client became heightened and an incident ensued with police resulting in the charges.

This matter raised important considerations in relation to the purported exercise of police powers. We challenged the level of physical force used to restrict our client's movements prior to the arrest and during her arrest and whether it was excessive in the circumstances. This matter also illustrates misidentification in relation to family violence matters, where our client has become criminalised through interaction with police, when she was the original victim of family violence.

Following the alleged offending, Eloise's access to her children and housing became precarious. As court proceedings unfolded, her children were moved from foster care, eventually into the care of Eloise's extended family. She was also unable to return to her usual home, due to concerns of family violence and fear of police.

The WILO social worker assisted the client to speak to the police liaison officer to get a family violence intervention order as well as to provide her updates in relation to the criminal investigation and matter where she was the victim. The social worker also liaised with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to make the appropriate changes to Eloise's property to ensure it is safe to return to.

In the criminal proceedings, we appeared at the contest mention as the prosecution had not agreed to drop the charges. We arranged for our client to have leave to appear via videolink to reduce the impact on her of being required to travel on public transport with two small children, coupled with the associated financial costs. Our client was brave in wanting to fight the charges in the context of potential police misuse of power and not acting in the proper execution of their duties and we set the matter down for a contested hearing.

We briefed a barrister with a special interest in police accountability matters to run the matter alongside FLS.

Just a week prior to the hearing, approximately eight months after our client was charged, the prosecution further reviewed the matter and the charges against our client were withdrawn.

Our client was on bail for the entire period, which significantly raised her risk of imprisonment and criminalisation and entrenchment in the criminal justice system.

In positive news, Eloise was provided with a Department of Housing property. She now has court orders with her children permanently in her care. Our client was committed to breaking the cycle of generational trauma and reunifying with her children. To achieve this, she is diligently working to address the protective concerns and ensure her home is safe for her family's return.

Eloise reflects on WILO's service provision as "from my perspective, I would not have gotten through losing custody of my children without [the social worker], and I wouldn't have had the bravery and courage to go against the police after being assaulted if I didn't have WILO by my side."

*Name changed to protect privacy



Wanted to share that the lawyer was lovely - she spoke on my behalf with the prosecutor and got some of the driving charges dropped, got a really good outcome, lawyer was really lovely, good outcome, no conviction.

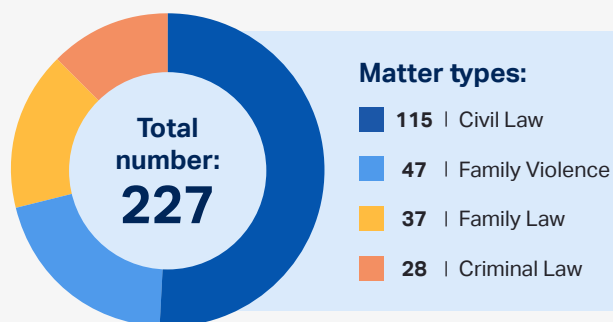
Q+Law

Q+Law is a statewide, community-led legal service for LGBTIQ+SB people in Victoria, delivered by Fitzroy Legal Service in partnership with Queerspace and funded by the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

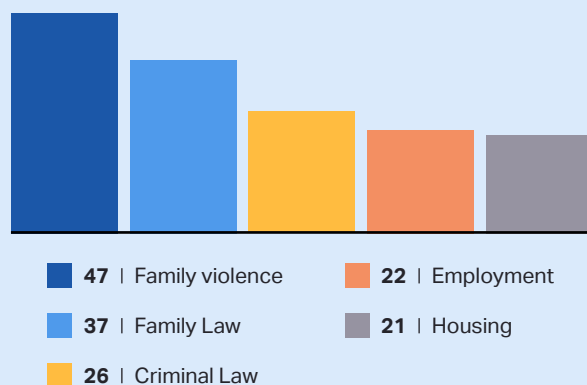
Q+Law acts as a safe entry point to the legal system and provides legal advice on a wide range of community law issues and casework assistance on specialist LGBTIQ+ legal issues. Q+Law serves people across Victoria online and over the phone, with physical outreach locations at the Victorian Pride Centre in St Kilda, Queerspace in Carlton, and Your Community Health in East Reservoir. In FY25, Q+Law was generously supported by secondeed lawyers from Gadens and Slater and Gordon.

Legal services snapshot:

In its second year, Q+Law delivered **642 individual services and opened files for 190 clients.**

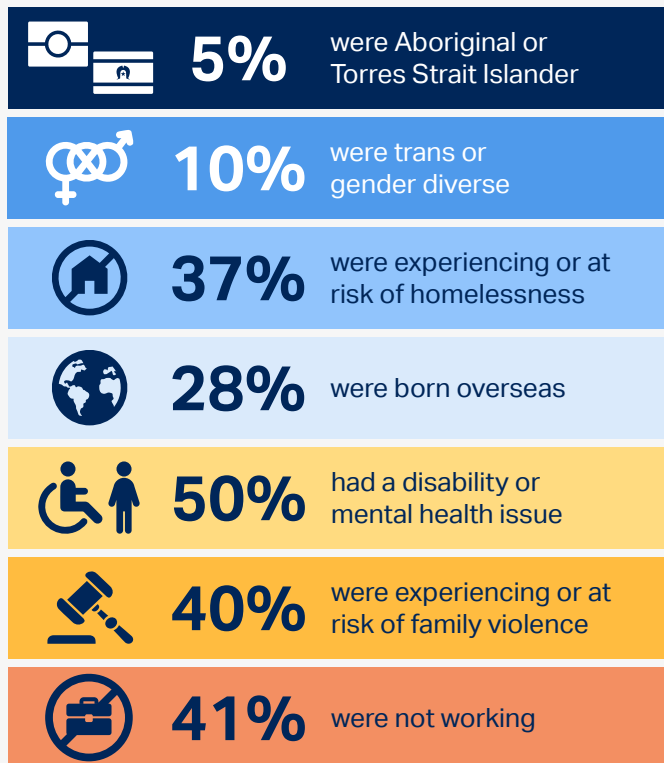


Top five problem types:

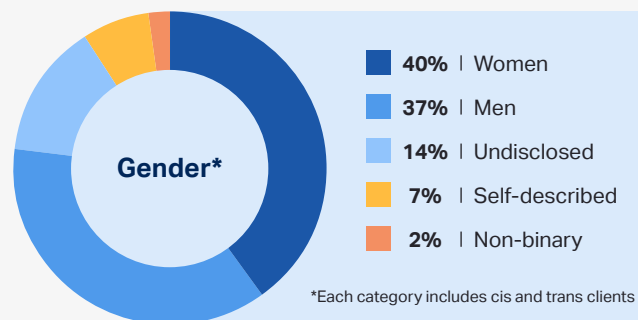
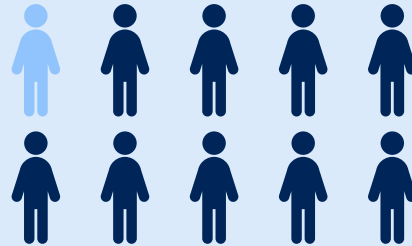


FLS and Q+Law staff with Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities Joe Ball

Our Q+Law clients:



1 out of every 10
of our clients was trans



Community Legal Education

Q+Law delivered **20 community legal education sessions to a total of 490 participants this year.**

Among these were workshops to improve sector understanding of legal issues impacting LGBTQIA+SB communities, and training to support mainstream services to better support LGBTQIA+SB clients. Recipients of these workshops include:

- Eastern Community Legal Centre
- Family Access Network
- Mackillop Family Services

Q+Law also provided advice and feedback for Eastern Community Legal Centre's LGBTQIA+SB working group as they worked towards strengthening organisational capacity for LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and to Victoria Legal Aid as they developed their Client Safety Framework's 'Working with LGBTQIA+ clients' module.

Community Engagement

This year Q+Law invested in community stakeholder and partner relationships by attending 28 stakeholder meetings, and hosting a community stakeholder forum with attendance from Flat Out, Living Positive Victoria, Minus 18, Thorne Harbour Health and Switchboard.

Q+Law had a presence at 11 LGBTQIA+SB community events throughout the year, including the Midsumma Carnival, Merri-bek Council's LGBTQIA+ Multicultural Fair Day, the Transfemme launch event, Pride in Prevention Evaluation Guide launch, Justice Q service launch, Trans Book Fair and IDAHOBIT celebrations at Footscray Library.

Case Study

Getting Josie redress for anti-trans discrimination

Josie* is a trans woman who engaged Q+Law for assistance with a discrimination matter. Josie had sought care from a health service not related to her trans identity. While she was accessing care, Josie was misgendered and deadnamed by multiple staff at the health service. Josie made a complaint to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. Q+Law assisted Josie including by representing her at conciliation. At conciliation, the health service agreed to pay Josie a sum of compensation and provide training to the staff who had misgendered and deadnamed Josie.

*Name changed to protect privacy



Midsumma Carnival



Trans Book Festival

Celebrating IDAHOBIT at Footscray library



Case Study

Clearing Sean's criminal history

Sean* approached Q+Law for assistance with another legal issue and while talking with our staff learned about the expungement scheme for historical convictions for homosexual activity. Sean had been charged with a prostitution offence for consensual sexual activity in the 1980s. Sean has limited literacy and so did not know about the expungement scheme and couldn't make the application alone. We assisted Sean with his application and the historical prostitution offence was removed from his criminal history.

*Name changed to protect privacy

Advocacy and Law Reform

Our fearless advocacy and law reform work drives positive systemic change by working with, learning from and empowering communities affected by laws and the legal system.

We do this through:



Research and gathering evidence about legal impact



Giving voice to community experiences



Advocating for changes to the law and legal system

This year we engaged in 23 systemic advocacy actions, including advocacy on legislative bills and reviews, participating in sector coalitions, submissions to parliamentary inquiries and signing on to open letters addressed to key decision makers.

Our advocacy spanned legal and social issues that impact our communities in relation to family violence, anti-vilification, social and public housing, prisoner rights, protest laws, bail reform, AOD strategy and decriminalisation of cannabis. We also convened the Prison Rights Working Group which we continue to convene with VACRO.

Anti-vilification protections

Q+Law delivered a strong advocacy program this year, including contributing to important improvements to the Anti-Vilification and Social Cohesion Bill. Our work on the bill included:

- Engaging in detailed legislative negotiations
- Supporting the drafting of crossbench amendments
- Formulating parliamentary questions
- Providing tailored advice to crossbench and government MPs ahead of committee stage debate

These efforts were instrumental in securing amendments and commitments that ensure the legislation better protects, rather than harms, marginalised LGBTIQ+SB communities.

Family law amendments

We made a submission on the Family Law Amendment Bill 2024, expressing broad support for the proposed reforms, and making a handful of suggested amendments to make the family law system safer for victim-survivors of family violence. Our submission was endorsed by the Federation of Community Legal Centres, South-East Monash Legal Service and InTouch Women's Legal Centre.

Our CEO, Manager of Policy, Advocacy and Projects and a Community Lawyer, Family Law and Family Violence went to Canberra in October to give evidence at the Senate committee inquiry into the bill. We were able to get our key messages across, and the committee was broadly supportive of our and the sector's position.

FLS staff in Canberra giving evidence at the Senate Inquiry on the Family Law Amendment Bill 2024



Health Justice Partnerships

Drug Outreach Lawyer program

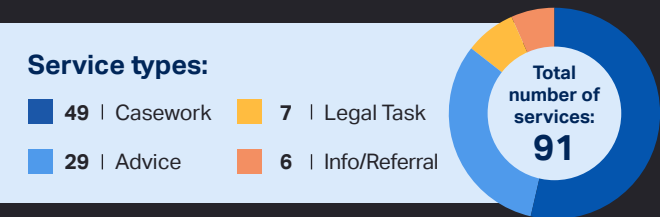
FLS’s Drug Outreach Lawyer (DOL) program had another strong year working with our health partners to provide legal services to people who use drugs in the Cities of Yarra and Darebin.

Our DOL clients are significantly marginalised, with over 50 per cent sleeping rough or at risk of homelessness. A core principle of the program is to promote harm reduction by reducing the negative impact of clients’ legal problems. The main focus of the service is in the context of the criminal justice system as we have accreditation as being a criminal law specialist. The legal support varies depending on the needs of the client, but the majority of the work is in casework, which often involves court advocacy.

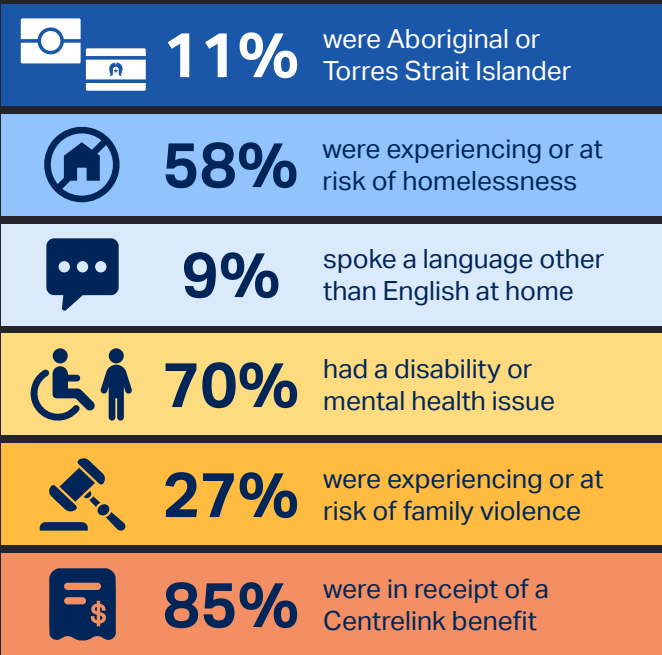
Outreach partners in the City of Yarra include YSAS (Youth Support and Advocacy Services), The Living Room (Youth Projects), cohealth (Innerspace and City Outreach), and the Medically Supervised Injecting Room (North Richmond Community Health). The main outreach partner for the City of Darebin is Uniting across their two locations including the day rehabilitation program and their other AOD services.

Legal services snapshot:

We helped **81 unique clients** as part of our Drug Outreach Lawyer program.



Our DOL clients:



Left: Andy Kuoch, Adam Willson and Hamish McLachlan at the 50th anniversary of North Richmond Community Health

Right: Andy Kuoch and Elanor Peattie (VLA director of Summary Crime and Therapeutic Justice) at the 50th anniversary of North Richmond Community Health



St Vincent's Health Justice Partnership

Through our innovative partnership with St Vincent's Hospital's ALERT team, we provide holistic legal services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and other systemic disadvantage, requiring intensive allied health support.

We have lawyers co-located at St Vincent's who attend care-team meetings and are on hand to receive referrals.

This health justice partnership continues to be highly valued both by FLS and St Vincent's, with lawyers and clinicians working closely to support clients with complex needs across their legal and health matters.

This year we assisted **42 clients with 52 services**, including casework files, legal advice and legal tasks, across multiple problem types, including criminal law, tenancy, disability rights, guardianship and administration, family violence and personal safety matters.

Our clients:



60%

were experiencing or at risk of homelessness



98%

had a disability or mental health issue

Case Study

Supporting Hannah through integrated practice

Hannah* was referred to our Senior Community Outreach lawyer through the St Vincent's ALERT team care-coordinator Chloe* who had met Hannah when she presented to the Emergency Department. Chloe had already built great rapport with Hannah and St Vincent's had already provided much-needed medical assistance, and so when our lawyer met with Hannah, Chloe vouched for our service and that we were on the same "team". **This allowed Hannah to trust our lawyer much sooner than she may have otherwise.**

Hannah had been sleeping rough for many years and had several outstanding criminal charges stretching back to 2021, including failing to attend court to answer bail and failing to attend treatment for a drug diversion. While Chloe worked on getting Hannah stable accommodation, our lawyer provided legal advice and took instructions from Hannah to contact the police to get all the matters listed before the court.

At the time of sentencing, Hannah was residing in supported accommodation that had been organised through Chloe. Our lawyer was able to obtain a letter of support from Chloe, the housing provider and from a support worker who worked with Hannah at her accommodation. Our lawyer was able to explain Hannah's circumstances, including her inability to complete the drug diversion course due to having no access to transportation or a phone. Our lawyer had previously case conferenced with the police to have the more serious charges withdrawn, and ultimately **Hannah was given a three-month adjourned undertaking to be of good behaviour for the most significant charge, with all other charges dismissed with no further penalty applied.**

*Names changed to protect privacy

Connie Benn Centre

We provide a family law and family violence-focussed health justice partnership, involving embedded legal services at the Connie Benn Centre in Fitzroy.

The Connie Benn Centre is an integrated Maternal and Child Health and Early Learning Centre, with a strong focus on children's rights, education, health and wellbeing. FLS has a lawyer co-located at the service, providing advice and casework on family violence-related matters, community legal education and secondary consultations. Now in its third year in its current form, our lawyer's regular presence at the centre results in community members approaching her directly to seek advice, warm referrals for clients and requests from staff for community legal education and secondary consults.

This year we provided holistic, integrated, trauma-informed, wraparound advice and legal support for **31 clients**, providing ongoing legal representation in ten matters, including complex family law litigation involving family violence.

In addition, we conducted eight stakeholder engagement meetings with City of Yarra workers, two community legal education sessions and 24 secondary consultations with workers from Connie Benn and the City of Yarra and developed four community legal information resources.

This service is made possible by funding from the Australian Government administered by the Victorian Government via the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.

“

They have been good. They have been on time and told me if I have a problem again to come back which is a good sign. I am very happy with that outcome.

Connie Benn client

FLS staff at the
Connie Benn Centre



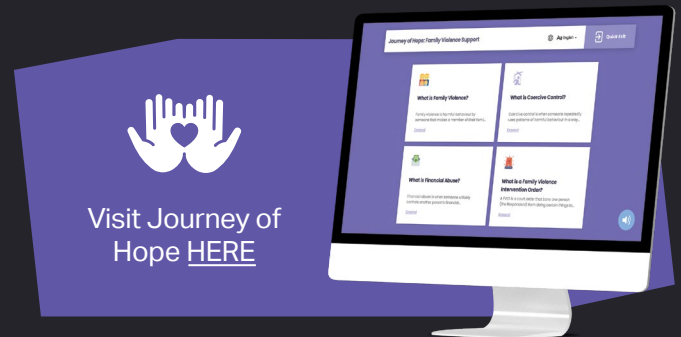


I am really impressed by the work and consideration put into making the website accessible and safe. Thanks too for all the meaningful work you do supporting us at Connie Benn Centre and in the wider community. I am really grateful to be able to consult with you and refer people to your amazing services and to know that people will be treated as people - with respect, patience and kindness. Keep up the amazing work!

Staff feedback

Journey of Hope

As part of our health justice partnership with Connie Benn and in consultation with the community, we developed a website *Journey of Hope: Family Violence Support* which provides legal information on family violence and links to available support. The information is in English, Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese, and has an option for the text to be read to the viewer.



Family Law and Family Violence Health Justice Partnerships

We provide several family law and family violence-focussed health justice partnerships at hospitals and community health services across the cities of Yarra, Darebin and surrounds, where we provide advice to victim survivors on family law and family violence as well as related issues.

We provide a holistic and trauma-informed approach to advising clients on their family law and family violence matters. We understand that some clients may require multiple appointments as developments in their separation occur, and regularly provide multiple appointments to clients to support them through the legal issues arising from their separation.

This year we provided 345 legal advice appointments to clients seeking assistance with either family law or family violence or both.

Community Outreach

Darebin Community Outreach

With the support of the City of Darebin, we provide community outreach legal services to community members in the City of Darebin.

Our weekly outreach at the Reservoir Neighbourhood House in conjunction with the Darebin community support and outreach service Darebin Information Volunteer and Resource Service has continued to be well-attended, with the number of clients assisted this year increasing significantly. Our outreach to the Northland Youth Hub continued fortnightly with plans to connect with further youth services across Darebin.

This year, we re-established a former Darebin Community Legal Centre outreach at East Preston Community Centre, commencing what has become a busy fortnightly outreach to a high-need cohort of largely older public housing residents in East Preston/East Reservoir.

This year we assisted
23 clients with 52 services.

North Richmond Information Hub

Our Policy, Advocacy and Community Engagement (PACE) team and Generalist and Integrated Services Team (GIST) launched the Legal Information Hub for Residents at North Richmond.

The team compiled resources for residents impacted by the public housing towers redevelopment, ensuring they have clear, accessible information during this period of significant change for residents.

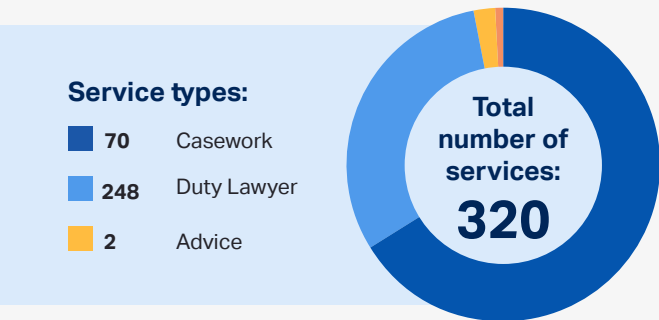
The legal information hub provided a safe and supportive space where residents could drop in, learn more about the relocation, and ask any questions. FLS also attended the hub alongside information sessions organised by North Richmond Community Health.

These sessions were for tenants from the 139 Highett St and Elizabeth St walk-ups in Richmond who had been directly impacted by the relocation process. The hub is designed to empower residents with knowledge about their rights, assist with navigating complex processes and reduce the stress and uncertainty that often comes with relocation.

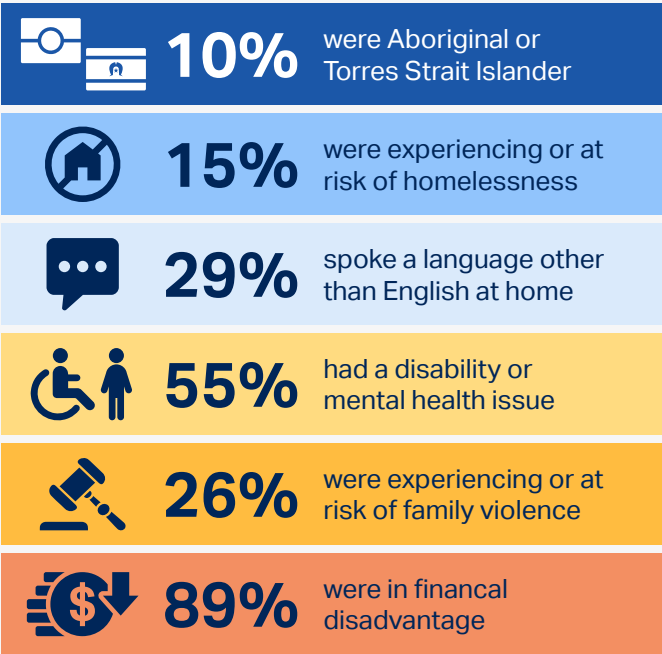
Neighbourhood Justice Centre

Our Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) team provides onsite casework and duty lawyer services in criminal law, as well as duty lawyer services in family violence and personal safety intervention order matters.

The team has continued to provide high-level advice and assistance to court users in the face of upheaval and change, particularly in relation to changing bail laws. We continued to participate in NJC stakeholder groups, meetings and events, contributing to areas such as community legal education and youth justice. We also partnered with Victoria Legal Aid and the Law Institute of Victoria to deliver a presentation about the NJC and the many benefits of its community justice model.



Our NJC clients:



Family Violence Duty Lawyer Services

FLS provides holistic and timely advice and duty lawyer services to victim-survivors of family violence, four days per week at the Specialist Family Violence Court (SFVC) at Heidelberg Magistrates' Court and one day per week at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) in Collingwood.

In line with the SFVC model, we are committed to providing a holistic and safe duty lawyer service for our clients. We work collaboratively with the court, applicant and respondent support services, Victoria Legal Aid, and the police to advocate on behalf of, and to give a voice to, our clients.

This year we provided an incredible **1,228 family violence duty lawyer services** at the SFVC and 211 duty lawyer services at the NJC.



Most people are really serious and it isn't much fun going through the legal process, but in his case he was philosophical and cheerful, it's not often you find people like that, I just appreciated that.

Heidelberg Magistrates' Court clients



Thank you for being so clear in explaining things during the meeting beforehand and speaking with so much respect for both parties involved.

Our SFVC clients:



Total number of unique clients:

852



3%

were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



14%

were experiencing or at risk of homelessness



23%

spoke a language other than English at home



27%

had a disability or mental health issue



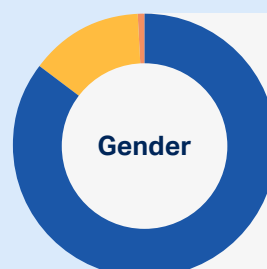
99%

were experiencing or at risk of family violence



40%

were single parents



727 | Women
120 | Men
5 | Gender diverse

Advice and Casework

Family Law and Family Violence

We understand how difficult navigating the family law legal system is particularly for victim-survivors of family violence.

We operate a well-regarded and substantial family law litigation practice focussed on victim survivors, for both parenting and property matters. We draw on our specialist understanding of family violence when assisting our clients to ensure it is a safe place for the client to provide us instructions and to present these instructions to the court.

In 2024, our lawyers represented a client in a final hearing where a question arose about whether the client could rely on a previous decision that family violence had occurred.

In our client's case, the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia had previously made a finding of fact that our client had been subjected to family violence in her relationship. Her matter returned to court and the question arose whether she had to prove that family violence had occurred a second time, and endure again the traumatic process of giving evidence and being cross-examined.

The court decided that our client did not have to reprove that family violence had occurred. Its published decision, *Tong & Gill (No 2)*, provides a legal rationale in family law parenting matters to reaffirm the res judicata principle by considering provisions in the Family Law Act, other common law principles, and most importantly, the best interests of the child principle.

This decision may still help protect other survivors of family violence from being subjected to unnecessary re-examination of facts that have already been established, thereby reducing the potential for further trauma.



The full judgment can be found [HERE](#)



To everyone at FLS. Thanks so much for your help and kindness.

Casework client





Madeleine Lynch, Managing Lawyer of our Family Law Family Violence team was awarded the Law Council of Australia Family Law Section's 2024 Pro Bono and Not for Profit Scholarship for her essay in response to the questions "If I were Attorney-General for a day, how would I fix the Australian Family Law System?"

Madeleine being awarded the 2024 Pro Bono and Not-for-Profit Scholarship.

Criminal Law

Along with the significant proportion of criminal law assistance through the Drug Outreach Lawyer program we were able to successfully re-introduce a further criminal lawyer.

The lawyer assists individuals facing a term of imprisonment and also offers a low-cost fee-paying service to fill the gap and provide an accessible legal option to those clients who are not eligible for a grant of legal aid or one of our tailored programs, but cannot afford standard private law services.

Case Study

For example, we represented Daryn, a 40-year-old non-binary person who migrated to Australia about 10 years ago. Daryn earns approximately \$1000 per week but has significant expenses including a mortgage which they previously shared with their ex-partner but which they are now paying entirely by themselves and other debts which make it extremely difficult to pay private lawyer fees unless significantly reduced.*

**Name changed to protect privacy*

Generalist




We provide generalist advice and casework to clients in the Cities of Yarra and Darebin. We assist clients with criminal charges, tenancy matters, victims of crime compensation applications, fines and other matters as they arise.

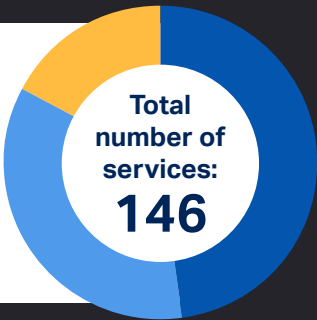
This year we were greatly assisted by Gadens, whose secondee support enabled us to extend our civil law services in the City of Yarra, and deliver **168 services**, including **70 casework files, 25 legal tasks and 51 advices**. The top problem types were **criminal law (35%) and housing (27%)**.

Our clients:



Service types:

-  **70** | Casework
-  **51** | Advice
-  **25** | Legal Tasks



Case Study

Sarah's story – A new financial start after \$100,000 in fines waived

Sarah* contacted FLS about a pending penalty enforcement warrant matter that she was facing in the Magistrates' Court relating to approximately \$100,000 in fines. Sarah was a single parent with a long history of volunteer community work whose sole income was the disability support pension, unlikely to ever be able to afford to pay the fines which had overwhelmingly been incurred by other people who had been driving her vehicle.

Our lawyer made detailed submissions to the court about Sarah's circumstances and the long history of community work she had undertaken, and tendered a number of character references which detailed the work she had done in her community and the impact she had made. After hearing the full story of Sarah's situation, the magistrate made orders discharging the entire \$100,000 total of Sarah's fines, allowing her a completely new financial start, while cautioning her not to let others drive her vehicle going forward.

*Name changed to protect privacy

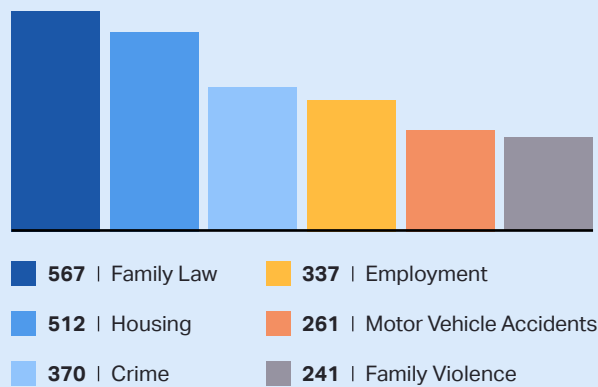
Night Service

Our iconic Night Service offers free legal advice to residents of Yarra and Darebin as well as clients from all over Victoria on a wide range of community law issues. Powered by over 200 volunteers, our Night Service runs five nights a week in Fitzroy, and three nights a fortnight in Reservoir.

This year we saw an increase in service demand in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. We saw particular demand for assistance with housing, employment, fines and debt matters, and we also saw a significant increase in clients seeking family violence and family law advice.

This year we provided **3,211 services to 2,326 community members.**

Top Night Service problem types:



Our Night Service simply wouldn't exist without the dedication of our volunteers. We remain very grateful for our volunteer administrative assistants, paralegals and lawyers who donate their evenings to assist members of our community to work through their legal issues.

This year also saw the introduction of a new initiative within the Night Service, offering experienced and qualified volunteer lawyers the opportunity to step into paid supervisory roles once a week. We've been fortunate to have Vu Dang, Ashley Chandler, Aidan McCarthy, and Joely Wilkinson-Hayes take on these positions, providing valuable guidance and expertise to the team and we thank them for their contributions.

Vu Dang shared his reflections on his experience volunteering with Fitzroy Legal Service:



I was admitted in October 2011 and from then I commenced my volunteer work at Fitzroy Legal Service. I provided phone advice during the COVID-19 period and moved up to the supervisor position in 2023, which I am currently doing on a Monday night. I also opened my law firm with family law and business purchase practice as a small boutique firm. The experience I have had in attending online and in-person court hearings has helped me a lot in providing legal service to the clients of FLS. My advice was deeper and more detailed than before - I intend to reach the milestone of 20-years service to FLS in 2031!

Vu Dang

In addition, our Paralegal Pathway program continues to pave the way for our future lawyers. Since its launch in 2023, lawyers and law students can grow within the service by starting in administrative or paralegal positions, eventually progressing to volunteer lawyers with the Night Service.

Sally Reid, one of our current volunteer lawyers who has progressed from administration support to a lawyer said:



Participating in the Paralegal Pathway program at Fitzroy Legal Service has been an invaluable part of my legal journey. Having started as an administrative assistant, progressing to a paralegal, and now volunteering as a lawyer, I've been lucky enough to experience firsthand the supportive and community-driven culture at every level of FLS's Night Service. This pathway provides meaningful opportunities to grow alongside incredibly dedicated staff who are, without exaggeration, some of the kindest, brightest and most welcoming people I've ever met. Through meeting clients who are inevitably dealing with all sorts of innately personal legal issues, the program serves to highlight the humanity of legal practice in a way that textbooks and lectures cannot. Fitzroy Legal Service is an incredible place to work, and, for someone young in their legal career, it is my opinion that you would be hard-pressed to find many programs that facilitate growth and learning in the same way as this one.

Sally Reid

Community Legal Education

We strive to increase community understanding of the law and how to access legal support through our community legal education program. We deliver information sessions directly to the community and to other community service providers to help them identify legal issues their clients are facing, and to know where to refer them for legal assistance.

This year we delivered **16 community legal education activities** and created **12 free legal education resources** for the community.

Our community legal education program covers a wide range of legal issues, including sessions for hospital coordinators on how violence impacts their patients, information sessions for residents affected by public housing relocations within the City of Yarra, and a video resource produced in partnership with the Victoria Law Foundation on police "move on" powers. We have also provided legal information to family members supporting loved ones experiencing addiction and mental health challenges.

Beyond the structured information sessions, community legal education requires us to be out in the community, building trust and meeting members of the community where they are, whether that means setting up stalls at local outreach festivals, community events or engaging in informal conversations.

Importantly, we have also connected with other community legal centres across the sector to share knowledge and contribute our experiences in consultations about new and existing programs. Together, these activities ensure that our work in legal education is not only responsive to community needs but also grounded in collaboration and sector-wide learning.

Community legal education session for residents impacted by public housing tower relocation



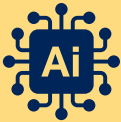
The Law Handbook

This year FLS developed the 47th edition of The Law Handbook which was released in October 2025 as a 2025/2026 edition.

This double-year edition allows us to bring the publishing timetable back in line with the calendar year and to focus on two exciting projects in the next financial year:



1. To redesign the online Law Handbook to ensure it remains accessible for all Victorians.



2. To design an AI tool to increase usability and accessibility of the Law Handbook content.

Funded by the VLSB+C, the AI project commenced in August 2025 with a view to completion in 2027.

Updated by more than 80 legal specialists, our leading guide to the law covers more than 90 common legal topics. It includes detailed information about areas of the law that most affect people in their everyday lives and provides information on emerging legal issues and changes to the law.

The Law Handbook is a valuable resource for lawyers, teachers, students, community workers, activists and members of the community with a legal problem.

The 12 areas of law covered in the 2025/2026 edition of The Law Handbook are:

- Understanding our laws and courts
- Getting help
- Fines, infringements and criminal law
- Relationships, families and young people
- Managing your money
- Houses, communities and the road
- Consumers, contracts, the internet and copyright
- Disability, unfair treatment and advocacy
- Health, wills and other legal issues affecting older people
- Accidents, insurance and compensation
- Rights, activism and fair treatment at work
- Government and the individual

Thank you, contributors

Producing this book every year would not be possible without the generosity and expertise of our contributors. We very much value the outstanding contribution of each and every contributor. For the 2025/2026 edition, magistrates, ombudsmen, commissioners, barristers, law lecturers, partners, principal lawyers and accredited specialists in a range of areas were among the contributors. Some contributors have been writing for the book for decades, while others are new recruits.

Thank you, freelancers

We would like to thank the freelancers who have dedicated many hours to producing the 2025/2026 edition of the handbook: Erin O'Dwyer (editor), Sandy Cull (cover designer), Puddingburn Publishing Services (compiler of the index and lists of cases and legislation), Kerry Cooke (typesetter) and Inkshed Press (glossary). We also were supported by experienced freelance editors – thanks especially to Ash Davida Jane, Linda McSweeney, Georgia O'Neill, Teresa Goudie and Ina Holzapfel.



Volunteer Program

Over the past year, 225 dedicated volunteers have supported Fitzroy Legal Service with administrative assistance, paralegal support and the provision of legal advice to our clients via the Night Service. Collectively, they've contributed more than 12,800 hours of their time – an extraordinary effort averaging 57 hours per volunteer across the last financial year.

2025 saw us welcome a fantastic group of new administrators and paralegals to the service. **Notably, for the first time in several years, we did not need to recruit volunteer lawyers due to our outstanding retention rates – a testament to our volunteers' dedication and engagement.**

Volunteer events

We held a number of events throughout 2025 including:

- A welcome event at The Russian House in September 2024 where we welcomed new recruits and recognised the ongoing contributions of our dedicated volunteers, with CEO Hamish McLachlan thanking our volunteers for their vital role in the organisation's success.
- Our end of year celebration at The Workers Club in December to celebrate the achievements of 2024 and farewell our Principal Lawyer and Legal Director, Night Service Rebecca Johnston-Ryan.
- To mark National Volunteer Week in May at The Workers Club where current FLS Board member Michael Kingston spoke of his 25 years volunteering at FLS and the many connections made over that time. We also farewelled long-time volunteer and staff member Morgan Nyland whose contributions have left a lasting impact on the service.

National Volunteer Week

During National Volunteer Week we celebrated the incredible contributions of our volunteers with a week-long online raffle, featuring new prizes each day. A sincere thank you to this year's generous contributors:

- Urban Climb, Collingwood
- Cinema Nova, Carlton
- Paint With Me, Northcote
- Readings, Carlton
- Rumi Restaurant, Brunswick East
- Sun Theatre, Yarraville
- Polly Bar, Fitzroy

Left: Michael Kingston during National Volunteer Week

Below: Morgan Nyland and Hamish McLachlan during National Volunteer Week



Our People

Abby Keenan

Admin Officer,
Specialist Family Violence Court
(from Jan 2025)

Adam Willson

Managing Lawyer, CLDO

Amity Mara

Manager, Policy, Advocacy and Projects
(until Apr 2025)

Amre Levy

Family Lawyer

Amy Frew

Director - Legal Practice
(from Aug 2024)

Andy Kuoch

Drug Outreach Lawyer

Bess Smallwood

Senior Policy and Systemic
Advocacy Officer
(to Jul 2024)

Beth Griggs

Admin and Client Services Officer, Q+Law

Beth King

Senior Community Lawyer, NJC
(to Dec 2024)

Candace Johnson

Finance Officer

Caroline Adler

Chief Operating Officer
(from Oct 2024)

Charlie Brennan

Client Services and Admin Officer,
Fitzroy Office

Chrissy Potts

Community Lawyer, FLFV

Deborah Brown

Front Office Administrator, Reservoir Office

Eleanor Symon

Admin Officer,
Specialist Family Violence Court
(to Dec 2024)

Em Collard

Admin Officer, Night Service

Emma Lang

Fundraising and Communications Lead
(to Apr 2025)

Eve Dickenson

Trainee Lawyer
(to Feb 2025)

Felicity De Lang

Manager, People and Culture

Flick Ellis

Social Worker, WILO
(to Jun 2025)

Gabby Bezabih

Community Legal Education Officer

Gabi McMullen

Senior Lawyer, WILO
(from Jan 2025)

Gatwech Wal

Community Lawyer, FLFV

Glen Ludbrook

Night Service Coordinator, Reservoir

Hamish McLachlan

Chief Executive Officer

Isabella Antonovich

Social Worker, WILO
(from Dec 2024)

James Kempster

Client Services and Admin Officer,
Fitzroy Office
(to Aug 2024)

Jess Ness

Volunteer Program Coordinator

Jia Kho

Project Coordinator, WWB
(to Jul 2024)

Jo Ferrari

Executive Assistant

Joe Ishow

Senior Lawyer, Q+Law
(to Sep 2024)

Julia Wallace

Community Outreach Lawyer,
St Vincent's HJP
(to Jul 2024)

Julie Liu

Community Lawyer, FLFV
(from Mar 2025)

Kathleen O'Callaghan

Community Lawyer, FLFV

Kelly Cassidy

Principal Lawyer, Q+Law
(to Mar 2025)

Kelly Whitworth

Membership and Outreach
Coordinator, Voices for Change

Kevin Nguyen

Community Lawyer, NJC

Khoi Nguyen

Community Engagement and Legal
Education Officer, Q+Law

Laura Gartland

Legal Practice Manager

Lauren Gordon

Managing Lawyer, GIST
(to Mar 2025)

Linda Waters

Senior Family Violence Lawyer, FLFV

Madeleine Lynch

Managing Lawyer, FLFV

Meg Whittaker

Legal Secretary, Family Law
(to Oct 2024)

Mark Rawlings

Night Service Coordinator, Fitzroy

Meghan Fitzgerald

Managing Lawyer, Strategic Litigation

Mia Tinkler

Voices for Change Project Lead
(from Dec 2024)

Michelle Goldberg

Senior Lawyer, WILO
(to Oct 2024)

Molly McDonald

Admin Officer, Specialist Family
Violence Court
(to Aug 2024)

Morgan Nyland

Senior Employment Lawyer, MELC
(to May 2025)

Nadia Endrinal

Admin Officer, Specialist Family
Violence Court
(from Apr 2025)

Naomi Hanna

Client Services and Admin Officer,
Fitzroy Office
(to Apr 2024)

Nicholas Newlands

Senior Migration Lawyer, GIST

Noah Khan

Client Services and Admin Officer,
Fitzroy Office

Peter Sublet

Senior Generalist Lawyer, GIST

Priya Pavri

Community Lawyer, Q+Law
(from Jun 2025)

Rafaella Lawrie

Admin Officer, Specialist Family
Violence Court

Raphaelle Stewart

Community Lawyer, FLFV

Rebecca Johnston-Ryan

Night Service Supervisor
(from Aug 2025)
Service Director and Principal Lawyer,
Night Service
(to Jan 2025)

Rebecca Leighton

Community Outreach Lawyer, GIST

Romilly Miller

Admin and Client Services Officer,
Q+Law
(to Jul 2024)

Ryan Hsu

Service Director, Q+Law
(to Jan 2025)

Sam Schilling

Project Worker
(to May 2025)

Sebastian Sharp

Senior Policy and Education Lead
(from Oct 2024)

Sebastian Brydon

Client Services and Admin Officer,
Fitzroy Office
(from Dec 2024)

Selina Domingo

Trainee Lawyer
(from Mar 2025)

Shane Marr

Chief Operating Officer
(to Oct 2024)

Sinead Tobin

Social Worker, WILO
(to Mar 2025)

Sonya Brennan

Legal Secretary, Family Law
(from Sep 2024)

Sophie Jest

Senior Community Outreach Lawyer,
St Vincent's HJP
Community Lawyer, FLFV
(to Jul 2024)

Sophie L'Estrange

Lawyer, Strategic Litigation and
Social Action

Tessa Di Paolo

Senior Community Lawyer, NJC

Tim Hutton

Senior Criminal Lawyer
(from Jul 2024)

Tuvan Vuong

Finance Assistant

Verena Tan

Director - Policy, Advocacy and
Community Engagement
Manager, Policy, Advocacy & Projects
(to Apr 2025)

Vu Dang

Night Service Supervisor

Yu Wang

Employment Lawyer, MELC
(to May 2025)

Zaynab Sherifdeen

Volunteer Program Coordinator
(to Apr 2025)

FLS staff at the Yoorrook Walk for Truth



Board Members

Claire Febey

(resigned as Chair, Sep 2024)

Mick Sheehy

(Chair from Sep 2024)

Karri Walker

(Deputy Chair from Sep 2024)

Jeremy Levine

(resigned Aug 2025)

Gerard Brody

Michelle Batsas

Monique MacRitchie

Tony Macvean

Lisa Ward

(appointed Dec 2024)

Prashanti Manchikanti

(appointed Feb 2025)

Michael Kingston

(appointed Aug 2025)

Life Members

Brian Collingburn

Brian Wright

Bruce McBain

Henrik Lassen

John Finlayson

Julian Gardner AM

Michael Kingston

Robin Inglis

Sue Bothmann

Tessa Hay

Trevor Williamson

Vu Dang

Finance, Risk & Audit Committee

Tony Macvean

Chair

Andrew Webster

(resigned Feb 2025)

Peter Loukas

Rebecca Middleton

Roslyn Aikman

Michelle Batsas

Sarah Nega

(appointed May 2025)

Natalia Hawkins

(appointed May 2025)

Venkata Valluri

(appointed May 2025)

Above: FLS staff and Peter Cashman

at the Tim McCoy dinner

Below: FLS staff undertaking

naloxone training with NRCH



Our Volunteers

A

Nouda Abdulhak

Alex Ahn

Margarita Ainsworth

Sarah Ajlouni

Neha Alam

Varun Alluri

Carol Andrades

Katrin Andreeva

Mara Antic

Rima Arakji

Paul Arnold

Tasmyn Askew

Rebecca Austin

B

Yingying Bao

Aaron Barthelot

Sebastian Baumgartl

James Beale

Chloe Beare

Ella Bellman

Jordyn Bethune

Ruby Bilson

Dominic Bilton

Ella Bilton-Gough

Cameron Bloye

Carla Bonifacio

Sonya Brennan

Erin Bridgeman

Sebastian Brydon

C

Nikki Canisius

Nguyet Tran Minh Cao

Navaar Carr-Janif

Joanna Cary

Ashley Chandler

Jasmine Chao

Milton Cheng

Liz Cheng

Isobel Christie

Max Chung

Brigette Ciampoli

Chloe Colfer

Jason Craig

Paul Crossley

Tiarne Crowther

Christina Cushen

D

Vu Dang

Aliza Danish

Kristin Davis

Annette de Guzman

Phoebe Kay Dellosa

Jeylan Deniz

Tanvi Dhariwal

Julio Di Gregorio

Florian Di Paolo

Mason Dimalanta

Sammy Dixon

Harvey Duckett

Jess Dugdale Walker

Aidan Dummmler

Ella Duncan

Amber Dwivedi

E

Nadia Endrinal

Bonnie Esposito

F

Sam Farfoud

Zoe Farrell

James Farrugia

Joan Feng

Emily Forbes

Ben Freeman

Jethro Fries

Ripple Fu

G

Alison Galbally

Fiona Garton

Susan Gatford

Roberto Gerrard-Martinez

Balraj Gill

John Ginnane

Jai Glennon

Cathy Guo

H

Hanyah Hanif Abdeen

Patrick Hannan

Coel Healy

Fereshteh Homayoun

Winona Horton

Jenna Huang

Michelle Huang

Ross Hutchins

Max Huyton

I

Moniroth Leng

Constance Iliadis

Yujin Im

J

Ned Jackson

Will Jackson-Martin

Yasmin Jarkan

Gagandeep Jassal

Justine Jawhar

Kayden Johnson

Rebecca Johnston-Ryan

Caldun Jureidini

K

Jacob Kairouz

Harini Kasthuriachchi

Jasminder Kaur

Abby Keenan

Gemma Keogh

Sam Kilpatrick

Eva Kilpatrick

Maya Klaric

L

Vinay Lakshman

Miles Langkamp

Paul Latimer

Megan Lazaro

Helen Le

Leana Le

Simon Lee

Bill Leung

Madeleine Lezon

Jason Lianto

Niamh Lingard

Raymond Lobo

Megan Lombardo

Peter Lynch

M

Khuwayla Mahamud

Karen Mak

Danijel Malbasa Hayley

Marsh Danielle Masagca

Jonathan Matthews

Bruce McBain

Aidan McCarthy

Charlotte Mcdonald

Hugh McLeish

Hayley McLeod

Danie Mellas

Ruby Mher

Kathryn Mifsud

Helena Mimigiannis

Clement Mok

Dhiman Mondal

Simon Moodie

Danita Moshinsky

Udaii Muhtaseb

Elli Murphy

N

Linh Nguyen

Michelle Nguyen

O

Isabel O'Connor

P

Yathisha Palanisamy

Ruby Palmer

Kimberly Pang

Brianna Partington

Amber Paton

Michelle Petrovski

Etty Philosof

Robert Ponsford

Tamara Preuss

R

Najwa Rachmani

Minaj Randhawa

Cate Read
 Brittany Reddington
 Sally Reid
 Dilhan Reznikas
 Saskia Richardson
 Jessica Richardson-Brown
 Lucy Roberts-Lovell
 Gabriela Robledo
 Paul Romas
 Tom Rowan
 Sharon Ryan
S
 Simran Sandhu
 Ash Sandra Segaran
 Anisha Sarib
 Karl Schaffarczyk
 Sam Schilling
 Rebecca Sepsakos
 Tal Septon
 Tanya Shah
 Kiran Shanker- Butler
 Asheesh Shawel
 Brendan Sheahan
 Parmeeta Siddique
 Meg Sinclair
 Eva Soodi
 Bridget Sowersby
 James Spencer
 Tian Steuart
 Jeremiah Stevens
 Tiana Sylvia
T
 Matilda Taggart
 Jared Talavera
 Nisha Thanabal
 Lavanya Thavaraja
 Alex Thomas
 Venessa Thomas

Lavinia Tjangdjaja
 Jasmine Tonkin
 Benjamin Tria
 Beatrice Triscari
 Cian Truong
 Georgina Tweedy
U
 Bill Unkles
V
 Mary Vairawanathan
 Isabella Varallo
 Jo Verity
 Zachary Vogrig
W
 Mary Wallace
 Kym Wallace
 Emma Walling
 Alan Wang
 Joanne Wang
 Franklin Ward
 Christopher Watt
 Hugh Wetherill
 Liz White
 Meg Whittaker
 Joely Wilkinson-Hayes
 Marc Willcox
 Vanessa Wilson
X
 Tom Xie
 Bowen Xu
 Roheema Yasmin
Y
 Jane Young
Z
 David Ziaja



Above: Zaynab Sherifdeen

Below: Sophie Jest moving
 our volunteer Katrin
 Andreeva's admission



Annual Report 2024-2025

Funding and Support

Our core ongoing funding at FLS is provided by the Australian 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.

Community fundraising

We are grateful for every individual donor, local business, foundation and company who generously supported our work this past year. This year we conducted our second annual Night Service Appeal. The community response was overwhelming, helping us to raise \$16,537.95 in donations which will enable us to assist victim survivors to obtain legal protection from family violence, low-paid workers to recover unpaid wages and renters to challenge unfair evictions.

If you would like to support FLS to break down barriers to access to justice, please consider donating at <https://fls.org.au/donate-to-support-community-access-to-justice/>.

Leaving a legacy

We also thank Inner North Community Foundation for assisting us with the opportunity to offer our supporters a safe and secure avenue by which to leave bequests and/or make gifts of significance to sustain our work in the years ahead.

If you would like information about making a gift or bequest, please contact info@innernorthfoundation.org.au.

Partnering for a fairer Victoria

We also saw increased support from values-aligned law firms including MinterEllison, DLA Piper, Slater and Gordon, Lander & Rogers, Barry Nilsson, Allens, Hall & Wilcox and Gadens with their commitment to seconding staff to assist in the Night Service, our legal clinics and in Q+Law. This contribution of course includes FLS's longstanding law graduate program, which has been made possible through the unwavering support and deep commitment of Allens over the past 27 years. We continue to see the growing legacy this program brings to our sector as it works to provide emerging lawyers with a program in which to cut their teeth and build lasting careers in community law.



Funders

Allens for funding our law graduate program.

City of Darebin for contributing to funding for outreach services for young people and other people experiencing marginalisation in the City of Darebin.

City of Yarra for contributing to funding for the Night Service.

Australian Government for funding Voices for Change and our Yarra Maternal-Child Health Family Violence Health Justice Partnership.

Court Fund of Victoria for contributing to client-facing investments such as defibrillators at each of our locations.

Court Services Victoria via the **Neighbourhood Justice Centre** for contributing to funding FLS services delivered at the NJC, provision of meeting facilities and support on a range of programs.

Gadens for providing a secondee lawyer and funding to support our Migration Law Program.

Victorian Government for specific grants that fund the Yarra Drug Outreach Lawyer program, the Women's Integrated Legal Outreach program, the prison legal service, The Law Handbook, Q+Law, and via the Federation of Community Legal Centres, the Darebin Drug Outreach Lawyer program.

Victoria Law Foundation for a grant to support interpreting and translation costs for our Migration Law program.

Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner for funding our Migration Law program and AI Law Handbook project.

Substantial pro bono support

- The Honourable Justice Elizabeth Bennett, Judge, Federal Court of Australia (prior to her appointment to the bench)
- James Cameron, Victoria Bar
- Conor O'Bryan, Victorian Bar
- Michael Stanton SC, Victorian Bar
- Christopher Tran, Victorian Bar
- Joanna Davidson, Victorian Bar
- Esther Faine-Vallentin, Victorian Bar
- Allens
- Barry Nilsson
- Clayton Utz
- DLA Piper
- Gadens
- Hall & Wilcox
- Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer
- King & Wood Mallesons
- Lander & Rogers
- Maddocks
- Maurice Blackburn
- MinterEllison
- Phi Finney McDonald
- Slater and Gordon

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
- DIVRS
- Fitzroy Learning Network
- Flat Out
- Grata Fund
- Harm Reduction Victoria
- Heidelberg Magistrates' Court
- Health Justice Australia
- Human Rights Law Centre
- Inner Melbourne Community Legal
- 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
- Queerspace
- 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
- VACRO
- VALID
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Victoria Legal Aid
- Victorian Pride Centre
- West Heidelberg Community Legal Service
- Voices for Change
- Uniting Care ReGen
- Yarra City Council
- Yarra Drug and Health Forum
- Your Community Health
- Youth Projects
- YSAS

Our Finances and Risk

Fitzroy Legal Service’s finances and risk management are considered by a committee of the Board, the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC).

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.

A primary function of the FRAC is to review the year-to-date (generally quarterly) profit and loss statement against budget, together with other financial and management reports including the balance sheet and cash flow statement. At year end, the FRAC reviews the full year audited financial statements and audit completion report.

From a financial sustainability perspective, FLS had a positive FY25. Increased revenue (generally project-based and grant funding) and prudent expense management led to FLS recording an FY25 surplus of \$32,042. This result continues to build on previous work to strengthen FLS’s financial position, and pleasingly, our auditors did not raise any issues of concern in their audit completion report.

As at the end of FY25, FLS has reserves of \$596,951. These reserves provide a reasonable buffer for any change that may occur within the organisation and any funding sources over the coming period. During this period FLS formalised a Reserves Policy to continue to build the organisation's financial resilience.

The FRAC was fortunate to welcome three new FRAC members in FY25 – Natalia Hawkins, Sarah Nega and Venkata Valluri – who have brought renewed energy and valuable capability to the committee.

In FY26, a focus of the FRAC will be reviewing and updating the FLS risk management framework and processes – with a particular focus on the strategic risks the organisation faces – together with reviewing our financial policies and controls.

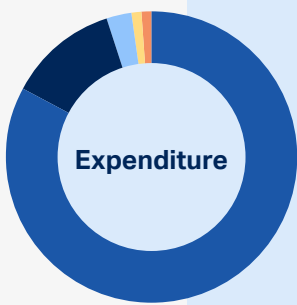
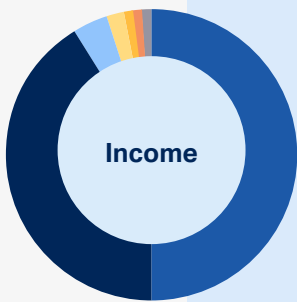
I would like to thank all FRAC members for their volunteer commitment to FLS over FY25, including Andrew Webster, who resigned from the FRAC in February after many years of service.

Finally, I would like to thank the FLS management team (and, in particular, COO Caroline Adler) for their tireless work ethic and substantial contribution.

Tony Macvean

Chair

Finance, Risk & Audit Committee



The full Audited Financial Statements are available at www.fls.org.au.

Income And Expenditure Statement

For The Period Ended 30 June 2025

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Income		
Government Grant - VLA	2,650,238	2,596,849
Grants	3,211,994	3,222,681
Practice Income	317,386	224,754
Sales	40,355	16,811
Interest Income	49,181	61,540
Membership Income	2,336	2,743
Miscellaneous Income	120,274	97,478
	6,391,764	6,222,856
Expenditure		
Employee benefits expense	5,275,228	5,024,580
Depreciation & Amortisation	49,287	54,541
Rental and premises expense	192,886	190,029
Office administration expenses	766,262	772,619
Publication expenses	76,060	72,843
	6,359,722	6,114,612
Surplus (Deficit) before income tax	32,042	108,244
Income tax expense	–	–
Surplus (Deficit) after income tax	32,042	108,244
Retained Earnings at the beginning of the financial year	564,909	456,665
Retained Earnings at the end of the financial year	596,951	564,909

Assets And Liabilities Statement

As At 30 June 2025

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	2,374,389	1,917,811
Trade and other receivables	116,358	185,663
Inventory	4,083	24,021
Total Current Assets	2,494,830	2,127,495
Non-Current Assets		
Bonds and other Non-Current receivables	72,196	13,126
Property, plant and equipment	135,634	149,646
Total Non-Current Assets	207,830	162,772
Total Assets	2,702,660	2,290,267
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	383,559	432,570
Amounts received in advance	1,140,364	898,084
Provisions	497,191	335,036
Total Current Liabilities	2,021,114	1,665,690
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provisions	84,595	59,668
Total Liabilities	2,105,709	1,725,358
Net Assets	596,951	564,909
Members' Funds		
Retained Earnings	596,951	564,909
Total Members' Funds	596,951	564,909

The logo for Fitzroy Legal Service is a dark blue, irregularly shaped rectangle with the text "Fitzroy Legal Service" in white, sans-serif font.

Fitzroy Legal Service

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

**Victorian Pride Centre
Level 3 | 79-81 Fitzroy Street
St Kilda VIC 3182**
Ph: (03) 9968 1002
