



Building fairness
and wellbeing in
our local community.

OUR VISION

Picture an Australia where the law is fair and everyone has access to legal help if they need it. A place where there is a shared sense of fairness and wellbeing.

We believe this is achievable and that it starts at the local level.

Fair and thriving local communities are the foundation of a just society.

We are part of creating this by building fairness and wellbeing in our local community through the law.

WHO WE ARE

Serving the local inner Melbourne area since 1978, we are an independent community legal centre working for social purpose.

We are part of a network of community legal centres that work in local communities across Australia.

We are a small but dedicated team of lawyers, administrative and project staff supported by volunteer law students and pro bono corporate partners. We are experts in community law.

WHY WE EXIST

We work with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our area to achieve:

Fairer laws: We help to ensure the legal system is fair for them.

Fairer outcomes: We help them be heard, and have their legal rights recognised and upheld.

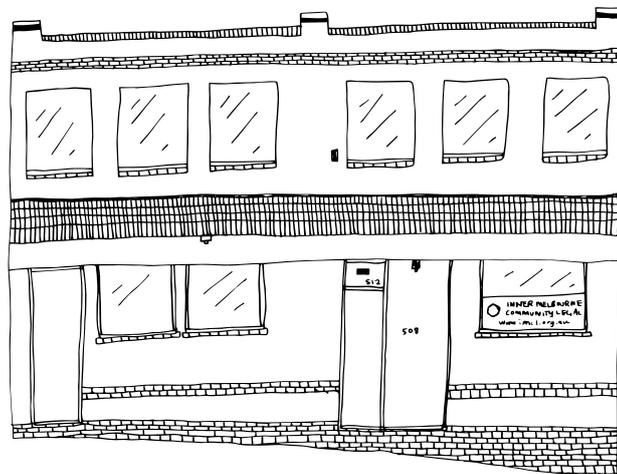
Improved wellbeing: We improve their capability to focus on their health and quality of life.

WHAT WE DO

Legal help: We provide free accessible legal help in the form of information, advice, casework and representation.

Legal education: We provide community legal education to targeted community members and professionals that aims to prevent legal problems from occurring or escalating.

Law reform and advocacy: We challenge and work to change unfair laws that disproportionately affect disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our community.



CONTENTS

4	SNAPSHOT OF OUR CLIENTS
5	CHAIRPERSON AND CEO REPORT
6	WHO WE HELP
9	SPOTLIGHT: FAMILY LAW
10	HOW WE WORK
12	WHAT WE DO
13	SPOTLIGHT: PROBLEMS WITH HOUSING
14	SPOTLIGHT: PROBLEMS WITH MONEY
14	SPOTLIGHT: BEING CAUGHT UP IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE OR FINES SYSTEMS
15	COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION
16	LAW REFORM AND ADVOCACY
17	OUR FOUNDATIONS
18	FINANCIAL REPORT
19	PRO BONO SUPPORT/FUTURE OF OUR FUNDING

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

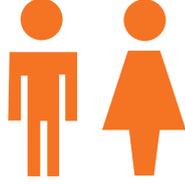
Inner Melbourne Community Legal acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians of the land where IMCL is based and works. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

SNAPSHOT OF OUR CLIENTS

935

TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS IN 2018–2019 (726 WERE NEW)

WE SAW ALMOST EQUAL NUMBERS OF WOMEN AND MEN



55%

WERE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF FAMILY VIOLENCE (OF THESE, 48% WERE SURVIVORS)



94%

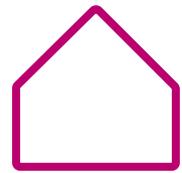
ALMOST ALL EXPERIENCED FINANCIAL DISADVANTAGE

* EXCLUDING FAMILY VIOLENCE DUTY LAWYER CLIENTS



26%

WERE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS



40%

INDICATED THAT THEY HAD A DISABILITY (OF THESE, ALMOST 60% INDICATED THEY HAD A MENTAL ILLNESS)



28%

SPOKE A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME



OUR CORE AREAS OF PRACTICE

FAMILY LAW

CRIMINAL LAW

TENANCY

FINES

FAMILY VIOLENCE

VOCAT

We have an onsite financial counsellor to assist with debt matters. We also refer matters to pro bono partners, particularly in the areas of employment law and family law property division.

CHAIRPERSON AND CEO REPORT

GROWING, INNOVATING AND DELIVERING BETTER THAN EVER

In 2018–19 IMCL built on our 40 years by developing new ways of delivering legal assistance for people experiencing the most vulnerability in inner Melbourne. As set out in our Plan of Action 2018–2021, our work with clients, partners and the broader community is built upon a foundation of trust and connection. We hold ourselves and our work, to a high standard so that clients with complex needs can be heard. We are confident our range of innovations and partnerships will see IMCL continue to ensure that everyone in our area has a greater opportunity to enjoy fairer laws, outcomes and wellbeing.

HOW WE WILL BUILD FAIRNESS & WELLBEING IN 2019–20

1. WE WILL ADVOCATE TO IMPROVE LEGAL OUTCOMES

To provide more accessible legal services, **we will establish new outreaches** and build on our established model of Health Justice Partnerships by partnering with the Peter MacCallum Centre. **We will continue to innovate our services through projects** targeting young people and also those experiencing mental-ill health. Using a human centered design approach, we will co-create these services from the ground up so that they reflect the needs of the people who will use them. This will ensure that, unlike much of the rest of the legal system, people who need help will be at the centre of our response so they are provided the greatest opportunity for access to justice. With local youth focussed organisations and two local schools — St Joseph’s Flexible Learning Centre and The River Nile School — we will develop a new Youth Outreach Lawyer (YOL) model of service to assist at risk and marginalised young people. We will keep building our project with the the Inner-West PACER (see [page 11](#)).

2. WE WILL CHALLENGE UNFAIR LAWS AND SYSTEMS FOR EVERYONE

We will continue our advocacy for systemic change for people living in public and community housing, together with those experiencing, or at risk of homelessness. And, just like when we advocated for reform on responses to family violence, we expect to see government starting to take notice of these important issues so that everyone has a safe and secure place to call home.

3. WE WILL EDUCATE OTHERS ABOUT THE LAW

We will continue to provide legal education and information sessions to assist front-line community workers to identify legal problems and ensure those who most need our assistance can get to us sooner. **We will continue to target young people** by promoting and enhancing our online [International Student Legal Information resource](#) and by rolling out a program for newly arrived young people with Victoria Legal Aid through our YOL project.

THE NEXT BIG THING

Over the year we worked closely with Flemington-Kensington Community Legal Centre (FKCLC) to determine how we could better serve our respective communities. This culminated with an in principle agreement in April between the two boards to develop plans for merging our centres to leverage the joint and complementary skills of the two organisations to bring a greater depth of capability and service across the catchments. In the coming year we will continue this extraordinary change process by understanding how we can align systems, integrate staffing and begin to re-imagine how and where we deliver services. With these plans, we expect to convene a general meeting, in the year ahead, seeking our respective members’ support for this significant undertaking.

- PETER FRIDELL, CHAIR
- NADIA MORALES, ACTING CO-CEO
- JESSICA DE VRIES, ACTING CO-CEO

WHO WE HELP

Clients experiencing difficulty are at the centre of what we do. We listen to our clients and help them be heard.

Life circumstances can make some people more likely to experience legal problems, and less likely to seek help. That's why we prioritise providing free legal help to people in our area who are experiencing **chronic disadvantage** or are **acutely vulnerable**.

Chronic disadvantage (such as homelessness, mental illness or substance misuse) experienced by people like **Mike** means they can have more frequent interaction with the justice system. This has an impact on their wellbeing and ability to achieve stability. We aim to minimise this impact and give them more control over their own lives.

MIKE'S STORY

Mike's difficulties began right at the start of his life, with the trauma of living in a violent home following him into adulthood. Drinking was his way of dealing with it. Down the track, this led to a multitude of other problems, including periods of homelessness and years of isolation from his family and children.

Already struggling to cope, a serious accident left him with a lasting brain injury and he had to endure months of rehabilitation and corrective surgery. Knowing his drinking was escalating and that he needed to find another way to cope, he self-referred to a drug and alcohol treatment program at Ozanam House. Working closely with his support workers, he felt empowered to improve his physical and mental health through art therapy and volunteering.

A social worker at Ozanam referred Mike to us in 2016 for help with fines and criminal charges. With our help, his fines for not being able to afford public transport tickets whilst homeless were revoked and he was able to move on from the charges with just a good behaviour bond. This sentence reflected his life circumstances and his efforts to exit the cycle of homelessness and substance use.

Without the financial, mental and physical burden of fines and serious criminal charges, Mike was able to focus on moving forward from his trauma, including finally moving into his own place after being in transitional housing for eight years.

Some time later when he received another fine following a minor altercation, it threatened Mike's stability and the progress he had

made in improving his life. We were able to help Mike by applying for a review. While the fine was cancelled, unfortunately the matter didn't stop there — it is likely he will be sent to court over it. With the matter continuing to hang over Mike's head, this uncertainty puts him at risk of exacerbating his significant anxiety and triggering disengagement from services and supports. We'll continue to stand by Mike's side and see the matter through to ensure the court properly takes into account his personal circumstances so he can continue to focus on his wellbeing.



“Mike is the kind of client that we strive to help. He has lived a life of struggles – over a decade of homelessness, severe mental illness, substance dependency and a brain injury. The justice system is set-up to trap people like Mike over and over again. IMCL will continue to be there to help minimise the impact of that system on Mike and others like him.”

– Lloyd Murphy, Lawyer

WHO WE HELP

Adverse unexpected life events like ill-health, relationship breakdown and family violence or unemployment can put people like **Elle** in an **acutely vulnerable** position and trigger legal issues. This can put them at further risk of longer-term, entrenched disadvantaged. We work intensively with them to break this cycle.

ELLE'S STORY

We first introduced Elle in our Annual Report 2016–17. Before we met Elle, she had felt alone and unheard in her struggles for a long time. Her partner was extremely violent towards her throughout their relationship. During this time, the mother of three fought to protect herself and her children. The police applied for an intervention order (IVO) which supported her to leave him, but the violence continued after they separated. He consistently breached the IVO by harassing Elle over the phone.

While the IVO provided her with a level of protection and distance from her ex-partner, she still wanted to respect her children's right to see their father and wanted to put in place a child contact agreement between them. During the mediation for parenting arrangements however, Elle didn't feel like her safety concerns were listened to and she felt forced into agreeing to supervise his contact time with the children. This made Elle feel uncomfortable and in fear for her safety.

At the same time, she was also struggling to cope on parenting payments and wasn't receiving child support. To make matters even worse, fines that she'd received whilst homeless were piling up and a consequent licence suspension meant that it was hard

to transport her youngest child to hospital appointments for a serious medical condition. Elle felt overwhelmed and helpless.

Elle finally felt heard when she met Jessica de Vries, a Senior Lawyer at IMCL, three years ago.

Since then, we have given Elle ongoing intensive and wrap-around legal support because family law issues are complex and can take a significant length of time to be resolved in the legal system. It is also a system which is difficult for people, like Elle, to navigate alone. This is made even more difficult by the processes involved, which are often re-traumatising for women like Elle who have experienced family violence.

Alongside Elle, we guided her through further negotiation and made sure she felt safe by arranging for supervised contact to be carried out by a contact centre in the short-term, and also extending and adding extra conditions to her IVO so that her ex-partner couldn't contact her at all. IMCL took over communication with him so that she didn't have to. We also worked to have her licence reinstated so that she could transport her and her children to important appointments.

When attempts to agree on long-term contact arrangements with him broke down and he continued to breach the IVO, Elle

was forced to take the matter to court. After a lengthy and stressful process, the court acknowledged her concerns and put in place orders for strict supervision. Meanwhile, her ex-partner was charged for his breaches of the IVO, giving her comfort that he will be held accountable.

Recognising her trauma, we also finalised an application to the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) so that Elle can receive financial support to focus on her wellbeing.

After feeling like she was in survival mode for so long, Elle finally feels in control of her life and positive about her future. Without the burden of living in constant fear of his violent behaviour, and through the therapeutic counselling she has received as part of the VOCAT process, she has rebuilt her confidence and prioritised her recovery for the first time. She can work again, and is even thinking of starting her own business with the financial assistance she has received.

Read more about Elle's story on [page 11](#).

SPOTLIGHT: FAMILY LAW

We help a lot of single-mothers like Elle, many of whom need help with family law issues and are experiencing family violence.

FAMILY LAW CLINIC MAKES UP OVER **30%** OF OUR CLINIC ADVICES

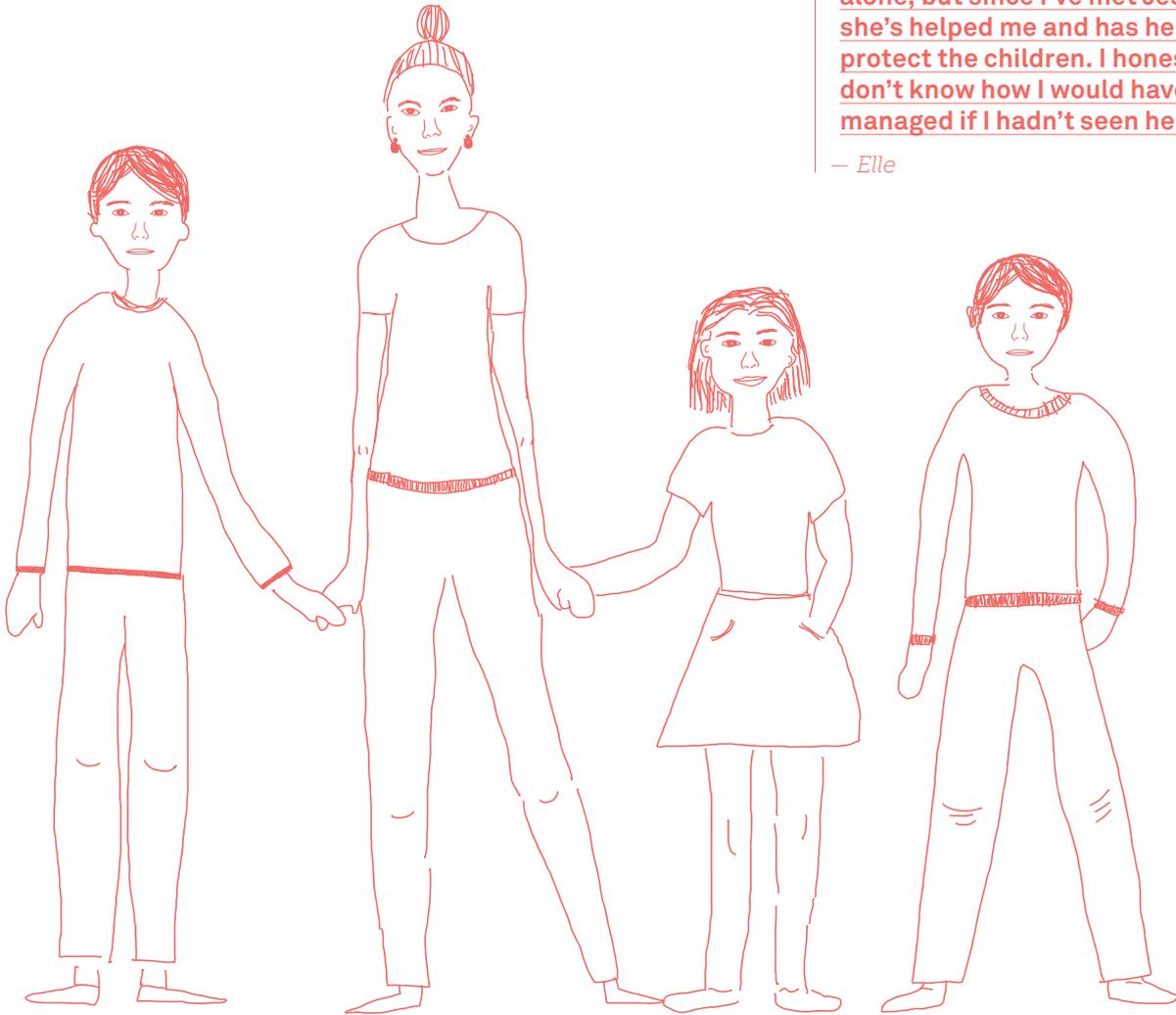
60% OF OUR FAMILY LAW CLIENTS WERE EXPERIENCING FAMILY VIOLENCE

“Using a trauma-informed approach, we gave Elle the time she needed to trust us. It took at least one year for her to share the worst of her experience. This information was vital for her case. It showed the persistent patterns of violent behaviour she had experienced so that we could ensure her safety and so that she can now look forward to the future.”

– Jessica de Vries, Acting Co-CEO

“For a long time I thought I was alone, but since I’ve met Jess she’s helped me and has helped protect the children. I honestly don’t know how I would have managed if I hadn’t seen her.”

– Elle



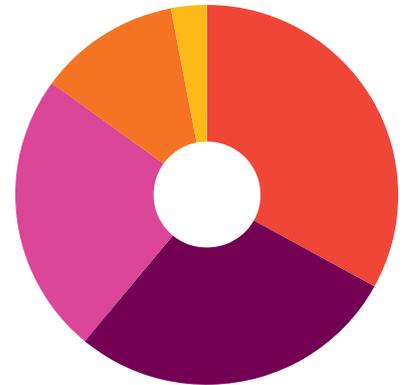
HOW WE WORK

We provide targeted legal help in places and ways that meet people's needs.

As well as providing legal help in our office, we also provide help through integrated outreach services to reach people who face barriers in accessing help, like **Mike** and **Elle**. Read their stories on [pages 6–9](#).

We understand that for many, a lawyer is not always the first person they turn to for help with legal problems and those problems are often interrelated with other non-legal issues. This is why we embed our lawyers within other community agencies to ensure that people can get legal help at accessible and appropriate places, at the same time as they connect with other support services.

TOTAL LEGAL ADVICES AT OUTREACH SERVICES
(PERCENTAGE BY CENTRE)



Royal Women's Hospital 33%
Ozanam Community Centre 28%
Royal Melbourne Hospital 24%
Carlton 12%
Other 3%

OUTREACH LOCATIONS

- 1 Ozanam House
- 2 North Melbourne Language and Learning Centre
- 3 Royal Women's Hospital (including the Social Work Department and the Women's Alcohol and Drugs Service [WADS])
- 4 Royal Melbourne Hospital
- 5 (including Royal Park Aged Care and Rehabilitation Units)
- 6 Family Services at Carlton Baths
- 7 Melbourne Magistrates' Court Family Violence Duty Lawyer Service
- 8 Open Door (the 480 Outreach Hub)



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- 9 St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre
- 10 The River Nile Learning Centre
- 11 Launch Housing — Elizabeth Street Common Ground
- 12 Salvation Army — Flagstaff Accommodation

HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS

HJP SERVICES MAKE UP **52%** OF OUR OUTREACH ADVICES

Legal issues are also often at the root of someone's health, financial or social problem and they can make those problems worse. By providing holistic on-site legal intervention, patients receive help early and are empowered to focus on other areas of their lives, positively impacting their health and wellbeing.

ELLE'S STORY

As a mother of young children, it was hard for Elle, [introduced on page 8](#), to make time during her busy days to go and see a lawyer. This was made harder by her licence suspension and child's medical condition, which required many hospital appointments. Being connected with an IMCL lawyer at the Royal Women's Hospital started to turn things around. Her hospital worker recognised that she was struggling with a legal issue and directed her to our on-site clinic.

This reflects what we know: **that people are almost twice as likely to ask a health and welfare professional about a legal problem than a lawyer.**

For Elle, the convenience of a legal clinic located within a hospital made all the difference: *"I was happy that I could go for hospital care while receiving legal assistance simultaneously. It was a lot easier than having to make an appointment somewhere else."*

Being able to build a relationship with Jess through one-on-one consultations was also extremely valuable to her: *"Women who have been through family violence have trust issues so it's easier to talk to the one person to build rapport and a trusting relationship."*

To make these partnerships work we invest a lot of time into building relationships with management and staff on the ground, running professional training sessions and participating in working groups designed to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable patients.

MOST COMMON LEGAL ISSUES IN HOSPITAL ADVICE CLINICS:

RWH – FAMILY VIOLENCE IVOS, BIRTH REGISTRATIONS, CHILD CONTACT ORDERS AND PARENTING PLANS, VOCAT, CHILD PROTECTION, DIVORCE

RMH – FAMILY VIOLENCE IVOS, DEBTS, FINES, VOCAT

A significant proportion of our ongoing family law casework comes from our HJPs, most commonly involving divorce and child contact orders.

POLICE (PACER)

To build on our successful HJP work and the evidence surrounding mental ill-health and legal need, this year we started on an ambitious two-year project with the Inner-West Police and Clinician Emergency Response (PACER) team, supported by funding from the Legal Services Board. We will be working with the team to co-design a complementary model that adds a legal dimension, offering specialised and timely legal assistance to the individuals seen. Read more about it on [our website](#).

WHAT WE DO

LEGAL HELP

We provide free accessible legal help in the form of **information, advice, casework and representation** to help people with life problems that have a legal solution.

SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR'S WORK

LEGAL ADVICES (IN-HOUSE AND OUTREACH): **713**

LEGAL TASKS: **476**

CASES OPENED: **238**

95% OF CLIENTS INDICATED THEY HAD MORE THAN ONE VULNERABILITY (E.G. MENTAL HEALTH, CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY, FAMILY VIOLENCE)

DUTY LAWYER SERVICE FOR THE MELBOURNE MAGISTRATES COURT INTERVENTION ORDER LIST: **391**

EARLY INTERVENTION LEGAL SERVICE (ADVICE TO DUTY LAWYER CLIENTS FOR LEGAL PROBLEMS CONNECTED TO FAMILY VIOLENCE):

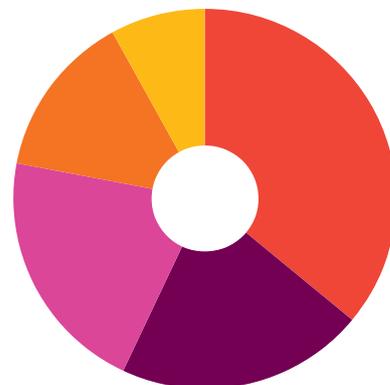
40 LEGAL ADVICES

42 LEGAL TASKS

13 CASES OPENED

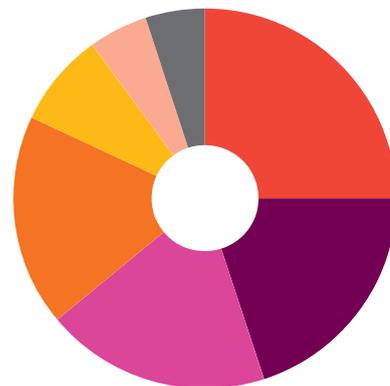
TOTAL SPECIALIST CLINIC LEGAL ADVICES

(PERCENTAGE BY CLINIC)



Family 36%
Criminal 21%
Fines 21%
Tenancy 14%
Other 8%

CASES OPENED



Family 25%
Criminal 20%
Fines 19%
Tenancy 18%
Other civil 8%
Family violence intervention orders 5%
VOCAT 5%

SPOTLIGHT: PROBLEMS WITH HOUSING

UNIQUE HOUSING CLIENTS: [63](#)

HOUSING CASES: [56](#)

The inner-Melbourne area is home to a high number of people in public housing. We target people in public, and also community housing, because we know they are more vulnerable to experiencing legal problems and less likely to get help. We also help a smaller number of people in private tenancies.

TOP 4 ISSUES

- Evictions
- Repairs
- Transfers
- People affected by the [Public Housing Renewal Program](#)

OUR ACTIONS

This year we worked to ensure tenants were treated fairly and got the outcomes they deserve by making sure that:

- **Landlords didn't impose unfair and illegal rent or utility charges** on people like [Jack](#)
- **People could live with security and dignity** in safe and sanitary conditions, like [Jack](#), whose rooming house room was infested with cockroaches
- **People were able to terminate their leases early** when they were facing extenuating personal circumstances, like loss of employment or family violence
- **People with complex behavioural issues stemming from mental ill-health or substance abuse issues were protected from eviction and subsequent homelessness.**

Read more about Jack's story [on our website](#).



ABOVE: Senior Lawyer Louise Bassini and client Jack.

“Housing is so fundamental to how we participate in society... so many of the difficulties people face in their lives stem from the fact that their housing is too unstable or too costly.”

— *Louisa Bassini, Senior Lawyer*

“I'm not a big complainer...but having cockroaches on your bed...that's something to complain about.”

— *Jack*

SPOTLIGHT: PROBLEMS WITH MONEY

UNIQUE CLIENTS: **135**

Every day we meet people who face significant disadvantage and social exclusion, often leaving them with debts on top of their legal problems. If unmanaged, debts can quickly increase the distress people feel when trying to get their lives back on track.

COMMON ISSUES

- Payday loans, utilities and telco debts
- Motor vehicle accidents and accessing early release superannuation and income protection
- Housing arrears and car repossession
- Credit card debt linked to family violence and flexible support package applications for people fleeing family violence

OUR ACTIONS

To fully and holistically serve our community, we partner with Anglicare to bring a financial counsellor to the doorstep of our community, on-site at IMCL one day per week. Our financial counsellor helps to manage their debts and the vulnerability causing them, whilst our lawyers frequently also manage parallel legal issues.

Beth was one of those clients. Read her story [on our website](#).

“After all these years, to see a light...is beyond miraculous.”

– Beth

SPOTLIGHT: BEING CAUGHT UP IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE OR FINES SYSTEMS

UNIQUE CRIMINAL AND FINES CLIENTS: **171**

CRIMINAL AND FINES CASES: **118**

People experiencing disadvantage are often criminalised and heavily policed, leading to their over-representation in the criminal justice system. This is particularly true for people experiencing homelessness, who are often charged with offences or issued fines directly relating to their lack of housing. This year we continued to support vulnerable people who are inappropriately caught up in the system.

COMMON ISSUES

- Drunk in public
- Driving offences
- Public transport fines
- Parking fines

OUR ACTIONS

We minimised the impact of the criminal justice system on vulnerable people by providing intensive support and taking on their matters when no one else would. With the assistance of a familiar and trusting lawyer, clients like [Mike](#) had the support they needed to engage with the process and make sure their story was heard.

CASES INVOLVING A CRIMINAL LAW ISSUE: **20%**

We minimised the impact of the fines system on vulnerable people by making sure that their adverse life circumstances were taken into account. These clients cannot always understand or control their offending behaviour and often get stuck unfairly in an ‘infringements roundabout.’

21% OF ALL CLINIC ADVICES WERE FOR FINES

OPENED CASES INVOLVING INFRINGEMENTS:
ALMOST **20%**

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

We provide community legal education (CLE) to targeted community members and professionals that aims to prevent legal problems from occurring or escalating.

COMMUNITY WORKERS

Acknowledging that our clients, like [Mike](#) and [Elle](#), talk about their life problems to non-lawyers, we educate community workers within our partner organisations to identify legal issues, which can be difficult to spot. By better understanding and identifying legal issues that present among the people they work with — more people are directed to the help they need. Elle was able to reach IMCL because her social worker connected her. The worker knew that we could help protect Elle and her children from family violence and support her to put in place safe child arrangements. With a direct intake pathway to IMCL, the worker was able to make a simple referral so IMCL could provide timely help that stopped Elle's situation from getting worse.

This year we delivered 31 formal education sessions to workers, and also participated in a number of smaller informal meetings to instruct workers and solidify our relationships. This sustained engagement is vital to maintaining successful referral partnerships.



ABOVE: Illustrations from our multilingual digital legal information resource for international students.

PRIORITY COMMUNITY MEMBERS

This year we continued our community education focus on young people, identified as a group at high risk of experiencing legal problems and less likely to seek help:

- **We launched our multilingual [digital legal information resource for international students](#)** to help them access better support with legal problems connected to where they live, work and study. We responded to the ways students seek and share information and designed the information to be shared online via social media.
- With supplementary funding from the Victoria Law Foundation, we began **drafting more topics and redesigned the website**, due to be launched in early 2020.
- **To build awareness of the resource, we participated in a range of student activities**, including the vibrant Lord Mayor's Student Welcome in partnership with the City of Melbourne.
- Focussing on common areas of exploitation and risk, including renting, family violence and personal safety, **we delivered face-to-face legal education sessions to international students**.
- **We refined the Pick a Path program tailored to CALD young people** in partnership with VLA, delivering the program at The River Nile School. Using interactive teaching methodology and community storytelling, this program supports students to understand their public and private rights, like how to interact with police and how to recognise and deal with family violence.

LAW REFORM AND ADVOCACY

Our work with individual clients produces positive results for people like [Mike](#) and [Elle](#). Significantly, this work also allows us to identify unfair laws and systemic issues within the justice system that disproportionately affect disadvantaged and vulnerable people like them in our community. To address this, we challenge and work to change the law and underlying frameworks.

Knowing however that we can't work in isolation to address complex social problems, we work with others to come up with solutions and influence decision makers. Working together strengthens the impact of our work and helps us realise our goal of achieving fairer laws, policies and practices.

This year we focussed on tackling **housing and homelessness, mental and physical health, family violence and criminal justice**.

We played an active and often leading role in around numerous **working groups and cross-sector networks**, including Health Justice Partnerships, public and community housing policy reform, fines reform, family violence, tenancy rights, homelessness and summary crime.

WE CONTRIBUTED WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO THE FOLLOWING LAW REFORM INQUIRIES:

- the **Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System**, calling for increased funding for existing and future integrated service models as well as outlining a number of recommendations to address the over-representation of people with mental illness in the justice system
- the **Inquiry into a Legislated Spent Convictions Scheme**, outlining our support for a scheme and further recommendations to allow people who have been involved in the criminal justice system the opportunity to leave behind the stigma attached to this
- the **proposed amendment to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2019**, advocating in support of the proposed changes to make it easier

for transgender people to update their birth certificates and give the option of listing genders other than female or male for the first time.

Throughout the year we continued with ongoing advocacy activities related to the [Public Housing Renewal Program \(PHRP\)](#) and improving **community housing standards**.

WE ALSO SAW THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF OUR CONTRIBUTION TO PREVIOUS LAW REFORM INQUIRIES:

- The Victorian Ombudsman published its **Investigation into State Trustees report**, recognising the concerns raised in IMCL's initial complaint and submission, and leading State Trustees to implement immediate changes to improve the experience of its clients, [like Lionel](#), introduced in last year's Annual Report.

TO FURTHER INFORM PUBLIC DEBATE BY BUILDING AWARENESS OF OUR WORK AND THE ISSUES AFFECTING OUR PRIORITY CLIENTS WE SEIZED MAINSTREAM MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES:

- IMCL Senior Lawyer Molly Williams appeared on ABC Radio National's Law Report to discuss the Public Housing Renewal Plan (16 October 2018).
- We published an article aimed at educating international students about seeking accommodation, their housing rights and where to get help (Meld Magazine, 10 February 2019) and about international student housing exploitation (The Age, 16 March 2019).
- We outlined our position on a Specialist Homelessness Court for Victoria and some ideas to counter the injustice of people experiencing homelessness being over-represented and poorly served by the criminal justice system (Parity Magazine, June 2019).

Read our [submissions](#) and [media engagements](#) on our website.

OUR FOUNDATIONS

Reputation of quality, trust and connection

Passionate and talented staff and a positive work culture

Good governance and sustainable funding

Clear strategic direction, aligned with community priorities

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This year we launched our [Plan of Action 2018–21](#). This plan guides our service planning and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

Framed around our Theory of Change, we conducted our first whole of practice survey, collecting feedback from our lawyers and a sample of the people we helped. We wanted to know what our clients thought about the services we provide and reflections from the lawyers about our impact on individuals.

ACROSS ALL OUR SERVICES, WE FOUND:

- **Our services are accessible**

96% OF CLIENTS SAID THE LOCATION WAS APPROPRIATE FOR THEM

52% OF CLIENTS WOULD NOT HAVE SEEN A LAWYER ELSEWHERE

- **People felt heard**, noting they were treated with respect and compassion
- **Understanding of legal problems improved** and clients had more confidence to deal with them
- **People we help often have multiple legal problems** — many had two legal issues, and some had up to six.

“Very understanding, compassionate and professional. I felt cared about and supported. Thank you.”

— *Melbourne Magistrates’ Court client*

ABOUT OUR CASEWORK, LAWYERS REPORTED THAT:

- **Legal issues cause stress:**

- Clients with six legal issues were noted to have stress, depression, anxiety and a physical health problem
- A high incidence of stress was noted in clients with family law matters

- **Resolving legal issues improves people’s wellbeing** — in 75% of cases, dealing with legal problems gave the client at least one benefit in their life. These benefits were:

41% OF CLIENTS SHOWED SIGNS OF REDUCED STRESS OR ANXIETY

FOR **16%** OF CLIENTS, WE ALSO IMPROVED THEIR FINANCIAL SITUATION

WORKING ON A LEGAL PROBLEM ALLOWED **19%** OF CLIENTS TO FOCUS ON THEIR HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

We monitor and evaluate other aspects of our work for continuous improvement, including our project and community legal education activities and also our staff and volunteer satisfaction.

This year, we also formally launched our [Health Justice Partnership Report](#).

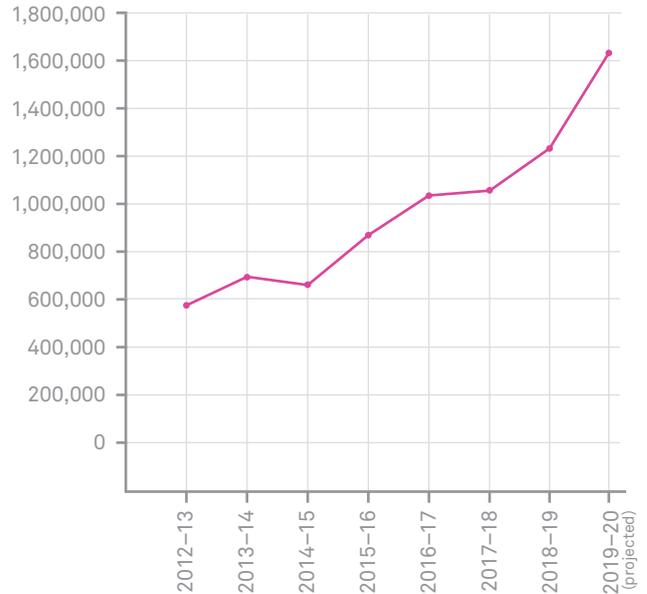
FINANCIAL REPORT

We are funded by government, other grants and donations. Our total income for the year was \$1,234,560.00. This shows a 5.9% growth of income since last year.

IMCL'S INCOME JOURNEY

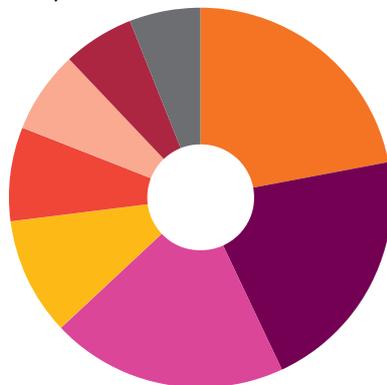
In 2018–19 we received financial support for our work from the State and Federal Governments, City of Melbourne, the Department of Justice, Legal Services Board, Victoria Law Foundation and the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

We very much appreciate the support that we receive from all these bodies. In the coming year we expect to diversify our income to more non-government sources, such as donations and philanthropic foundations, to support our innovative and inspiring work.



THIS FINANCIAL YEAR

The majority of IMCL's expenditure is dedicated to direct staffing costs – over 75%. The remainder is spent on key basics, such as rent (6.2%), project costs (2.4%), and information technology and communications (2.4%).



- Core funding (Victoria) 21.79%
- Core funding (Commonwealth) 21.02%
- Department of Justice 20.25%
- Other 10.25%
- Other grants (Commonwealth) 8.1%
- City of Melbourne 7.19%
- Small one-off grants 5.76%
- Legal Services Board 5.64%
- Cost recovered <1%

PRO BONO SUPPORT/ FUTURE OF OUR FUNDING

PRO BONO SUPPORT

During the year the pro bono contributions of our partner law firms and volunteers were equivalent to IMCL expenditure of \$637,690. Included in this are two valuable long-term pro bono partnerships which significantly expand IMCL's capacity to assist some of Melbourne's most vulnerable people. Moray & Agnew continue to generously employ a full-time lawyer who leads our homelessness outreach and criminal law work. We also have a longstanding and mutually beneficial relationship with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office which supports our work by placing one of their talented lawyers on a year-long secondment in the IMCL office. Herbert Smith Freehills (HSF) assists us with a range of pro bono work for IMCL and our clients. HSF will also be supporting us with a 5 month secondment in the coming year to undertake legal assistance for our clients and assist with the FKCLC-IMCL merger process. Through the receipt of a large number of pro bono referrals, Ryan Carlisle Thomas and Lander & Rogers have provided extensive and valuable legal assistance for our clients. Firms like these, who take our referral with no questions asked, make a profound difference to how quickly and seamlessly we can provide a wide range of assistance to vulnerable clients.

We also received support from several other law firms, including Clayton Utz, WLW Migration Lawyers and Hall & Wilcox, who accept referrals in areas of law outside of our practice so we can provide clients with holistic help, give us organisational governance legal advice, assist us to develop law reform and policy submissions and provide IMCL with non-legal assistance (including training, meeting rooms and administrative services). It is important to note that much of our work would not be possible without all of this support.

A range of other non-legal supporters provide us with substantial cost savings by offering us the free use of their facilities or free or discounted service rates. This includes Empower Wealth financial planners who provide free meeting rooms and photography, and also our long-standing contractors (our graphic designer Susan Fitzgerald, web developer Andrew Strachan and IT provider ConnectedIT) who provide service discounts.

FUTURE OF OUR FUNDING

During the year we funded our work in a variety of ways to ensure we firm up the organisation's capacity to continue to deliver. Our total income of \$1,234,560.00 means that we are now a sustainable size such that we have started to ensure we can support our staff and work in innovative ways such as by implementing a sophisticated online case management system, office space expensation and enhancements, IT improvements and administrative and paralegal support.

In addition to delivering high quality work, we continue to reconnect with all of the past and current friends of IMCL by telling the stories of the range of people we help over the year as well as the stories of our lawyers and partner organisations and we are therefore confident that next year's report will show a further diversification of financial supporters for this great work. IMCL's complete audited financial report can be downloaded from [our website](#).

- JOHN MANGAN, TREASURER
- NADIA MORALES, ACTING CO-CEO
- JESSICA DE VRIES, ACTING CO-CEO



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