

2015-16 ANNUAL REPORT



INNER MELBOURNE  
COMMUNITY LEGAL

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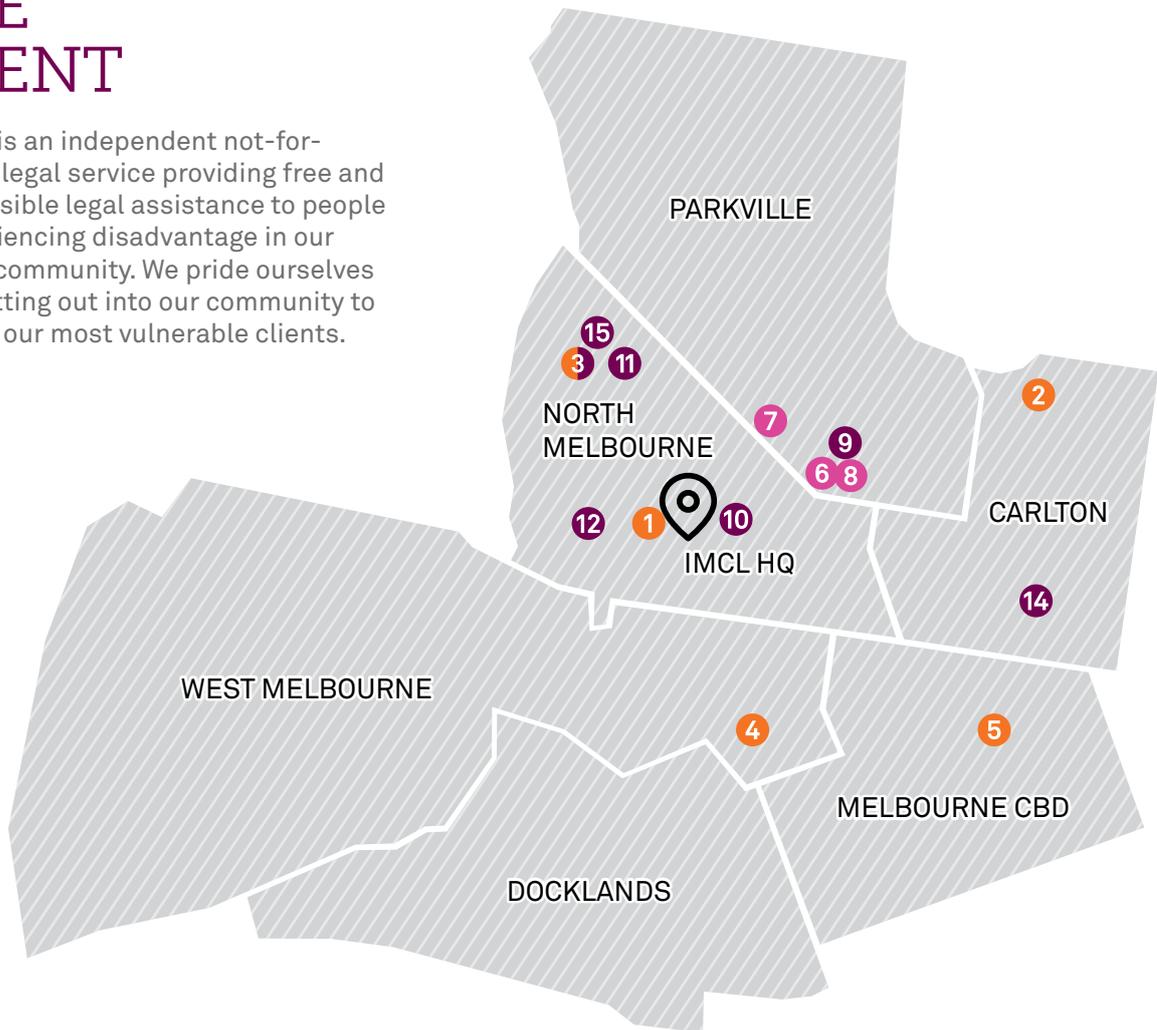
(03) 9328 1885



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# WHERE WE WENT

IMCL is an independent not-for-profit legal service providing free and accessible legal assistance to people experiencing disadvantage in our local community. We pride ourselves on getting out into our community to reach our most vulnerable clients.



## Community Partners:

- 1 Ozanam Community Centre
- 2 The Community Space at 480 Lygon Street (Carlton public housing estate)
- 3 cohealth (North Melbourne Public Housing Estate)
- 4 Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE)
- 5 Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA House)

## Health-Justice Partners:

- 6 Royal Women's Hospital
- 7 Royal Children's Hospital
- 8 Royal Melbourne Hospital

## Community Legal Education Partners:

- 9 University High
- 10 St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre
- 11 St Aloysius College
- 12 The Huddle, North Melbourne Football Club
- 3 cohealth (North Melbourne Public Housing Estate)
- 14 The Drum Youth Services
- 15 North Melbourne Language and Learning Centre

# WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DID IN 2015-16

4	<b>SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR'S WORK</b>
5	<b>OUR IMPACT</b>
5	<b>Out and About</b>
5	In Community Spaces – Community Partnerships
6	In Hospitals – Health Justice Partnerships
9	In Schools and Learning Centres – Community Legal Education
10	In Courts and Tribunals
11	<b>Meanwhile, back at HQ</b>
11	Our On-Site Advice Clinics
14	Ongoing Case Work
16	Monitoring and Evaluation
16	Our Law Reform Work
17	<b>WHERE TO NEXT - CHAIRPERSON/CEO REPORT</b>
18	<b>FUNDING AND SUPPORT</b>

# SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR'S WORK

**672**

VULNERABLE PEOPLE WERE ASSISTED



**58%**

OF OUR CLIENTS WERE FEMALE



**64%**

OF OUR CLIENTS WERE AGED BETWEEN 25-55



**50%**

OF OUR CLIENTS LIVED ALONE OR IN SHARE ACCOMMODATION



**30%**

OF CLIENTS SPOKE A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME



**42%**

OF OUR CLIENTS HAD EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



**30%**

OF OUR CLIENTS INDICATED THAT THEY HAD A DISABILITY



**736**

TOTAL LEGAL ADVICES PROVIDED



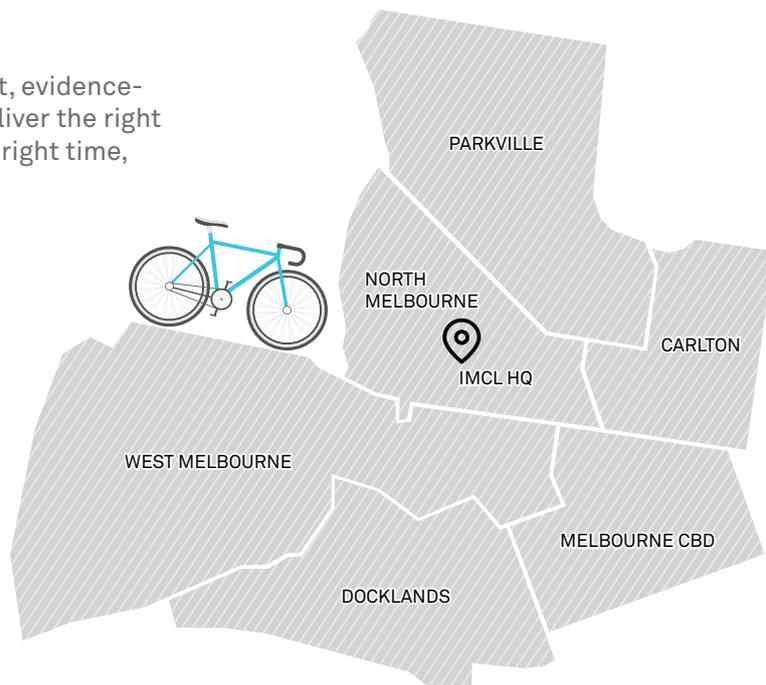
## TOP 10 LEGAL PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY OUR CLIENTS:

Family law – 28%  
 Infringements – 16%  
 Family violence – 11%  
 Criminal – 10%  
 Tenancy – 8%  
 Credit and debt – 8%

Other civil – 5%  
 Injuries – 4%  
 MVA – 2%  
 Employment – 2%  
 Other – 6%

# OUR IMPACT

At IMCL we are committed to smart, evidence-based legal service delivery. We deliver the right services, in the right places, at the right time, and in the right way.



## OUT AND ABOUT

### In Community Spaces – Community Partnerships

**Getting out of the office to reach our clients is one of our key priorities and something we do best.**

Research demonstrates that often people do not recognise their problems as having a legal dimension and do not disclose these issues to lawyers. Rather, non-legal service providers such as social workers, doctors, financial counsellors, and alcohol and drug workers are often the first and only points of contact with a professional for many people with legal problems. Research also shows that some groups are more exposed to legal problems than others and also less able to deal with them.

Knowing this, IMCL has partnered with community agencies to provide co-located outreach advice services to seize opportunities to reach individuals who likely experience legal problems but face barriers to accessing legal help.

Each of the outreach locations was selected to target specific client demographics or specific legal issues. Our clients at these services are often our most vulnerable, many experiencing a cluster of legal problems exacerbated by insecure housing, cultural and linguistic differences, mental illness, family violence, social isolation, trauma and addiction issues.



**“THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH IMCL IS INVALUABLE TO US BECAUSE OUR STAFF HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO LEGAL INFORMATION WHEN WE NEED IT AND THAT HELPS US HELP OUR CLIENTS”.  
VIOLET BODOKY,  
WOMBAT HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

## CASE STUDY

### *SOMETIMES LIFE CAN TAKE A SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED TURN.*

*Bruce\* ran a business as a concreter. He earned a good income and was able to successfully maintain this work for many years, despite having suffered from depression for most of his life. Following the death of his mother around 2010, things got worse for him. As sometimes happens for people who experience episodes of poor mental health, he lost control of his life. He started drinking heavily and using drugs. He wasn't able to properly manage his business affairs and stopped lodging tax returns.*

*By the time Bruce came to see us at Ozanam Community Centre he was at crisis point. He'd become homeless, his finances were in disarray, he had significant debt, he was battling substance addiction and he'd been charged with breaching a Community Corrections Order (CCO).*

*In tandem with several outreach workers – including drug and alcohol, housing support and mental health workers - we worked with Bruce to resolve his legal problems. We all knew his problems were interlinked. We represented him in court twice to have almost \$5,000 worth of transport fines wiped and, on another occasion, to successfully argue that because of his engagement with treatment services, his CCO was no longer necessary. We also connected him with a pro bono law firm so they could assist him to have a \$15,000 tax debt waived on the basis of his hardship. During this time he also secured stable accommodation.*

*IMCL engaged with Bruce at the right time, at the right place and with the right supports. We helped him when and where he was ready and able to receive help, and with other support service providers, enabled him to achieve meaningful and sustainable change in his life.*

To ensure we are connecting with those who need us most, we regularly assess legal need within our community. This year we identified that very few of our clients were from Carlton, notwithstanding its large population and relative disadvantage. As a result we developed our newest Community Partnership with cohealth and the Department of Housing at the Carlton Housing Estate. Since January 2016, our lawyers have worked hand-in-hand with a community engagement coordinator and social worker from cohealth to help hard-to-reach residents with their legal problems.

We also have strong cross-referral relationships with numerous other agencies within our catchment. An understanding of each other's work facilitates effective warm referrals which allow our mutual clients to obtain timely holistic care and address issues underlying their legal problems. An important part of our work is equipping non-legal service providers with the skills to identify legal issues.



## In Hospitals – Health Justice Partnerships

**Health Justice Partnerships (HJPs) are a holistic model of service delivery which sees free legal services integrated into public health-care settings.**

HJPs recognise that socio-economic circumstances can have a detrimental impact on the health of individuals and that disadvantaged individuals are particularly vulnerable to legal problems, including multiple and substantial legal challenges.

By providing a free, generalist legal service on-site in several major metropolitan hospitals, IMCL aims to empower disenfranchised Victorians to access free legal services in a convenient and trusted setting. This model has a significant and efficient social return on investment.



**70% OF THE PATIENTS SEEN THROUGH OUR HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS WERE ON A LOW INCOME**



**ALMOST HALF OF THEM SELF-IDENTIFIED AS HAVING A DISABILITY**



**43% OF THEM WERE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF FAMILY VIOLENCE**



**20% OF THEM WERE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS**

### **The Royal Women’s Hospital – Acting on the Warning Signs Project**

**Our Acting on the Warning Signs project with The Royal Women’s Hospital is the first HJP in a major metropolitan hospital in Australia and is at the forefront of the HJP movement.**

Recognising that women experiencing family violence may have few practical opportunities to seek assistance, this HJP aims to deliver an integrated response to violence against women whereby patients can access free on-site legal services alongside health and social work support.

The project aims to upskill front line health professionals to identify and respond to family violence and to make appropriate referrals to the on-site legal service, increasing the number of women who receive the legal help they need.

**In 2015-16, IMCL provided formal, multi-disciplinary training to over 130 staff, including 24 doctors. Since the project’s inception, a total of 349 staff have received training.**

The training to doctors received accreditation with a number of medical colleges, enabling doctors to attract professional development points for attendance.

The evaluation report for Phase 1 of the Project (2012-2014) can be accessed on our website.

**IMCL PROVIDED 167 INSTANCES OF FREE LEGAL ADVICE TO PATIENTS AT HOSPITAL-BASED LEGAL CLINICS.**

### **CASE STUDY**

#### **HELPING SARA\* IDENTIFY AND SOLVE MULTIPLE LEGAL PROBLEMS**

*Sara, a 30-year old African woman was referred to our legal service at the Royal Women’s Hospital by her social worker when she was 10 weeks’ pregnant with her second child. She was living in public housing and had experienced significant family violence over many years.*

*Sara told the lawyer that she was not sure whether she required legal assistance. She started telling her story and in the process the lawyer identified several legal issues.*

*Several cases were opened for Sara. We assisted her to: apply for a divorce and obtain an intervention order against her violent ex-partner; transfer to a new public housing property that was safer and more appropriate for her circumstances; waive a number of outstanding infringements; deal with a criminal matter; and helped her to apply for financial assistance from the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal to help her to recover from an act of violence. She was awarded a total of \$5,969, including a lump sum payment, counselling expenses, home security and the fees for a Certificate I and II in the English language to support her recovery.*

## The Royal Children's Hospital – Connecting the Dots Project

**This HJP is the first of its kind in a paediatric hospital in Australia and focuses exclusively on legal issues that affect the health and wellbeing of the children who are patients of the hospital.**

Beginning in 2016, IMCL lawyers provide advice and information to patients with legal challenges that impact the patient's health and/or the family's capacity to care for their sick child.

### CASE STUDY

#### **CONNECTING A FAMILY WITH A SICK CHILD WITH THE PRO BONO LEGAL HELP THEY NEED**

*We saw Amy\* and Mark\* at our clinic at the Royal Children's Hospital (the RCH). They have two children, James\*, 6, and Michael\*, 4. Michael is a patient of the RCH. He has a one in a billion illness and he is part of a global research study. He spends significant time in hospital. His parents currently receive benefits because they both had to quit their previous jobs to care for Michael. The couple started their own business late last year hoping that they will be better able to juggle Michael's care needs and a sustainable income for the family.*

*They own their own house two hours out of Melbourne but the house is old and requires significant renovation. They decided to rent a home closer to the RCH so that they can see Michael when he's in hospital and to provide him with a nicer home environment. When they came to see us, they were struggling to keep up to date with their bills. They had already seen a financial counsellor who had helped them clear \$90,000 debt but*

*they were still two months in arrears on their mortgage repayments and still owed around \$15,000. They planned to make alterations to their home including the installation of ramps and other adjustments but they couldn't afford it. They had already accessed Mark's superannuation to buy a vehicle big enough to transport Michael.*

*They told us they had many friends and family members who wanted to donate money to them. We gave them advice about their debts and referred their matter to a large commercial law which provided them with pro bono assistance to set up a necessitous circumstances trust for Michael. It is hoped that this will assist them to better meet the financial needs of their family.*

## Royal Melbourne Hospital – Melbourne Legal Care

IMCL's newest HJP is with the Royal Melbourne Hospital. A cornerstone of this partnership is its focus on preventative law with a view to ensuring that clients are assisted in a timely manner before the escalation of their legal issue. Whilst still a new initiative - having commenced in September 2015 - Melbourne Legal Care has been able to assist a number of vulnerable Victorians with complex legal issues.

A cross-site evaluation of the health impacts of this legal intervention is currently under way with a final report due by mid-2017.

## CASE STUDY

### HELPING JOE\* LEAVE HOSPITAL SAFELY

*We saw Joe at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, where he was an inpatient. Joe suffers from a complex medical disorder and had recently attempted suicide, in part because he was struggling to deal with the family violence that he was experiencing from his sibling who lived at home with him and his elderly mother. He was very worried about returning home, and concerned for his safety and wellbeing.*

*There was already a limited Intervention Order in place for his protection, but it still allowed his sibling to live with him and contact him. We contacted Police to see if they would assist Joe, because he was very vulnerable but they would not take any action in part because of his mental health issues. Despite being eligible for release, the hospital was also reluctant to discharge him due to concerns for his safety.*

*IMCL assisted Joe to draft an application to have the Intervention Order varied, and arranged with the Melbourne Magistrates' Court for him to make his application the day he was discharged from hospital. If we did not have our existing relationship with the Court, it is likely that we would not have been able to get Joe an expedited court appointment. Joe was able to successfully vary the Intervention Order to exclude his sibling so that he could safely return home and not remain in hospital unnecessarily.*



## In Schools and Learning Centres – Community Legal Education

*'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,'* said Benjamin Franklin and while this quote is often assumed to have been made with reference to health services he was, in fact, talking about fire safety. And although our legal service often sees us putting out fires for our clients and the legal problems they face, we take a similar view towards helping the communities we serve by empowering them to prevent legal issues from escalating or even arising in the first place.

That is why our lawyers are deeply committed to community legal education, **delivering 36 community legal education sessions in 2015-16 for over 1,000 community members** and those who support them on issues ranging from family violence and police powers to tenancy and using public transport.

### Recently arrived communities

This year, in particular, we were able to strengthen our engagement with recently arrived migrant and refugee communities by delivering a number of tailored sessions for students attending the North Melbourne Language and Learning Centre and young asylum-seekers enrolled at St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre.

### Youth Advocates Against Family Violence

In its fourth year, our Youth Advocates Against Family Violence program has continued to gain momentum, inspiring more young people to become change-makers in the prevention of family violence. This year we forged important new partnerships with Victoria Police, SafeSteps, cohealth and the Drum, working together to deliver **community legal education sessions for over 500 young people on family violence prevention** in a range of schools

and community-based settings. As schools work towards the introduction of respectful relationships into the curriculum in 2016-17, we successfully piloted a professional development session to support teachers and school staff in responding to disclosures and making effective referrals into legal and other support services.

Our survey of students at University High showed that as a result of our education sessions:

- 23% more young people identified verbal abuse as a form of family violence
- 38% more young people identified hacking phones and social media as a form of family violence
- 20% more young people identified legal services as places they could go for help if they experience family violence

**"I THINK THIS HAS BEEN A REALLY GOOD LEARNING EXPERIENCE. THIS WILL DEFINITELY CHANGE OUR FUTURES. THANK YOU." UNIVERSITY HIGH STUDENT, YEAR 9**



## In Courts and Tribunals

### Family Violence Duty Lawyer Service

2015-16 saw IMCL begin to deliver a Family Violence Duty Lawyer Service at the Melbourne Magistrates Court to assist in Family Violence Intervention Order matters. The State Government funding enables the service to be provided bi-weekly, supplementing services provided by other agencies. This means that a greater number of clients are able to access legal advice and/ or representation and the efficiency of the court is substantially increased.

## CASE STUDY

### *PROTECTING JANE\* AND HER CHILDREN FROM HARM*

*It can be extremely difficult for women to leave violent relationships, particularly when young children are involved. The absence of legal help makes it even harder, if not impossible.*

*We saw Jane as duty lawyer. She had fled the family home due to escalating family violence that included physical and sexual assaults and threats to kill. She was living in a refuge and had applied for an Intervention Order to protect herself and children from her husband.*

*She was fearful and intimidated by the court process, which was completely unfamiliar to her. English was her second language, so with the assistance of an interpreter we gave her advice about her options in a way she could understand.*

*We negotiated on her behalf and a final order was granted, without the need for a full court hearing. Jane was relieved that she had been supported through the process and that we spoke on her behalf in court.*

*Knowing that to take control of her life she required advice about child arrangements, child support, property settlement, divorce, and making a compensation claim to the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal, we made a subsequent appointment for her to see us at the IMCL office. After our assistance, Jane said she felt her life was beginning again.*

### Court representation for ongoing casework

IMCL also routinely appears in courts and tribunals as solicitor advocates for our ongoing casework. This is often in cases where clients are unable to obtain representation elsewhere due to being either ineligible for Legal Aid or unable to afford a private lawyer. We also brief barristers for more complex matters eligible for grants of Legal Aid and for ineligible matters we work closely with Justice Connect to obtain pro bono barrister assistance.

**In 2015-16, 74 of our ongoing cases involved court representation (24 more than the previous year).**



## MEANWHILE, BACK AT HQ

Whilst our staff spend much of their time out of the office, our headquarters at 508 Queensberry Street is the steady engine driving all that we do.

Here, busy rosters are drafted, weekly team meetings are had, case strategies are discussed over cups of tea and lunches are spent together tackling the daily newspaper quiz. At HQ, lawyers beaver away on ongoing casework, eagerly supported by energetic law students with a thirst for knowledge.

A dedicated team of administrative staff and volunteers assist with file administration, field a constant stream of phone inquiries and ensure our door is always open for those who are able to come to us.

You can meet our lawyers and volunteers on our website.

### Our on-site advice clinics

At 508 Queensberry Street, our clients can access a number of on-site specialist legal advice clinics for a wide variety of legal issues. These clinics are:

- **general law**
- **criminal law**
- **family law and intervention orders**
- **debt and Infringements**
- **Early Intervention Legal Service.**

IMCL fulfils a vital safety net role by catching clients who may not be able to receive the help they need elsewhere. Our workable eligibility guidelines allow us to provide comprehensive and timely advice in a broad range of matters, tailor our assistance to the individual and provide intensive support for our most vulnerable clients at all stages of the legal process. This includes taking time to explain the law and legal process in a way that clients understand. For example, a number of CALD clients seek assistance through the family law clinic to complete divorce applications. Without the means to pay for a private lawyer, and ineligible for assistance from Victoria Legal Aid, this is a unique and therefore valued community service.

Responding to family violence is a significant proportion of our in-house advice work in the family law and intervention order clinic. To expand our reach, in May 2016 IMCL received state funding to establish an Early Intervention Legal Advice Service for clients affected by family violence. This service enables us to identify unresolved legal issues and provide prompt telephone or in-person legal advice and referral information to clients seen as part of the Family Violence Duty Lawyer Service. The advice concerns connected legal issues such as child arrangements and other family law matters, child protection, criminal law, debt, fines, tenancy and victims of crime in order to prevent escalation necessitating more complex, intensive and costly assistance later on.

Of note this year, our ability to assist with tenancy matters was enhanced with the employment towards the end of the financial year of a new generalist lawyer with experience in tenancy law. This will enable all our lawyers to further develop their tenancy knowledge and increase the organisation's capacity to deliver services in this area.



## CASE STUDY

### KEEPING MEGAN\* IN HER HOME

*Megan was referred to us by her clinician at a local mental health service. Megan had been receiving treatment for a number of years for schizophrenia.*

*Megan was a public housing resident and had been in her property for several years. She reported that while unwell, she attended her local Housing Office and requested the immediate termination of her tenancy. The Housing Office contacted Victoria Police, who attended and assessed that Megan did not require hospitalisation. The attending police officer subsequently assisted Megan in completing a notice to terminate the tenancy with immediate effect and it was processed later that day.*

*Megan's clinician subsequently made a number of representations on her behalf to the Housing Office seeking to reinstate her tenancy but was unsuccessful. As a result, Megan was left homeless and spent several nights couch surfing and in crisis accommodation.*

*Megan instructed that she had not wanted to terminate her tenancy and only did so as a direct consequence of her illness. IMCL contacted the Housing Office who*

*maintained that the tenancy had been terminated by competent consent. IMCL escalated the matter to a team manager, highlighting concerns that the termination was accepted and processed immediately, without the usual 28 day notice period being afforded. IMCL stressed that it was inappropriate for a police officer to make an assessment of Megan's capacity to give consent, and that a termination should not have been readily accepted in circumstances which rendered Megan homeless. IMCL advised that an urgent application to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal may be made on Megan's behalf if the matter could not be resolved.*

*Within two days of Megan's first meeting with IMCL, the tenancy was reinstated and she could collect her keys and return home. In addition, the Housing Office implemented a system for regular meetings with Megan and her clinician to better manage her tenancy. IMCL's close relationship with community agencies was a key factor in the efficient and holistic resolution of Megan's case.*



WE ASSISTED 19 CLIENTS TO WAIVE UNFAIR FINES AND DEBT TOTALLING \$ 55,260



WE ASSISTED 7 VICTIMS OF CRIME TO RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TOTALLING \$133,098.69 TO ASSIST THEIR RECOVERY

## CASE STUDY

### GIVING AMIR\* THE CHANCE HE NEEDED

*Access to a lawyer can be the difference between a client becoming entrenched within the criminal justice system and having a future free from the disproportionate impact of a criminal record.*

*Amir came to us charged with multiple criminal offences. He'd come to the attention of police when he was drunk in public. He was 31 and had no criminal history. His behaviour didn't reflect his respect for the law. We prepared written submissions and appeared on Amir's behalf at court to successfully argue that he was an appropriate candidate for diversion. This meant he avoided a criminal record. Now, using his experience with police and the criminal justice system, he mentors young at-risk African youths in Melbourne. His experience showed him that with the right support, people can positively move through difficult periods in their lives.*

"I FELT APART WHEN MY MARRIAGE BROKE DOWN. I MOVED OUT OF THE FAMILY HOME, WASN'T SEEING MY KIDS AND GOT DEPRESSED AND ANGRY. I STARTED DRINKING TO NUMB THE PAIN... I WASN'T THINKING ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF MY ACTIONS. I REGRETTED MY BEHAVIOUR AND REALISED I HAD A PROBLEM SO I STARTED SEEING A COUNSELLOR... MY COMMUNITY SUPPORTED ME AND NEVER STOPPED BELIEVING THAT I HAD POTENTIAL. I AM NOW FOCUSING ON FINDING WORK AND SUPPORTING MY TWO KIDS. I DON'T KNOW WHERE I'D BE IF I DIDN'T HAVE ACCESS TO A FREE LAWYER."

## Ongoing casework

**This year, IMCL opened 297 new cases, 30 more than the previous year.**

The level of ongoing assistance provided to clients is assessed on a case-by-case basis, determined by factors such as legal merit and the client's capacity to self-help. Where appropriate, we aim to empower clients to advocate for themselves in their legal matter

by giving initial advice, helping with the drafting of legal documents, and providing procedural advice on next steps. Where necessary however, we take carriage of all aspects of the matter. This is particularly so in circumstances where clients are ineligible for Legal Aid, especially vulnerable and have meritorious case, like defences to criminal charges which have a strong likelihood of success.

## CASE STUDY

### **GIVING JOSHUA\* LEGAL HELP WHEN HE HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO GO**

*Joshua was 31 years old when he came to us in August 2015 and on a Centrelink benefit. Due to an offence committed in 2007 when he was 20, Joshua was placed on the Sex Offenders Register for 8 years.*

*In 2015, Joshua was charged with failing to comply with reporting obligations under the Register. He did not re-report a gym membership and a Twitter account. Although minor, if he was unable to contest the charges he would have had a criminal record persisting past 2017, when the original conviction would no longer appear in most criminal record checks.*

*Joshua wasn't eligible for a grant of Legal Aid, nor could he afford private representation. IMCL was the only free legal service in the area.*

*Joshua explained that he had had difficulty understanding his obligations. He had been suffering from serious depression for a number of years and had issues with concentration and processing complex*

*information as a result of a head injury sustained when he was a child. We knew this could be a defence to the charge.*

*We agreed to assist Joshua and were also able to arrange a pro-bono barrister to run his contested hearing. We engaged a psychologist who also appeared in court to explain his difficulties.*

*The Magistrate found Joshua not guilty, meaning that in 2017, when Joshua\* applies for jobs, his criminal record will not be disclosed in most cases. This will give him greater employment opportunities. If it wasn't for IMCL's work and assistance in providing representation for Joshua, he wouldn't have been able to contest the charges against him and achieve such a life changing outcome.*

*"IMCL listened to me. I wouldn't have been able to get this result without them. I had nowhere else to go for help. I made a mistake when I was young. Now I can look for a job and move on with my life."*

Cases where clients are ineligible for a grant of Legal Aid for ongoing assistance but are persuasive candidates for diversion – a scheme to divert people from the criminal justice system - is another area where IMCL is able to have enormous impact. This impact extends not only to the individual, but to the community as a whole. In 2015-16 IMCL assisted 5 clients to successfully obtain diversion.

**This year, IMCL's capacity to represent clients on an ongoing basis was greatly enhanced by our inclusion in three Victoria Legal Aid Panels: Summary Crime, Family Law and Family Violence.** This enables us to obtain funding to cover the cost of disbursements such as specialist reports and to instruct barristers for contested and more complex cases. The ability to take on these matters means that clients do not experience the referral roundabout and we establish a relationship of certainty and continuity. With this funding, our lawyers have also been able to substantially expand their knowledge of specialist and more complex areas of law.

## CASE STUDY

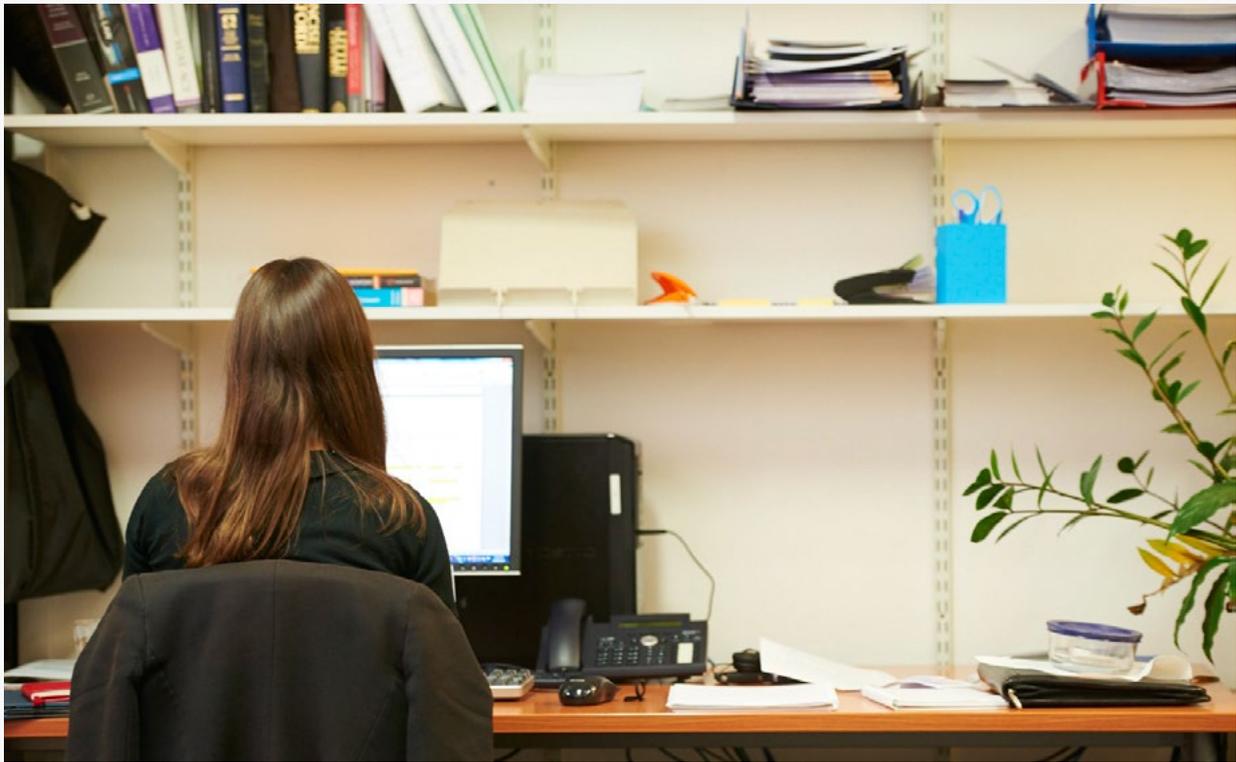
### *ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF DEAN\* SO THAT HE WASN'T UNFAIRLY AFFECTED BY A MENTAL HEALTH EPISODE*

*10 months after being charged with criminal offences, Dean's life has completely changed. "After you helped me, I got a job. With a criminal record, I wouldn't have got it. It's nothing great, but I enjoy it..."*

*When we first saw Dean he was 38, unemployed and on disability pension. He had been charged with minor assaults against two strangers, both on the same day. Dean told us that he'd had a happy childhood, lots of friends and finished high school. He dreamt of becoming an accountant. But he started experiencing signs of psychiatric illness and was unable to function well without medication.*

*In December 2015 he experienced a rapid decline in his health and on the night of the offences he was psychotic. The police found him unfit to be interviewed and he was made an inpatient of a psychiatric ward for almost a month. We knew that Dean likely had a defence: he was mentally impaired at the time. His behaviour was completely out of character.*

*IMCL obtained a psychiatric report to explain his condition and engaged a barrister to appear at court to negotiate with police. The material was accepted and the charges were dropped, without the need for a hearing. The police were satisfied that Dean was receiving the medical help he needed to manage his symptoms. IMCL's help meant that his matters were resolved fairly and efficiently.*



We also have strong relationships with specialist law firms to whom we are able to refer cases for ongoing pro bono assistance in areas of law we cannot assist with ourselves.

### Monitoring and evaluation

As part of our continuous improvement and commitment to evidence-based service delivery, we regularly monitor and evaluate our services to determine whether they are effective and meeting unmet legal need in our community.

### Our law reform and systemic advocacy work

Our client contact and grass-roots community engagement equips IMCL with a nuanced understanding of the legal and overlapping non-legal needs of priority clients in our catchment and of how vulnerable people are treated within the system. This places us in a privileged position to engage in systemic advocacy to reform unfair laws and improve the operation of the legal system. Directly informed by client experiences arising from our advice and casework, **IMCL participated in over 20 working groups to collectively address systemic legal issues affecting vulnerable people in our community** and we participated in **7 law reform activities and made recommendations concerning the following issues in 2015-16:**

- the important role of HJPs at the Royal Women's Hospital as part of oral evidence received before the Royal Commission into Family Violence
- IMCL's current and future strategy to reduce family violence to inform the Royal Commission into Family Violence.
- improving access to justice in Victoria and how to best meet the legal needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our community
- changes to birth certificate registration requirements in Victoria where there is family violence and registration may pose a risk to a mother or a child's safety
- fairer and safer housing as part of the review of the Residential Tenancies Act in Victoria.
- amendments to the Infringements Act to require agencies issuing fines to offer payment by instalments for individuals on a low-income
- how HJP work strengthens gender equality in Victoria.

# WHERE TO NEXT - CHAIRPERSON/CEO REPORT

In 2015-16 IMCL went to many new places. In the coming year we will build on that with new outreaches, partnerships, income sources and a focus on the impact of our work to meet our **three strategic priorities**. We will also launch a video to show people and partner organisations what we can do for them. It will be available on our website.

## **Strategically target Inner Melbourne Community Legal's activities to address priority community needs and maximise our impact**

IMCL's community partnerships are a key way we get out and about to provide legal help to many of Melbourne's most vulnerable people. Key to our success is who we go there with. To build on last year's achievements, in 2016-17 we will also partner and work with Study Melbourne Student Centre, and The Drum Youth Services. Given our success in 2015-16, we know this will enable us to get to more vulnerable people who would never have made the trip to see us at the IMCL office or have gone to a lawyer at all.

Our community legal education in schools and youth based services leads the way to create Youth Advocates Against Family Violence and we believe it will reduce the need for family violence services in the long term. This year we look forward to working with some local schools and the Victorian Government to be part of implementing the Respectful Relationships curriculum.

To reduce barriers to access to justice for vulnerable people at a broader level we drew on our case work to undertake strategic law reform and policy advocacy work. This became a growing part of IMCL's work in 2015-16 and we will continue this in the coming year. Notably, based on our experience in the area of family violence, we will continue to respond to and advocate in relation to the Royal Commission. Also, we will further our work concerning: birth registrations when new mums have experienced family violence; the Victorian Access to Justice Review where we will focus on the needs of vulnerable people in the justice system; and tenancy.

## **Promote Health Justice Partnerships to improve access to justice and community health and wellbeing**

Our health justice partnerships continue to assist people who disclose serious legal problems to front-line health professionals.



In 2016-17 IMCL will launch and evaluate Melbourne Care, our health justice partnership with the Royal Melbourne Hospital. This new and exciting partnership builds on our considerable expertise and experience from IMCL's ongoing partnerships with the Royal Womens and Royal Childrens Hospitals.

## **Strengthen Inner Melbourne Community Legal's organisational capacity to achieve its mission**

Last year, we welcomed three new members to IMCL's Committee of Management. Charlotte Aherne currently works for ANZ, is an experienced employment lawyer and has experience working in the community legal sector. Caroline Evans is Senior Legal Council (Australia) at Avanade with strategic management and corporate governance experience. Joanna Renkin is the pro-bono partner at Lander and Rogers and will bring expertise in a range of our legal practice areas.

Key changes we will make in the coming year include: a new website focusing on communicating with clients and community workers; targeted use of social media; investment in IT infrastructure to support our outreach work; and implementation of new ways to measure and show our impact and effectiveness. Combined with the passionate and innovative work of our team, we will build on IMCL's strengths.

This year we will overhaul our strategic priorities to be sure we meet the needs of vulnerable people and make a real, measureable difference. We will remain dedicated to continuing to assist our community and to **helping you be heard**.

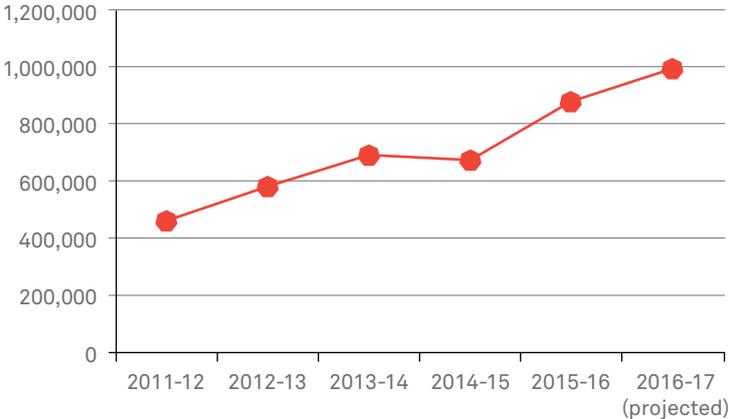
Peter Fridell,  
Chair

Daniel Stubbs,  
CEO

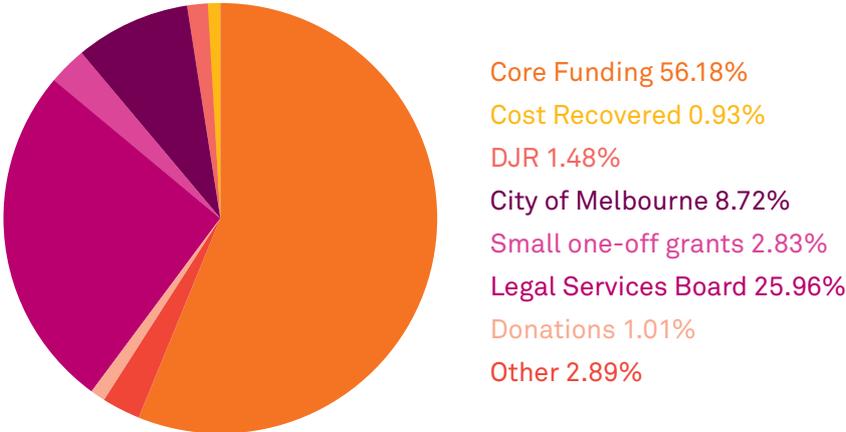
# FINANCIAL REPORT: HOW WE FUELLED THE JUSTICE JOURNEY

Our total income for the year was \$875,565. This shows a 30% growth of income since last year and an average annual growth of 18% over the last five years.

**IMCL's income Journey**



In 2015-16 we received financial support for our work from the State and Federal governments, the Legal Services Board, the Victoria Law Foundation, Herbert Smith Freehills, City of Melbourne and the Department of Justice. We very much appreciate the support that we receive from all these bodies, and we continue to seek out new independent sources of funding to support our innovative and inspiring work.



The majority of IMCL's expenditure is dedicated to staff salaries – over 75 per cent. The remainder is spent on key basics, such as rent (5.5 %), staff training (2%) and information technology and communications (4%).



## Pro Bono Support

During the year the pro bono contributions of our partnering law firms and volunteers were equivalent to IMCL expenditure of around \$439,800.

We have a longstanding relationship with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office which supports our work by placing one of their staff on a year-long secondment in our office. Moray & Agnew generously employ a full-time lawyer who, in 2016-17, will work on our health justice partnership at Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Herbert Smith Freehills provided two full-time secondments to us for three and six months resulting in much needed support for our community and health justice partnerships. Ryan Carlisle Thomas has provided a range of legal assistance for our clients as well as supported the development of our new website.

We also receive significant support from several law firms who provide volunteers for our clinics, accept referrals, give us legal advice and assist us to develop law reform and policy submissions. Much of our work would not be possible without this support. We specifically acknowledge the support of Clayton Utz, Colin Biggers & Paisley, DLA Piper, Herbert Smith Freehills, Lander & Rogers and Ryan Carlisle Thomas.

## Future of our Funding

In 2016-17 IMCL will embark on new and innovative ways to fund our work. We will conduct some different types of crowd sourcing and we will develop an alumni program to reconnect with former volunteers and supporters from our 38 years assisting vulnerable community members.

From mid-2017 we face some challenges in terms of reduced funding from the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department and a need to fully fund our land-mark health justice partnerships work with the three hospitals. We are 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

**Daniel Stubbs**  
CEO



INNER  
MELBOURNE  
COMMUNITY  
LEGAL

2/508 Queensberry St, North Melbourne  
03 9328 1885

[www.imcl.org.au](http://www.imcl.org.au)