

PENINSULA
COMMUNITY
LEGAL CENTRE INC

ANNUAL REPORT 07/08

FUNDING

Peninsula Community Legal Centre Inc.
is funded by the following sources:



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Peninsula Community Legal Centre Inc.
gratefully acknowledges financial support
from the following sources:



Blake Dawson

LONG TERM GOAL

To empower and support disadvantaged community members of the South East and Westernport Region to use the law and legal system to protect and advance their rights and broaden their awareness of their responsibilities.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Peninsula Community Legal Centre (formerly Frankston North Legal Service) has had its primary base in Frankston since it first began in 1977. The legal service began as a volunteer advice and referral service, but has grown over the past 30 years to become one of the major community organisations in the region, providing comprehensive legal services and employing 23 professional staff with a volunteer base of 120.

The centre was initiated by Frankston North residents who, due to a general lack of resources and limited public transport facilities, recognised the need for a local legal resource. The legal centre continues to offer services in Frankston North.

In 1990 the legal centre established an outreach program. At the time the Commonwealth increased funding to the centre which enabled the legal centre to employ a specific outreach solicitor. Local government continues to provide financial assistance.

In 1998, the centre moved to its current Head Office location at Nepean Highway, Frankston. The centre expanded its catchment area to include Glen Eira, which was formerly serviced by Southern Communities Legal Service. In 2005, the Centre's catchment further expanded to include Casey and Cardinia.

Considering the growth of the legal centre and the expansion of the needs of the community and catchment area, the centre has continued to provide quality and responsive services to the community.

ROLE

To provide free legal advice and casework (subject to guidelines) - which may include letters, documents and negotiations, court representation in some cases and referrals to appropriate agencies for non legal issues, community education about legal rights, responsibilities and other issues, law reform/policy activities, whilst maintaining a strong community development focus.

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

The Centre undertakes a range of community legal education activities to provide information and empower the community. These include workshops, seminars, media articles, public stalls and participation in networks to increase awareness of legal rights and responsibilities and help people handle their own legal matters.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development activities are an important part of the centre's efforts to strengthen its community. The centre works closely with other local agencies to assist their growth and development.

VOLUNTEERS

Low cost operation of community legal centres is made possible through significant voluntary contribution and goodwill extended to CLCs. Local lawyers volunteer their time to assist in the provision of legal advice. Community volunteers also assist by interviewing clients prior to seeing a lawyer and providing paralegal and administrative assistance.

OPERATIONS

The centre operates outreach services in community venues throughout its vast catchment. The centre also provides appointment sessions, telephone advice and drop-in sessions at its Frankston, Bentleigh, Cranbourne and Pines offices.

FUNDING

The centre receives funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, Department of Justice (Vic), Consumer Affairs Victoria and Victoria Legal Aid, as well as support from local government - Cities of Frankston, Kingston, Glen Eira, Casey and Mornington Peninsula Shire.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

Peninsula Community Legal Centre is managed by a community based management committee. The centre's major administrative and policy decisions are made by its Management Committee. On a day to day basis, the centre is managed by the Chief Executive Officer.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AND VICTORIA LEGAL AID

Although both organisations have the same fundamental aims, Community Legal Centres do not have a bureaucratic structure like Victoria Legal Aid, but are run by a Committee of Management drawn from the local community. As a result, they are able to respond more easily to local issues and are able to assist clients who may not be eligible for legal aid.

Community Legal Centres have their own guidelines to target the assistance they provide, and may offer extra services such as basic Wills for low income clients. Both organisations offer advice, casework and legal education.

SOUTHERN COMMUNITIES LEGAL SERVICE

In May 1998, Peninsula Community Legal Centre expanded its catchment to include the area formerly serviced by Southern Communities Legal Service (SCLS) when the two centres amalgamated. Due to lack of funding, SCLS was no longer able to adequately maintain a service to its community.

CHILD SUPPORT

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department funds the centre to employ child support solicitors. These workers assist carer and liable parents with child support or maintenance queries. Child support telephone, appointment and drop-in advice services are offered.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROGRAM

The Metro Advocacy Service commenced in July 2005. The service, in a sub-contracting arrangement with the Tenants Union of Victoria, employs a part-time consumer/tenant advocate to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged tenants and consumers with advocacy services, including Tribunal support and representation in the Civil Claims and Residential Tenancies Lists of VCAT.

FAMILY LAW PROGRAM

The Family Law Program commenced in August 2005. It offers a parallel duty lawyer service in conjunction with Victoria Legal Aid at the Dandenong Registry of the Family and Federal Magistrates' Courts, as well as providing clients with advice and casework services and conducting community legal education activities.

OUTER SOUTH EAST EXPANSION

The centre has provided outreach services to Cranbourne since 1990. In 2005 the centre received additional funding from the State Government to establish a branch office in Cranbourne and extend its services to Melbourne's outer south east (Casey and Cardinia municipalities). The centre also offers outreach services to Pakenham.

PHILOSOPHY

Community legal centres are about providing free legal advice to those who need it. CLCs aim to address not just the legal problem of the client but to eliminate the structural and systemic barriers to justice. The culture of volunteerism in CLCs is historical and allows Centres to provide services well beyond their funding. It enhances our social change agenda by bringing lawyers and law students who are generally from privileged backgrounds into contact with our communities.

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VOLUNTEERS

LAWYERS

Andrew Bayliss
Adam Birch
Vincent Booth
Bill Boucher
Paul Bradley
Victoria Campbell
Joel Carroll
Jane Carter
Andrew Closey
Jason Coppard
Meg Dalling
Michael Denison
Drago Dragojlovic
George Erlichster
Chris Gallagher
David Gibbs
James Gorman
Amanda Graham
Avril Grainger
Chris Gunasekera
Heather Guthrie
Lance Guymer
Katrina Haller
Chris Hill
Ian Hone
Sascha Karner
Sara Kowal
Susan Landy
Peter LeSouef
Justin Lewis
Jennifer Maher
Michael Manuel

Vivien Mavropoulos
Paul McCarthy
Rudi Meier
Celestine Moon
Philip Moon
Uyen Nguyen
Elizabeth O'Brien
Michael O'Brien
Helen O'Connell
Lola Peeters
Yana Podolskaya
Hayley Pope
Kathy Raccanello
Penelope Ralston
Mariolina Reale
Tim Rintoul
Mary Roubos
Greg Russo
Trish Samson
Robert Shand
Patrick Smith
Jeffrey Stanley
Andrew Stone
Roderick Tan
Petar Trifkovic
Stephen Tuck
David Ulbrick
Richard Warren
Scott Whitechurch
Christina Widuckel
Lorna Williamson

PARALEGALS

Brylee Alexander
Jack Anstey
Trudy Ararat
James Bankhead
Katie Barnes
John Batho
Nina Bigu
Matthew Bowler
Amy Burton
Rod Callaghan
Pamela Casagrande
Karen Chibert
Tim Conboy
Hannah Cross
Briony Cullin
James Daly
Sandra Dargie
James Davaris
Sally Denham
Andrew Doyle
Matthew Duck
Mathew Giaquinta
Dhanya Gunasekera
Daniel Haworth
Kate Hennessy
Amanda Hickey
William Ho
Vicki Holmes
Claire Hunting

Chuol Char Kong
Michael Labiris
Cara Litterick
Jarrod McPherson
Nidhi Motipalli
Jacinta Moulden
Jenelle Myers
Julie Newdick
Tom O'Gorman
Barbara Osafo-Kwaako
Fulvio Pasquini
Elise Paynter
Olga Pecherski
Heather Perry
Elaine Pierson
David Putt
Carla Purcell
Mimosa Rizzo
Rhonda Sandardos
Jonathan Sise
Anthony Staunton
Laura Stevenson
Nick Sullivan
Amy Weiner
Shaun Whittaker
Brett Woods

ADMINISTRATION

Jasminka Kumbaric

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Victoria Erlichster

*“No one is more cherished
in this world than someone
who lightens the burden of
another. Thank you.”*

(Author unknown)

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 07/08

Chris Gallagher
President

Victoria Campbell
Vice President

Jen Kelly
Treasurer

George Erlichster
Secretary

Elaine Pierson
Public Officer

Jack Damschke
General Committee

Paul Bradley
General Committee

Heather Perry
General Committee

STAFF MEMBERS 07/08

Helen Constan
Chief Executive Officer

PROGRAM MANAGERS

Andrea Florance
*Manager – Volunteer &
Education Programs*

Jackie Galloway
*Deputy CEO & Manager –
Consumer Affairs Program*

Victoria Mullings
Principal Lawyer

Brendan Stackpole
*Managing Lawyer –
Family Law Program*

Sue Vincent
*Manager –
Administration Program*

Gillian Wilks
Manager – Projects & Development

STAFF

Hellen Argiriou
*Assistant Manager -
Administration Program*

Ian Brent
Administrative Worker

Cathie Currie
*Community Worker
Young Renters Program*

Jack Greenwell
Finance Officer

Chris Gunasekera
*Community Lawyer
Family Law Program*

Katrina Haller
*Community Lawyer
Child Support Program*

Vicki Holmes
Administrative Worker

Quinn McCormack
*Community Lawyer
Cranbourne Branch*

Celestine Moon
*Community Lawyer
Child Support Program*

Ros Quick
*Community Lawyer
Family Law Program*

Kristie Quinlan
Administrative Worker

Kate Ross
*Community Lawyer Outreach
(Maternity Leave March 2007
- Feb 2008)*

Valmai Scully
*Administrative Worker
Bentleigh Branch*

Carla Weelen-Young
Administrative Worker

Saskia Weerheim
*Community Worker
Volunteer & Education Programs*

Carla Weelen-Young
Administrative Worker

The following staff worked/left
during this period. We wish
them well.

Georgina Hogan-Keogh
Executive Assistant

Natalie Mikkelsen
Community Lawyer

Kaeleene Owen
Manager – Data & IT Support

John Rouw
Outreach Solicitor

Scott Whitechurch
Locum Community Lawyer

Jenny Finn
Locum Community Lawyer

Chris Larsen
Project Worker

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



CHRIS GALAGHER
President

The Peninsula Community Legal Centre Inc. continues to provide a broad range of legal and consumer services which improve access to justice for the many thousands of people within our catchment area.

"Access to justice" is a neat little phrase which is easy to throw into a Mission Statement or a Press Release or a President's Report...but just pause and think about that for a moment. The work done by this Centre in which so many of us are involved and contribute to and care for actually means that many people who otherwise may not have any realistic opportunity to do so are given a pathway to achieve real fairness and equity in any particular situation which confronts them.

Sure, we are not able to help everyone and the system is not perfect, but every year a significant number of people are better off simply because PCLC exists and was able to assist them. Kind of makes it all worthwhile, doesn't it?

Last year I reported on the 30th Anniversary celebrations and the support and commendations given to the Centre by both our State and Commonwealth Attorneys General. This was further recognised later in the year when the Centre was honoured with the Metropolitan Consumer Advocacy Excellence Award presented by Consumer Affairs Victoria.

There was some irony in this in that one of the low-lights for our year was the difficulty encountered in securing ongoing funding for advocacy services carried out on behalf of Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Nonetheless, in the coming year we plan to further enhance the services provided by the Centre by improving and expanding our legal and consumer affairs programs including, most excitingly, the development of a further branch office operating from Rosebud which will better serve the people of the southern Mornington Peninsula.

Of course, funding for an organisation such as PCLC is always a battle and we sincerely thank not only the Commonwealth and Victorian governments and various local Councils for their financial assistance but also other individuals, companies and service organisations who have donated to the Centre.

The staff of PCLC are, as always, worthy of our praise and thanks for their efforts and dedication to the Centre and what it stands for. They are ably led by the Program Managers, Jackie Galloway, Victoria Mullings, Brendan Stackpole, Andrea Florance and Sue Vincent, all of whom show outstanding devotion and commitment to the Centre.

This last year has seen another notable anniversary, being the 25th anniversary of Helen Constan's work with the Centre. Helen has now passed 26 years and is powering ahead. You might think Helen would be quite justified to sit back and look at what she has achieved with PCLC and be satisfied but, if you do think that, you don't know Helen well enough. Her commitment to develop and improve PCLC and the services it provides to its community is stunning and seemingly never ending. On behalf of the Management Committee of the Centre I offer our sincere thanks to Helen for her drive, determination, experience and skills all of which have made the Centre what it is today.

While mentioning the Management Committee, I would like to thank my fellow Committee members for their valuable contribution to the governance and direction of the Centre. This year we have had an "interchange" on the Committee with long standing and much valued members, Judy Del Rio and Michael Denison taking what we hope is only a short leave of absence. In their place we have been joined by Heather Perry and Paul Bradley.

New members always bring new ideas and fresh perspectives which benefit and revitalise a Committee and Heather and Paul are no exception to this rule. It is a great pleasure to have them with us.

“The work done by this Centre in which so many of us are involved and contribute to and care for actually means that many people who otherwise may not have any realistic opportunity to do so are given a pathway to achieve real fairness and equity in any particular situation which confronts them.”

During the year we have been saddened by the ongoing poor health of our friend and fellow Management Committee member Jack Damschke. We wish Jack all the best for a swift recovery.

Finally, on behalf of the Management Committee and the staff of PCLC I would like to offer our sincere and heart-felt thanks to the very many volunteers who assist the Centre in very many ways. “Andrea’s Army” is yet another reason for the success and strength of PCLC.

It is an incredibly satisfying experience to be involved in an organisation which you feel is actually making a difference. PCLC is one of those organisations.



Victoria Campbell
Vice President



Jen Kelly
Treasurer



George Erlichster
Secretary



Elaine Pierson
Public Officer



Jack Damschke
General Committee



Paul Bradley
General Committee



Heather Perry
General Committee

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

KATH NEILSEN MEMORIAL AWARD

Congratulations to volunteer lawyer, Patrick Smith, on receiving Peninsula Community Legal Centre's highest honour, the Kath Neilsen Memorial Award, in recognition of his outstanding contribution.

Patrick has been volunteering with PCLC from the inception of the Bentleigh Branch Office ten years ago. His genuine commitment to extending the reach of the Centre into the community and providing services to disadvantaged clients is demonstrated by his unfailing reliability and courteous, approachable demeanour.

The Kath Neilsen Memorial Award was created by the Centre in 2002 in honour of the late Kath Neilsen who was a founder and strong supporter of PCLC and a fearless advocate for her community. The 2007 Award was presented to Patrick Smith at the Centre's Annual General Meeting by Ms Neilsen's son, Mr Arthur.

VOLUNTEER ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS

Peninsula Community Legal Centre's 2007 Volunteer Encouragement Awards were presented to paralegal volunteers Jenelle Myers, Pamela Casagrande and Mat Giaquinta. We commend Jenelle, Pam and Mat on their enthusiasm and commitment to the Centre, and thank them for their important contribution.

Thank you to Bentons Square Shopping Centre (Mornington) for providing vouchers for our award-winning volunteers.

COMMENDATION AWARD

Congratulations to Chris Gallagher on winning a Citizen of the Year (Frankston) Commendation Award. The Award was presented by Frankston Mayor, Cr Alistair Wardle, at the City's 2008 Australia Day ceremony.

The Award recognised Chris' exceptional contribution to the local community through his volunteer work at Peninsula Community Legal Centre and support of a number of other community groups and initiatives. For over 20 years, Chris has volunteered his time to provide free legal advice to clients, as well as serving on the Centre's Management Committee, currently in the role of President.

EXCELLENCE AWARD

Peninsula Community Legal Centre was honoured with the Metropolitan Consumer Advocacy Excellence Award at the inaugural Consumer Affairs Awards on 16 November 2007. Presented by Parliamentary Secretary for Justice, Brian Tee, the Award recognised the Centre's work within the community to "champion consumer rights and a fairer marketplace."



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



Helen Constas
Chief Executive Officer

I can proudly say that this was a very successful year for Peninsula Community Legal Centre (PCLC). Aside from the inevitable stresses of funding uncertainty in some programs, it was a year of high performance, with large volumes of clients assisted, a high proportion of ongoing work undertaken for clients, a very active community education program and projects that went from strength to strength.

It was also a year of celebration, with a function held to commemorate the Centre's 30th Anniversary held on 7 September 2007. We were very pleased to secure sponsorship for the event from three of Melbourne's most prestigious firms – Blake Dawson Lawyers, Corrs Chamber Wessgarth Lawyers and Slater & Gordon Lawyers – and we thank them for their support. Given the importance of the work PCLC does and the values it is based on, perhaps it is not surprising that PCLC attracts strong support from a range of people and groups. Some of the Centre's key supporters were presented with Certificates of Appreciation at the Anniversary function, in recognition of their valued support of PCLC.

A highlight, and particularly proud moment of the celebration, was the launch of the Centre's commemorative publication, written by Victoria Erlichster. I congratulate Victoria on her commitment to the Centre and this project, and thank her for the countless hours she spent researching and writing this very enjoyable and worthwhile history of the Centre. We are grateful for the support of the Victoria Law Foundation in providing a small grant to assist with publishing costs. The book was launched by Mark Woods, a Board Member of the Victoria Law Foundation and councillor of the Law Institute of Victoria.

The 2006-2008 Review of Community Legal Centres (CLCs) by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department was completed in March 2008. The Report recognised the close connection that CLCs have with their communities, their responsiveness to emerging client issues and expertise in handling the 'clusters' of legal and related problems faced by clients. A series of recommendations were made for improving client focus and streamlining accountability, and further consultation will be undertaken by the Attorney-General's Department with CLCs.

We enjoyed the opportunity to meet with the Attorney-General, the Hon. Robert McClelland, when he visited PCLC in January 2007 to meet with staff and talk about key issues, as well as my meeting with him in Parliament House in February this year. We shared the pleasure (and relief) of CLCs across Australia when the government announced a one-off injection of \$10m into CLCs.

We understand that changes are afoot regarding funding allocations from the Commonwealth to the States and hope that this will relieve at least some of the financial pressures on Victoria Legal Aid and CLCs.

PCLC held a review of its own in January and February to evaluate the types of work currently undertaken and establish priorities for the next three years. Through a written survey, the Centre consulted with volunteers, staff, local agencies, police, courts and councils to seek input about the services offered by PCLC. All were highly supportive of the work of PCLC, with many useful suggestions that will be implemented in the Centre's 2008-2011 Strategic Plan. A Strategic Planning Day was held for all staff and management committee members in February to further explore community needs and PCLC services.

The VLA Community Consultative Committee did not meet this year, but I continue to serve as the nominee of the Victorian Federation of Community Legal Centres.

Unfortunately, the funding crisis experienced by VLA put into jeopardy PCLC's Family Law Program. Given the high demand for free legal assistance in family law matters, securing future funding became a priority this period, and a huge amount of time was spent seeking the necessary support. The Commonwealth's one-off injection of funds into CLCs will enable the Family Law Program to continue for another 12 months, but it is imperative that this become part of the Centre's core funding.

"Well done to all of the volunteers, the Management Committees, and to all the staff that have been involved over the years. We started off as one of the smallest community legal centres 30 years ago, we are now one of the largest and proudest. Everyone should be very proud, because I certainly am."

(Quote by Helen Constas, 'From Humble Beginnings: A Brief History of Peninsula Community Legal Centre 1977-2007')

In fact, so effective has the Centre's Family Law Program been, we believe it could serve as a model for other CLCs that experience high demand for family law assistance.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous support of Tony Parsons, who finished as Managing Director of VLA this year. Tony never failed to impress with his genuine concern for those experiencing disadvantage and his passion for human rights and access to justice. We thank Tony for his strong support of CLCs generally, and PCLC in particular, and extend our congratulations and best wishes on his appointment as a Magistrate. We welcome Bevan Warner as VLA's new Managing Director, and look forward to working with him in the future.

Another of the Centre's specialist programs in high demand was its Intervention Order Support Program, which assists clients of the Frankston Magistrates' Court Family Violence Service. The program provides parallel duty lawyer services each sitting day, and has been very well utilised, assisting more than 500 clients this year alone. We hope that a similar program will be established at the Moorabbin Magistrates' Court, which is also based in PCLC's catchment area.

PCLC relies on the financial support of all levels of government. Primary funding is through the Commonwealth-State Legal Services Program, administered by Victoria Legal Aid. Local governments also have an important role in supporting and enhancing the work of CLCs on a local level.

Following written submissions and oral evidence at a Frankston Council Meeting, Frankston City Council resolved in August 2007 to provide increased financial support and enter into a three year funding agreement with PCLC. This will enable the Centre to extend its community legal education and community development activities in the City of Frankston, as well as continuing to provide comprehensive free legal services. We welcome Dr Gillian Kaye to the role of General Manager, Communities, at Frankston Council, and look forward to working with her and her team. We are also grateful for the financial support of Mornington Peninsula Shire which, in addition to supporting our outreach and education programs, provided a grant for a Governance Workshop project to support local non-profit groups. For the third consecutive year, the City of Kingston provided a grant for PCLC to offer workshops during its Youth Festival, as well as making a financial contribution to the Centre. We also thank the Cities of Casey and Glen Eira for their financial support.

We made a special effort to meet with law firms to seek pro bono support. Whilst we have not entered into any formal arrangements, we have been able to secure a substantial level of pro bono assistance on an ad hoc basis, and hope to extend this over the coming year.

PCLC has continued to excel in the design and delivery of special projects. Three such projects were officially launched by then Minister for Consumer Affairs, the Hon. Daniel Andrews, on 13 July 2007.

At the launch, the Minister announced that the Department would provide funding over the next three years to enable PCLC to continue and extend the Young Renters Program, Civil Claims Workshops and Tenant (VCAT) Workshops, building on successful pilot projects. A short-term Virtual Tenancy Tour Project also received funding. The provision of three year funding was an important development, as it enables the Centre to focus on 'doing the job', rather than entering into the time consuming (and stressful) process of seeking funding every year.

For the past three years, PCLC has sub-contracted with the Tenants Union of Victoria for the provision of advocacy services to vulnerable and disadvantaged tenants and consumers in the south-eastern metropolitan regions. With the conclusion of that Contract, PCLC is negotiating directly with CAV for the provision of advocacy services in its catchment area in 2008-2011. An 'in principle' agreement was reached for the provision of advocacy services from 1 July 2008, but it has been necessary to enter into an interim agreement, pending finalisation of negotiations.

The National 'Valuing Volunteers' Project has been completed, with the adaption of the original kit (funded by the Victoria Law Foundation and undertaken in partnership with Chisholm Institute) for each Australian State and Territory.

As Gillian, Cath and I delivered training to CLCs across the country, we were astounded at the conditions and lack of resources experienced in some centres – and very pleased that we could offer this resource to help centres train volunteers. We thank the Federal Attorney-General's Department for providing funding for this project, and hope for their continued support to further develop this resource.

We were also able to resource other CLCs through a workshop presented by PCLC and Finrea at the National Conference of CLCs in September 2007. The workshop focused on effective data reporting, communication and relationship-building strategies to enhance relationships with local governments and seek their support.

I was also a presenter at the 7th International Legal Services Research Conference in June 2008 where I delivered the Centre's paper: 'Access to Justice for \$2 a Head: A Multifaceted Approach to Providing Free Legal Services in Australia'. I received very positive feedback about the Centre's model of service delivery as an effective way of extending the reach of justice in the community. These accolades were very welcome – but we are always looking for ways to do more!

Whilst on leave in September 2007, I was inspired by my visit to the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, USA, which had recently celebrated its 150th Anniversary. The Society operates as more than a poverty law practice, providing holistic legal and community services to those experiencing disadvantage and working towards systemic change.

One woman I met told me how the Centre had changed her life – from being a client who needed help with family violence, housing and a range of issues, to becoming a qualified lawyer working at the Centre and helping others. There were many more heart-warming examples of the good work coming out of the Society's historic three storey building, and I felt both humbled and inspired by the experience. Staff of the Legal Aid Society were interested in learning more about our paralegal volunteer program and exploring a "lawyer exchange" program with PCLC in the future.

I acknowledge the Management Committee's insight and commitment to sound forward-planning, evidenced (among other things) this year by a restructure of employment terms and conditions that will benefit all staff. The Centre enjoyed another year of staff stability, with relatively few changes. Natalie Mikkelsen, Solicitor, left the Centre to embrace motherhood and we congratulate her on the safe arrival of her son, Tex. We also said goodbye and thank you to two long-term employees, Kaeleene Owen, Manager of Data & IT Support and former Administration Program Worker, and Georgina Hogan-Keogh, Executive Assistant. Thank you to Carla Weelen-Young, Administration Worker, for agreeing to take on the role of Executive Assistant in the interim. At the time of writing, we have employed Lesley Occhipinti to commence in September 2008 as Assistant to the CEO.

Lesley brings with her a wealth of experience in like roles, and we look forward to working with her. It was also my pleasure to welcome Chris Gunasekera (Community Lawyer) and Beth Weerheim (Administration Worker) to the team during the year. Thank you to all staff members and program managers for your efforts throughout the year.

One staff achievement, of which I am very proud, was Jackie Galloway's 10th Anniversary with PCLC in February 2008. Jackie first became involved with the Centre as a student on placement, researching the effectiveness of Intervention Orders for people experiencing family violence. Recognising her talent and commitment to the values of our Centre, Jackie was employed as a Tenant / Consumer Support Worker, later becoming the Manager of PCLC's Consumer Affairs Program. Today, Jackie fulfils the roles of Deputy CEO and Tenant and Consumer Advocate. Congratulations Jackie on your hard work and achievements!

PCLC has a strong Management Committee (MC), comprised of a group of dedicated and long-serving volunteers of the Centre. Many MC members also volunteer as lawyers and paralegals, and I congratulate them on their unwavering commitment. We were concerned by the ill health of MC member, Jack Damschke during the year, and are pleased to hear that he is recovering well. We were sorry to say goodbye (for now) to outgoing MC members, Michael Denison and Judy del Rio. My personal and professional thanks to them both for their guidance and support over many years. A warm welcome to new MC members, Paul Bradley and Heather Perry.

Special thanks to Chris Galagher, who has again undertaken the demanding but important role of President – and congratulations on winning a Commendation Award for Citizen of the Year, Frankston! Very well deserved!

Thank you to all of the Centre's volunteers for sharing their time and expertise so generously. We, and our clients, are very grateful for your support.

Thank you also to the volunteers, staff, MC members and CLC comrades who helped celebrate my 25th Anniversary with the Centre on 1 August 2007. It is a privilege to work with people who share my commitment to helping the most marginalised in our community access justice. Having grown up in the Pines, and retained my local connections, I feel honoured to serve my community - and I'm proud of what we do!

PRINCIPAL LAWYER'S REPORT



Victoria Mullings
Principal Lawyer

This last year has been, as always, a busy and interesting one with 8138 client activities throughout 2007/08. There has been a particular focus on broadening our involvement in family violence matters both at the local court and through input into the new Family Violence Protection Act which should come into force later this year.

Changes to this act currently before the parliament should have some impact on immediate safety of applicants, as well as refining the interaction between Intervention Orders, child protection orders, and orders made under the Family Law Act.

Definitions of abuse will be broadened to include psychological, emotional and economic abuse, some carers will be covered as a 'family member', and there will be a prohibition on cross-examination by respondents in person. PCLC looks forward to the introduction of these changes, as with any initiatives which will improve the lot of our clients.

On the staffing front, 2007 saw the conclusion of a minor baby boom at PCLC, with our Outreach Lawyer Kate Lovett (now Kate Ross), and Intervention Order Service Lawyer Natalie Mikkelsen both giving birth to boys, in addition to two other PCLC bubs over the last two years.

Natalie left in September and is sorely missed, but Kate has returned to the fold and to her previous position. Thanks to John Rouw, Scott Whitechurch, and Jenny Finn, who filled in as locums, and welcome to Chris Gunasekera, a long-time PCLC volunteer and family law solicitor who commenced in August 2007 and works in both the general casework and family law programs.

Victoria Mullings continues as Principal Lawyer, and Quinn McCormack as lawyer at our Cranbourne office, and we are looking forward later in 2008 to the opening of an office at Rosebud, replacing our existing outreach there, and providing desperately needed additional services to clients on the peninsula.

IO SUPPORT SERVICE

We continue to provide a duty lawyer service on three days per week at Frankston Magistrates' Court, assisting both applicants and defendants. Many matters settle by negotiation, and we will appear in consent matters and draft undertakings where appropriate, as well as doing adjournments, ensuring extension of interims, and making applications for aid in contested matters.

This year has also seen the opening of a new Magistrates Court in Moorabbin, which services much of Peninsula Community Legal Centre's catchment area. We welcome this initiative and have been liaising regularly with the court with a view to the provision of services there in the near future.

A rewarding aspect of working with the courts is the integration between services involved, with smooth referrals between court staff, the Applicant Worker, DV outreaches, and duty lawyers from both PCLC and VLA. A recent conference held in Canberra brought together various court and allied workers from all over Australia and from overseas to look at ideas for further improvement on this front.

Although the focus of our service is on family violence, there is a small proportion of matters under the stalking legislation and an application brought under the legislation against Mr P, an intellectually disabled resident at a care facility gives a good example of this lateral thinking. The family of another resident sought an order to protect their co-resident daughter, but we believed it to be unsuitable given our client's inability to understand either the terms or the consequences of an order. A barrister's help was sought and preparations commenced to have psychiatric reports done. Ultimately though, Mr P's capacity was never tested as all parties including the applicant's parents co-operated to look at more practical solutions. Some re-arranging of accommodation and a more detailed care plan resulted in an outcome that suited all parties.

Of particular concern and seemingly more frequent are the cases where harassment has continued for many, many years after separation. We encounter clients who are still afraid after 10 or 15 years, often because of the very serious and sadistic nature of the violence during the relationship. It is often difficult to relay this fear to the court when recent contact is simply driving by or telephone hang-ups, but the defendant is always well aware of the effect of this behaviour on the applicant. Many applicants are unaware of changes to police procedures over time and expect to be ignored as has occurred in the past, but this is a scenario which may fall more easily under the psychological abuse provisions of the new act.

CLIENT MATTERS

Advice is provided through four offices at present, and is supplemented by telephone advice (particularly helpful for some elderly or disabled clients) and appointments at our outreach venues. Sessions are held every day of the week, and every evening except Friday at one or another of our locations, many of them staffed by volunteers, who last year saw over 1300 clients, a remarkable achievement.

Excellent links with community organizations who provide office space and some support by way of reception, telephones and photocopying are invaluable in enabling us to offer such a broad range of services and we thank them once again for the help provided.

In January 2008 our Rosebud outreach, which is by far our busiest, was increased to weekly, in preparation for the opening of a new branch office in late 2008. A previous initiative which led to the Cranbourne office replacing an outreach at that location has been spectacularly successful, and we expect to see the expansion at Rosebud similarly provide better accessibility and an increase in services to meet the needs of residents on the southern peninsula.

Work done this year has included a variety of criminal matters, with many of the defendants represented by counsel. Drug offences, theft, assault and transport infringements feature heavily, and many of our clients suffer from a mental illness. Appropriate representation is essential in ensuring that the court is fully appraised of their circumstances.

Mr K had issues with severe agoraphobia and had already failed to appear on one court date, where he faced a variety of charges following a confrontation with Transport Officers. Representation was arranged, and ultimately 5 of the charges were withdrawn, the result being an undertaking to be of good behaviour.

In terms of initial advice given, family law matters still predominate. We give a great deal of practical advice on settling property issues, hopefully providing clients with the skills and knowledge to negotiate an outcome and save the trauma and expense of court action. PCLC is keen to see de-facto property dealt with under the umbrella of family law (as proposed by the new Federal Government) which would help to avoid some potentially unfair outcomes. Victoria has already taken the first step by referring the relevant powers to the Commonwealth.

Child-related matters that require more than initial advice are generally referred on to our family law program for further assistance, and this cross-referral option has proved to be one of our most beneficial initiatives. Clients can be provided with help on all aspects of family-related problems, including family violence, childrens and property matters, child support and even tenancy, through our VCAT advocacy service. Another great example of integration, and certainly the way of the future.

As always, thanks must go to the administration team for their cheerful and tireless support, and to the other staff, Committee of Management and our Chief Executive Officer who are always a pleasure to work with.



Quinn McCormack
*Community Lawyer
Cranbourne Branch*



Kate Ross
*Community Lawyer
Outreach*

FAMILY LAW PROGRAM



Brendan Stackpole
Managing Lawyer –
Family Law Program

The Family Law Program continued to provide alternate duty lawyer services at the Federal Magistrates' Court at Dandenong, casework services at the Frankston, Cranbourne and Bentleigh offices, and community legal education initiatives. These services were provided pursuant to a service agreement with Victoria Legal Aid, which commenced in 2005 and concluded on 30 June 2008.

Due to Victoria Legal Aid funding shortages, one off funding has now been secured for a further 12 month period directly from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. This funding will ensure the continued operation of the Family law Program for the next year. We express our gratitude to the Commonwealth Attorney General for this funding, but also more generally for his ongoing support of Community Legal Centres.

Our presence at the Court has markedly enhanced the delivery of duty lawyer services by ensuring both parties have representation. The duty service has enabled court users to receive advice, assistance with documentation, and where resources have allowed, representation where they would otherwise be self represented.

Clients also directly benefit from the Program's daily attendance at court (and the bi-annual court user's meetings) because current trends are observed 'at the coal face', and clients are advised accordingly. Additionally, the professional development of PCLC solicitors is enhanced. Ultimately, the profile of PCLC is improved with the Court and the legal community generally and that is important for the ongoing funding of PCLC legal services.

The Centre wishes to thank Family Law Program lawyers Roslyn Quick and Chris Gunsekera for their tremendous efforts in maintaining the excellent reputation of our duty lawyer service in often testing circumstances.

As the VLA service agreement has now expired, it is also timely to convey our gratitude to VLA for having the initiative and foresight to partner with our Centre in the provision of FLP services. The willingness of both organizations to come together in the manner required by this agreement has again demonstrated that both share a commitment to the improvement of access to justice and a common social justice vision.

ONGOING REFORM OF THE FAMILY LAW SYSTEM

On 1 July 2007, Family Dispute Resolution became mandatory save in limited circumstances defined under the *Family Law Act 1975*. This development has been monitored with keen interest by the Program, especially considering some concerning reports from clients about the screening of domestic violence by some Family Dispute Resolution providers and the potential of the reforms to expose parents to domestic violence or control.

The child support system has also seen major reform over the last year and our dedicated Child Support Lawyers, Katrina Haller and Celestine Moon have had an exceptionally busy year dealing with that.

In general, the combined effect of the child support reforms (rolled out over three phases) and the shared parenting legislation introduced in July 2006, has been to financially disadvantage clients who have the daily care of children, and to encourage contact applications motivated significantly by a desire to reduce the amount of child support payable to the carer parent.

Additionally, carer parents regularly complain that whilst the other parent might successfully obtain orders to spend increased time with the children, they often exercise no more financial responsibility for the children than they did before the previous arrangements. The result is twofold; the primary carer receives less child support, and that parent continues to shoulder the 'hidden' costs of raising children which the child support system does not capture.

Victoria Mullings, Principal Lawyer, and Brendan Stackpole, Managing Lawyer, FLP met with the Australian Institute of Family Studies in June 2008 and provided input regarding the effect of these reforms, with contributions from our child support lawyers Katrina Haller and Celestine Moon.

THE FUTURE

The FLP duty solicitor service has greatly valued the relationships it has developed with both the Court and Victoria Legal Aid over the last three years, and it looks forward to developing those relationships despite the changed funding arrangements.

This Centre will continue to operate a dedicated Family Law Program for the next financial year with a very similar structure to that which existed under the VLA agreement.

Thanks must go to our dedicated team of lawyers in both the Family Law and Child Support Programs, and to our ever patient support staff for their diligent assistance. The program also thanks the Chief Executive Officer for her leadership and foresight.



Ros Quick
*Community Lawyer
Family Law Program*



Chris Gunasekera
*Community Lawyer
Family Law Program*



Katrina Haller
*Community Lawyer
Child Support Program*



Celestine Moon
*Community Lawyer
Child Support Program*





VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



Andrea Florance
Manager – Volunteer and
Education Programs

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Volunteers are one of the great strengths of Peninsula Community Legal Centre – and the 1,410 clients who were assisted by volunteers this year would surely agree! When a client contacts the Centre anxious and upset about their legal issue, with a sense of urgency and crisis, it is wonderful to be able to offer them free advice that same day. Thanks to our volunteers, we can usually do that.

PCLC volunteers enable the Centre to offer up to 9 additional free legal advice sessions each week, including after hours advice in six locations – Bentleigh, Cranbourne, Frankston, Hastings, Pines and Rosebud. Not only do volunteers strengthen the capacity of the Centre to provide fast, accessible advice to clients, volunteers are also involved in governing the organisation (through the Management Committee), providing administrative support and assisting with special projects.

Paralegal and student placement positions have continued to be in high demand throughout the year. We met with a number of tertiary institutions to seek their support of our Volunteer Program. All acknowledged the value of our program in giving students practical experience and broadening their legal education, and we hope that they will be in a position to offer PCLC tangible support in the future. Having regard to the often long waiting lists of students eager to volunteer, we will review our Volunteer Program over the coming year to consider ways of expanding the program.

Saskia Weerheim has continued to thrive in the role of Volunteer & Education Worker and I extend my warmest thanks to her for all that she has done to assist our volunteers and Volunteer Program.

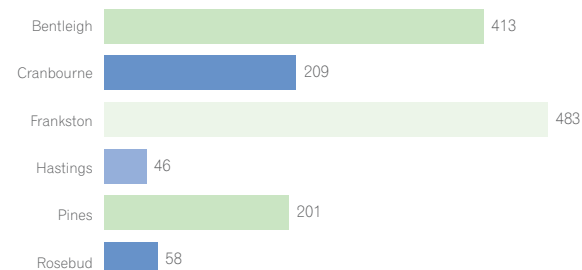
It is with regret that we observe the strong need in our community for free legal help, but it is with pride that we respond to that need with a strong and compassionate team of volunteers who share our commitment to supporting and empowering our clients.

So, a mighty thanks to all of our volunteers for your service to our Centre, our clients and our community. A big thank you also goes to Helen Constatas, who is a strong supporter of our volunteers, for her invaluable guidance and encouragement, and to Program Managers and the Administration Team, who have assisted the Volunteer Program throughout the year.

“Volunteerism... is a fundamental source of community strength, resilience, solidarity and social cohesion. It can help effect positive social change by fostering inclusive societies that respect diversity, equality and the participation of all. Such contributions are vital to the three pillars of the United Nations’ work – promoting peace and security, advancing development, and protecting human rights and human dignity.”

UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon on International Volunteer Day, 5 December 2007

CLIENTS ASSISTED BY VOLUNTEERS 2007-2008



COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Peninsula Community Legal Centre is committed to empowering and strengthening the community through community legal education (CLE) and community development (CD) activities.

Throughout the year, PCLC was an active member of the following groups:

- » Benton's Square Community Centre Management Committee
- » Casey Healthy Families Taskforce
- » Community Car Connection (Frankston New Arrival Driving Program)
- » Frankston and Mornington Peninsula Family Violence Network
- » Frankston Family Relationship Centre Reference Group
- » Frankston North Community Renewal Steering Committee
- » Frankston Police and Community Youth Assist Program Steering Committee
- » Mahogany Neighbourhood Centre Management Committee
- » Middle South Welfare Network (Kingston & Glen Eira)
- » Mornington Peninsula Joint Service Providers Network
- » SECASA Advisory Committee (East Bentleigh)

Through talks, workshops and public information stalls, PCLC provided information on a range of legal topics to thousands of community members. Topics of particular interest included: Wills and Powers of Attorney, Family Violence and Intervention Orders, Family Law and Child Support Issues, Neighbour Disputes and Young People and Law.

PCLC again participated in Law Week, embracing the 2008 theme of "reaching out", with a focus on people with special needs and those who may face difficulty accessing the justice system, such as rural Victorians, seniors, youth, indigenous Australians and multicultural communities. During Law Week, public information stalls were held in Cranbourne, Rosebud and Frankston.

The Centre also assisted local groups with governance and accountability issues. This is

a recurring theme among many community organisations, in response to which the Centre has made a successful application to the Mornington Peninsula Shire for a grant to develop and deliver three 'Governance Workshops' in the later part of 2008. Workshops will be offered to non-profit groups in Mornington, Hastings and Rosebud.

Thank you to all of the staff and volunteers who undertook CLE activities, and to my fellow CLE Subcommittee members (Helen, Victoria and Saskia) for their expertise, guidance and support. After 25 years of initiating, developing and conducting CLE activities, Helen has retained her enthusiasm and unwavering commitment to CLE, and continues to inspire us. I congratulate Helen on achieving 25 years of service to the Centre, and stand in awe of all that she has accomplished.



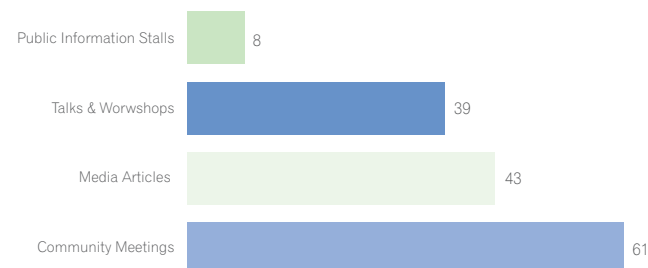
Saskia Weerheim
Community Worker –
Volunteer and Education
Programs

"Provided me with information that I found helpful and of interest."
(CLE Survey Response)

"Provided a wide variety of information on all different issues facing the community."
(CLE Survey Response)

"Clear, professional and informative."
(CLE Survey Response)

CLE MAIN ACTIVITIES 2007 – 2008
INCLUDING FAMILY LAW AND CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAMS



LAW REFORM & POLICY

FAMILY LAW REFORMS

PCLC provided feedback to the Australian Institute of Family Studies to assist their evaluation of the family law reform package. The Institute is undertaking an evaluation on behalf of the Australian Government to assess how the new system is working and how it is affecting families.

FAMILY VIOLENCE LAWS

PCLC participated in the Victorian Law Reform Commission's (now completed) Review of Family Violence Laws. In 2007-2008, the Centre provided feedback on draft legislation through its participation in the Violence Against Women and Children Working Group and the Victorian Family Violence Law Reform Campaign (a group comprising the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic), Women's Legal Service and other CLCs, Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre, Victorian Council of Social Services and other key stakeholders).

The Family Violence Protection Bill 2008 broadens the definition of violence as well as recognising diverse family relationships and providing greater flexibility for tenants affected by family violence to alter and exit residential tenancies. PCLC hopes that the new legislation will result in better processes and outcomes for those affected by family violence, and commends the Victorian Government and Attorney General on the spirit and substantive provisions of the legislation, as well as the extensive consultation process.

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION ISSUES

PCLC also participated in a Stakeholders Consultation to provide feedback on Consumer Affairs Victoria's 'Residential Accommodation Issues Paper' in September 2007.

WORKING GROUPS

Peninsula Community Legal Centre is an active member of the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic) and regularly participates in its Working Groups. These groups use the collective expertise of members to address and develop strategic responses to sector, policy, law reform, justice and legal system issues.

In 2007-2008, PCLC participated in the following:

- » Access to Interpreters Working Group
- » Child Support Working Group
- » Community Legal Education Workers Working Group
- » Consumer Affairs Working Together Forum (representing the Federation)
- » Management Committee of the Federation of Community Legal Centres
- » Sector Development Working Group
- » Victoria Legal Aid Community Consultative Committee (nominee of the Federation)
- » Violence Against Women and Children Working Group.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROGRAM

“Every woman, man, youth and child has the human right to gain and sustain a secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity”¹.

Access to affordable and appropriate housing was the key issue for clients accessing the Centre’s Consumer Affairs Program this past year. The program, through its Metro Advocacy Service, provided advocacy services including Tribunal support and representation to vulnerable consumers and tenants across the Melbourne Metropolitan area.

Housing affordability is a significant national issue, locally tenants have been presenting with issues such as substantial rent rises, difficulty in accessing affordable housing along with an increase in tenants seeking assistance after being served with no reason notices to vacate or no fault notices such as landlord selling or landlord conducting renovations. Increasingly the program saw tenants on low incomes particularly those on government benefits paying far in excess of 30 – 40% of their income on rent. This crisis has also contributed to tenants’ increasing reluctance to exercise their rights, such as requesting repairs, for fear of an eviction notice or blacklisting on the national database.

In its final year of the sub-contracting arrangement with the Tenants Union of Victoria the service assisted a total of 424 clients – 355 tenants and 69 consumers. A total of 349 cases were conducted including 120 Tribunal appearances and 75 clients were assisted with advice and/or assistance with forms etc. Tribunal appearances were conducted in the Civil Claims List and the Residential Tenancies List in Dandenong, Dromana, Frankston, Melbourne, Moorabbin and Ringwood.

The service all too often assisted clients with complex and pressing matters, requiring a co-ordinated and responsive model of service delivery. Increasingly clients, particularly tenants, consulted the service for assistance with pending hearing dates with little information provided by the other party, despite the legislative requirements and the principles of natural justice. The Y family contacted the service, extremely distressed after receiving notification of a compensation claim against them for in excess of \$20K with no detail as to the basis of the claim. The service initially obtained orders for the provision of particulars and then successfully defended the claim with orders made for less than \$1.5K.

Consumers presented to the service with a range of issues including education services, household goods, building, contracts, motor vehicle purchase and repair, services, computer disputes and funeral services. We assisted with advice, drafting of letters and documents and representation in the Civil Claims List of the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

This is often a challenge for the service as representation is not an automatic right under the current legislation for matters under \$10,000.

There were many positive outcomes for consumers during the year with orders obtained for refunds of monies, works to be done and cancellation of contracts. One example is Mr X who consulted our service in relation to the purchase of an education service on finance. After substantial negotiation and a number of lengthy hearings the matter finally resolved with a cancellation of the contract and finance and (it is our understanding) the withdrawal of what was a problematic product from the marketplace.

The service also addressed the broader casework practice issues with ongoing discussion with Consumer Affairs Victoria and participation in VCAT’s Civil Claims List and the Residential Tenancies List Users Groups.

Special thanks to Catherine Currie and Saskia Weerheim for their work and valuable assistance with the program during the year.

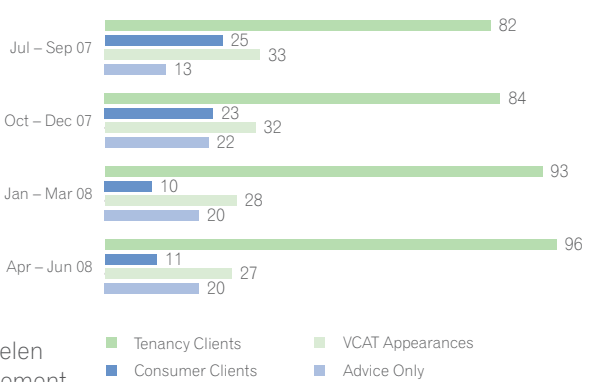
The Consumer Affairs Program would like to extend sincere thanks to Helen Conostas, Chief Executive Officer, Management Committee, Program Managers and the staff of the legal centre for their ongoing support and assistance.

We look forward to being an integral part of the PCLC family delivering quality and responsive services to the community.



Jackie Galloway
Manager Consumer
Affairs Program and
Deputy CEO.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROGRAM STATISTICS 2007-2008



¹ United Nations Special Rapporteur, Miloon Kothari on Adequate Housing 2006

PROJECTS



Gillian Wilks
*Manager – Projects and
Development*

YOUNG RENTERS PROGRAM

The Young Renters Program, which has successfully operated in the Cities of Frankston & Casey since 2005, expanded into the Mornington Peninsula during 2007/08. This expansion was well received by local service providers who are seeing increasing numbers of young people facing homelessness due to lack of knowledge about the rental market and the absence of affordable rental accommodation on the Peninsula.

Thirty three Young Renters Workshops were held during the year. One hundred and seventy six people participated in the workshops. The workshops aim to assist young people to be better informed about their rights and responsibilities as tenants, and to enhance their skills and confidence in securing and maintaining first-time rental accommodation.

The Program works closely with local youth and housing agencies, local government departments, real estate agents and tertiary institutions. These agencies actively support the Program by participating in local Reference Groups, promoting the Program, referring young people to workshops and assisting them to attend, and by supporting young people who have completed the workshop when they decide to seek private rental accommodation.

In 2008/09 PCLC will further extend its work in providing young people with the knowledge and skills to better negotiate their way through the complexities of the rental market, by offering workshops in the City of Greater Dandenong and working with the Sudanese community.

Congratulations to Catherine Currie for her continuing committed, high quality and enthusiastic work on this Program. PCLC wishes to thank those young people and workers/agencies who support the Program, especially those who participate in the Program Reference Groups.

CONSUMER & TENANT WORKSHOPS PROJECT

In 2007-2008, thirty workshops about self-representation in the Civil Claims List and the Residential Tenancies List at the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal were delivered to the general community at Consumer Affairs Victoria premises in Melbourne and in suburban locations, members of the Chinese community, workers from the community and welfare sector and Consumer Affairs Victoria staff.

Two hundred and eighty six people attended the workshops during the year. The participants came from across the metropolitan area and a number of rural locations. Feedback regarding the workshops has been very positive.

The workshops have been promoted on the Consumer Affairs Victoria and Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal websites, by Consumer Affairs Victoria telephone advice staff, through the distribution of pamphlets to a wide range of organisations and in the print media.

PCLC has continued to distribute the Civil Claims Workbook, both in conjunction with workshop bookings and as a stand-alone resource. The Workbook has also been available for download from the Consumer Affairs Victoria website.

A review of the Workbook has been conducted to assess if improvements could be made, both in terms of simplifying (putting in "plain English") and updating the content.

Jackie Galloway and Gillian Wilks worked on this Project during 2007-08. Given her main roles as an advocate for vulnerable and disadvantaged people who are dealing with tenancy and consumer disputes, Jackie's currency, breadth and depth of knowledge is an important asset to the Project.

Thank you to Consumer Affairs Victoria for funding the Project. PCLC wishes to acknowledge the direct support that has been provided to the Project by Consumer Affairs Victoria staff, including assistance with workshop promotion and organisation, and interpreting for the Chinese community workshops.

VIRTUAL TENANCY TOUR FEASIBILITY PROJECT

The Virtual Tenancy Tour Feasibility Project was also funded by Consumer Affairs Victoria. The objective of this small Project was to explore the feasibility of using interactive technology to inform residential tenants of their rights and responsibilities at the commencement of a tenancy, with a focus on the importance of properly completing the condition report. The Project resulted in the completion of a feasibility report and the preparation of a draft training module that could be used by educators alone or in conjunction with a 'virtual' product.

Chris Larsen was employed to work on the Project on a part-time basis from late 2007 until mid March 2008. A Reference Group met to provide feedback and some direction to the Project. PCLC would like to thank all of these people for their assistance.

VICTORIAN VALUING VOLUNTEERS PROJECT – STAGE 2

The Victorian Valuing Volunteer Project – Stage 2 was funded by the Victoria Law Foundation. Through this Project the Valuing Volunteers Training Kit: A Training Resource for Volunteers at Community Legal Centres, which was originally published in June 2005, was updated, restructured and new material added. This included a new module – Screening and Selection of Volunteers, and a new section regarding pro bono legal services.

Copies of the updated version of the Kit have been distributed to all Victorian community legal centres, to the Federation of Community Legal Centres and to Victoria Legal Aid. An electronic version has been supplied to the Federation for inclusion on its website. A workshop about the content and application of the Kit was delivered to Victorian CLC representatives in March.

This Project also explored, through research and a focus group, the potential to deliver the Kit using alternate (electronic) technologies. Although some possibilities were identified, it was assessed that pursuing these was beyond the scope and expertise of the Project at this stage.

Gillian Wilks was employed as the Project Worker for this Project. Saskia Weerheim helped with the exploration of use of alternate technologies aspect of the Project. Rachel Brown, from the Public Interest Law Clearing House, assisted with the development of the pro bono section. Wendy Pedersen undertook the desktop publishing and Chisholm Institute assisted with printing the Kit. Thank you to all of these people/organisations and especially to the Victoria Law Foundation for its continued support for Valuing Volunteers Project.

VALUING VOLUNTEERS KIT – NATIONAL PROJECT

The Valuing Volunteers Kit – National Project was funded by the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department. Through the National Project the Victorian Valuing Volunteers Training Kit: A Resource for Training Volunteers of Community Legal Centres was adapted for community legal centres in each Australian State and Territory other than Victoria. The relevant versions of the Kit were provided to centres in each State and Territory. Workshops about the content and application of the Kit and which explored training skills and volunteer issues were conducted around Australia between mid February and early June.

Gillian Wilks was the Project Worker for the National Project. As she noted in the report to the Attorney-General's Department –

"The success of the Valuing Volunteers Kit – National Project relied heavily on the goodwill, support and contributions of the NACLC, State/Territory representatives and State and Territory CLC Associations. Individuals from within and external to CLCs assisted in adapting the Kit/Module content for each State or Territory...The contribution made by PCLC staff must also be recognised... Helen Constas and Catherine Currie assisted in running workshops in the States and Territories. Wendy Pedersen undertook the formatting, desktop publishing and preparation of the Kits for printing. Helen Constas and Andrea Florance acted as a sounding board, providing important support and direction to the Project.

All other PCLC staff helped in some way – assisting with mailouts, organising travel, being patient while the photocopier was being monopolised, checking content, providing suggestions and administrative support."

Chisholm Institute continued its support for the Valuing Volunteers Project by assisting with the printing of the State and Territory versions of the Kit.



Catherine Currie
*Community Worker
Young Renters Program*

Both the Victorian and National projects, kits and workshops have been very well received and supported by the community legal centre sector. There has been a great deal of appreciation expressed to PCLC for developing the concept, providing the resource and delivering the training. Thanks and appreciation have also been directed to the Victoria Law Foundation and the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department for funding and supporting the Projects and, by doing so, resourcing and supporting community legal centres in Victoria and across the country. There have been a number of suggestions for further development of the Kit.

The completion and success of all of the projects outlined above has definitely been as the result of a team effort. Many thanks to all involved. Project staff especially wish to acknowledge the PCLC administration team whose work underpins everything else that happens in the organisation, and the Management Committee members and Helen Constan for the support, energy and leadership that they provide to the Centre and its staff.



CEO'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Congratulations to Helen Constas, who celebrated 25 years with Peninsula Community Legal Centre on 1 August 2007. Management, staff and volunteers of the Centre attended a surprise dinner (well, sort of – try putting anything past Helen!) at the Rocks, Mornington to celebrate the occasion.

Helen first approached the Centre (then Frankston North Legal Service) as a university student in need of legal advice following a car accident. She became a volunteer, then commenced her employment in the role of Community Legal Education Worker, writing media articles and running self-help workshops (like the popular 'Do-it-Yourself' Divorce classes). Helen later became Co-ordinator of the Centre, and today serves as its Chief Executive Officer.

President, Chris Gallagher, said, "It's hard to imagine Peninsula Community Legal Centre without Helen Constas – her energy, commitment and passion for social justice have helped make the Centre what it is today." Hear hear!

In 2003, Helen received a Centenary Medal in recognition of her career dedicated to a community legal centre.

(Tribute to Helen, as sung at her 25th Anniversary Dinner to the tune of John Lennon's classic 'Imagine')

*Imagine there's no Helen
You wouldn't want to try
No leader to inspire us
And keep our spirits high
Imagine all the workers
Poor conditions, little pay...*

*Imagine there's no centre
It's very hard to do
Helen built it from almost nothing
On a shoestring budget too
Imagine all the people
In strife with police*

*You may say she's a dreamer
Helen's only just begun
She's no empire-builder
Believes in justice for everyone*

*Imagine there's no funding
The s**t would hit the fan
She always made it happen
With her attitude 'we can'
Imagine all the clients
Couldn't get our help...*

*You may say we're all dreamers
But we're the lucky ones
After 25 years of Helen
Peninsula is number one!*



Helen (centre) with sisters Anna and Despina at the celebration dinner.

30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

A special event was held at Frankston Arts Centre on 7 September 2007 to celebrate the Centre's 30th Anniversary. The event was sponsored by Blake Dawson Waldron Lawyers, Slater & Gordon Lawyers and Corrs Chambers Westgarth Lawyers, and was attended by more than a hundred people, including Federal and State Members of Parliament, local councillors, representatives from Victoria Legal Aid, the Law Institute of Victoria, Victoria Law Foundation, Chisholm Institute, volunteers and staff of the Centre.

The celebration ran smoothly, with Jon Faine presiding as Master of Ceremonies, and a number of notable speakers, including then Federal Attorney-General, the Hon. Philip Ruddock (via video message), the Victorian Attorney-General, the Hon. Rob Hulls (via video message), the Hon. Bruce Billson MP, the Hon. Bob Smith MLC, Frankston & Mornington Peninsula Mayors, Managing Director of Victoria Legal Aid, Tony Parsons and the Executive Officer of the Federation of Community Legal Centres, Hugh de Kretser.

"For 30 years, Peninsula has been the best kind of agitator for the cause of community justice – taking it up to successive Governments, holding coppers and courts to account, advocating on behalf of its clients and community, and for the wider interests of the law."

Peninsula and its staff, headed by the passionate Helen Constas, embody what we can achieve when we are committed to assisting the disempowered, the disenfranchised and the disadvantaged; when we know that reaching real heights in the legal profession is simply about having the courage of your convictions and working to realise them. Congratulations, Peninsula – and best wishes for another 30 years more."

The Hon. Rob Hulls MP, Victorian Attorney-General

"Congratulations to all of the staff, volunteers and supporters of Peninsula Community Legal Centre on three decades of dedicated work building a strong and effective organisation providing access to justice for the Peninsula community."

*Hugh de Kretser, Executive Officer,
Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic) Inc.*

"We are proud of the reputation Peninsula Community Legal Centre has as a leader in the sector. The Centre has thrived as a result of being responsive and innovative, as well as placing great importance on accountability and long-term strategic planning."

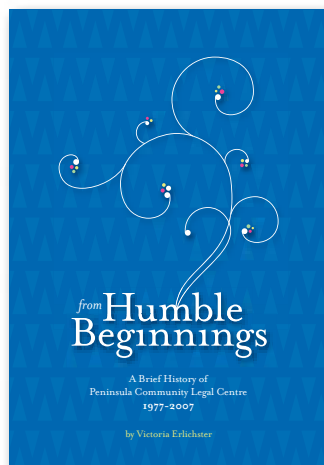
*Chris Gallagher, President PCLC,
at the 30th Anniversary Celebration*

"Peninsula CLC enjoys an enviable culture of strong professionalism and efficiency and it distinguishes itself as a legal sector leader by virtue of its strong service delivery ethos and its commitment to clients. Congratulations on thirty years of community service."

Tony Parsons, Managing Director, Victoria Legal Aid

"The success of Peninsula Community Legal Centre is a testament to the dedication and passion of its volunteers and staff to ensuring that the most vulnerable members of our community are afforded access to justice. Since its inception, more than 500 volunteers have supported the Centre, and we take this opportunity to thank them for their vital contribution."

*Victoria Campbell, Vice President PCLC,
at the 30th Anniversary Celebration*



Victoria Erlichster

LAUNCH OF COMMEMORATIVE PUBLICATION

A highlight of the celebration was the launch of a commemorative publication, *From Humble Beginnings (A Brief History of Peninsula Community Legal Centre 1977-2007)*, researched and written by volunteer Victoria Erlichster and supported with a small grant from the Victoria Law Foundation. The book was launched by Mark Woods, a Board Member of the Victoria Law Foundation and councillor of the Law Institute of Victoria.

"The history of Peninsula Community Legal Centre is akin to an adventure story, for it is a tale of hardship, elation, uncertainty, disappointment, perseverance and celebration.

From humble beginnings, Frankston North Legal Service, driven by dedicated volunteers and staff, has transformed itself from a tiny advice and referral service operating out of the Pines Forest Community Centre, into Peninsula Community Legal Centre Inc, a community organisation that provides free legal services to almost 800,000 people in the south east of Melbourne and in adjoining rural area."

Erlichster, V: 'From Humble Beginnings – A Brief History of Peninsula Community Legal Centre 1977-2007', PCLC 2007.



ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM



Sue Vincent
*Manager Administration
Program*

Throughout the year the legal centre has continued to be a major community resource. The centre received 19,797 telephone contacts with reception staff providing 7,861 information and referrals. Approximately 4,807 clients received face to face legal advice and 948 clients received legal advice over the phone. Unfortunately, statistics often do not reflect the complexity of many of the issues dealt with nor do they reveal the diverse range of clients we assist.

The administrative team continue to provide a high level of support and commitment to clients, staff and volunteers. Each worker fulfils a demanding and important role requiring many interpersonal skills to deal with the complexities faced each day.

Good communication skills, compassion, common sense and patience are always necessary.

We are consistently busy and the need is sadly never-ending. Clients often comment on how much they value the service we offer and feedback from surveys indicates 95% satisfaction.

STAFFING

Welcome to Beth Weerheim and Kristie Quinlan who joined the team during the year.

Special thanks to our Administrative Volunteer, Jasminka Kumbaric who has been assisting us with the endless pile of filing and administrative tasks.

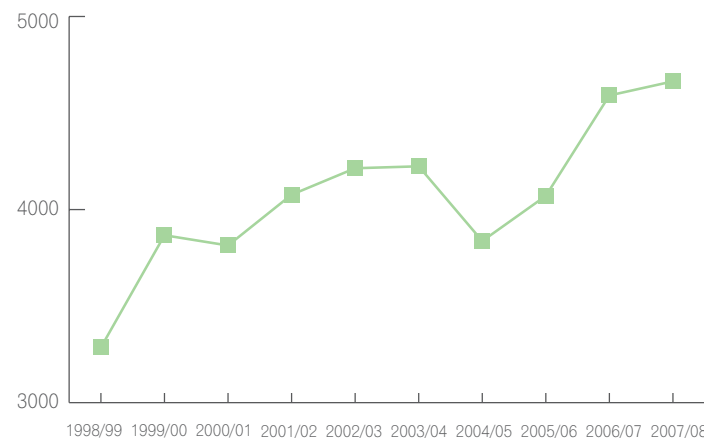
CLISIS

Statistical information is collected to meet the accountability requirements of our funding bodies. The information collected on CLSIS enables the centre to run a variety of reports with detailed demographic and social data on who is utilising the centre. These reports are a valuable source of information for future planning, community legal education, law reform and community development activities.

Sadly, we farewell our Data & IT Manager, Kaeleene Owen who has worked at the centre since 1993. Kaeleene's dedication and contribution over the years has been invaluable. We wish her well.

The CLSIS torch has been passed to Sue Vincent and Hellen Argiriou who have taken over CLSIS maintenance and reporting responsibilities.

CLIENTS ASSISTED OVER 10 YEAR PERIOD



INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY

- » During the year the centre upgraded to a wireless network. Thank you to Mark Courtney, CLC Program Advisor, Victoria Legal Aid for allocating funding towards this upgrade.
- » Special thanks to Donortec who provided Office 2007 software under the Microsoft Software Donation Program.
- » Work has commenced on our new website and intranet with plans to launch the website in the next financial year.
- » Finrea Computers continue to provide the centre with technical support and we thank them for their assistance and expertise throughout the year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our brilliant administration team who "always go the extra mile" you are indispensable and we value you.

On behalf of the Administration team I would like to thank our dedicated staff, management committee and volunteers for their support throughout the year and in particular, our fearless leader, Helen Constan for her vision and tireless work ensuring continued services to our community.



Hellen Argirou
*Assistant Manager
Administration Program*



Vicki Holmes
Administrative Worker



Carla Weelen-Young
Administrative Worker



Beth Weerheim
Administrative Worker



Kristie Quinlan
Administrative Worker



Valmai Sculy
*Administrative Worker
Bentleigh Branch*



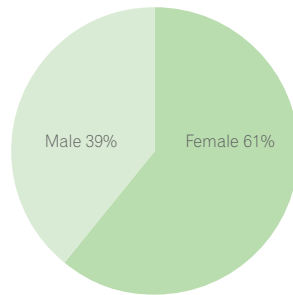
Ian Brent
*Administrative Worker
Cranbourne Branch*



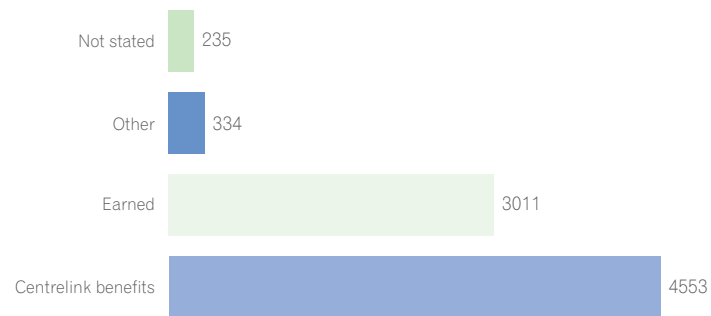
Jasminka Kumbaric
Administrative Volunteer

CENTRE ACTIVITY STATISTICS

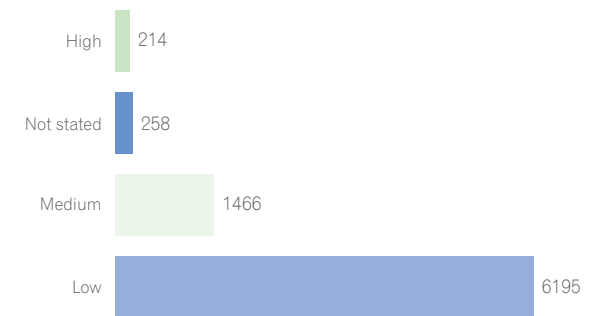
CLIENT SEEN BY GENDER



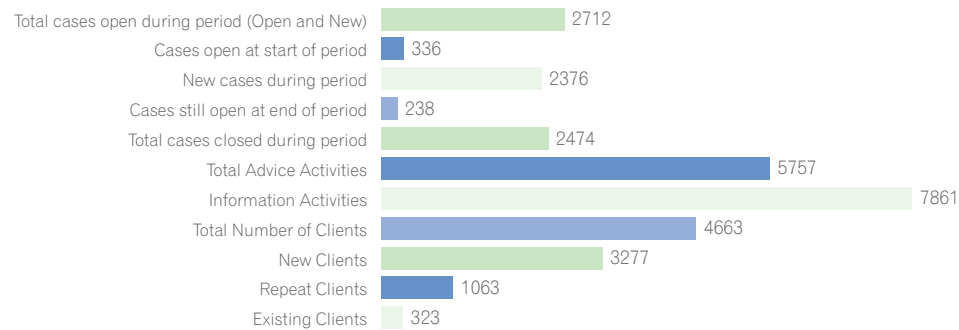
INCOME SOURCE



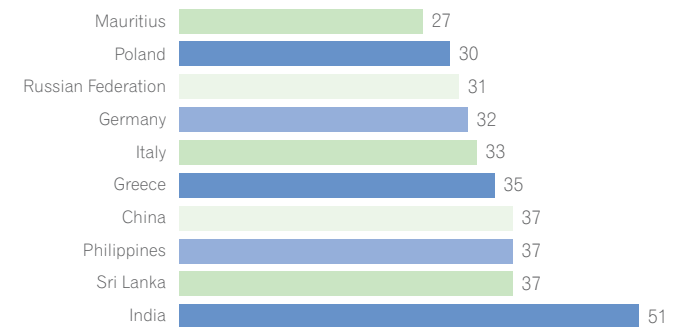
INCOME SCALE



CENTRE ACTIVITY SUMMARY

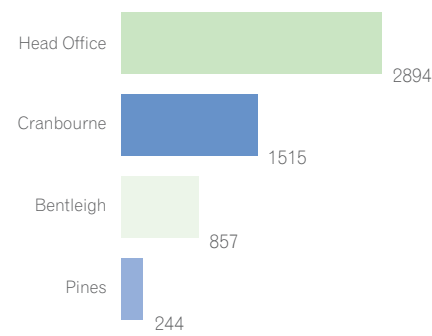


TOP TEN CALD CLIENTS BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH

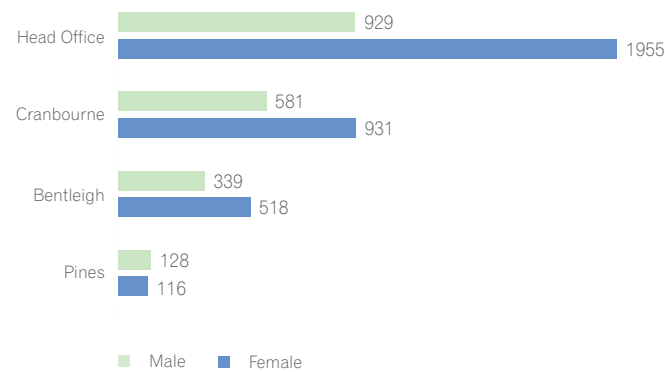


BRANCH STATISTICS

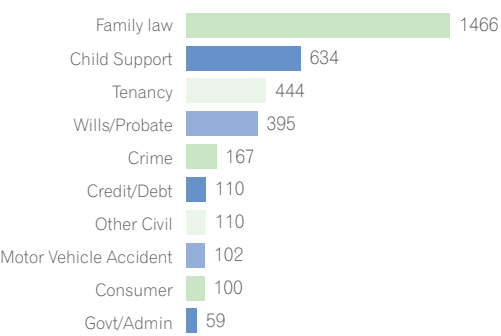
CLIENT ACTIVITY BY BRANCHES



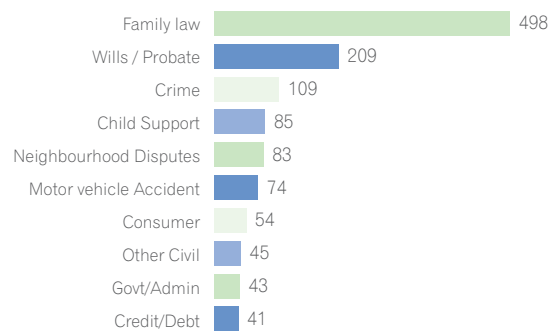
CLIENTS ACTIVITIES AT BRANCHES BY GENDER



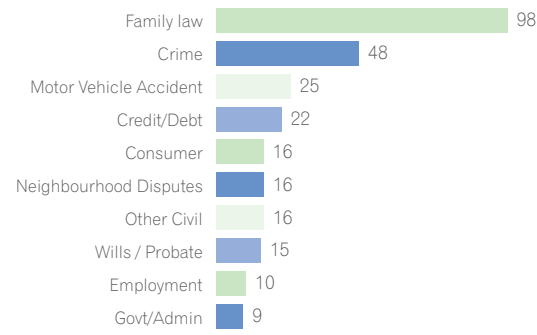
HEAD OFFICE CLIENT ACTIVITIES BY TOP TEN PROBLEM TYPES



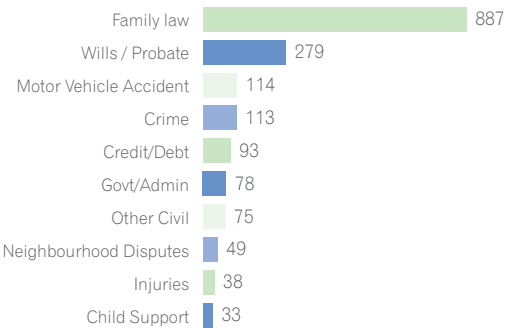
BENTLEIGH BRANCH CLIENT ACTIVITIES BY TOP TEN PROBLEM TYPES



PINES BRANCH CLIENT ACTIVITIES BY TOP TEN PROBLEM TYPES

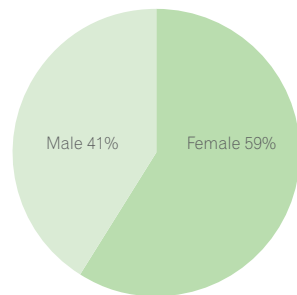


CRANBOURNE BRANCH CLIENT ACTIVITIES BY TOP TEN PROBLEM TYPES

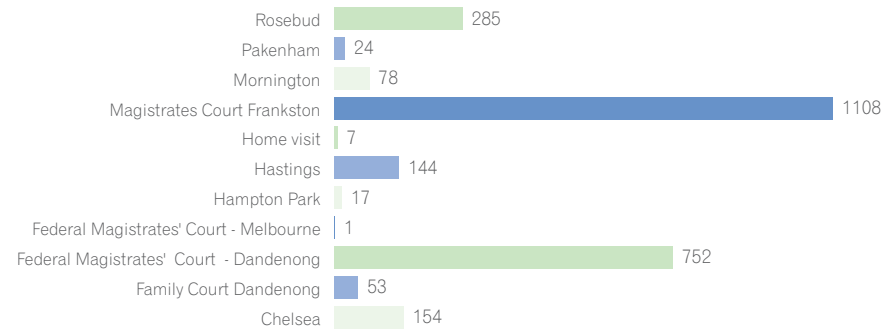


OUTREACH STATISTICS

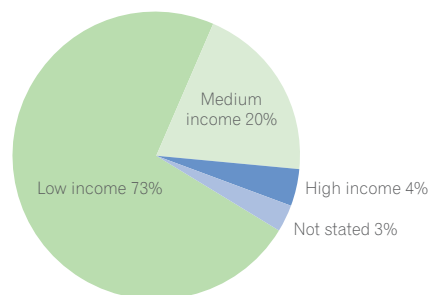
CLIENT ACTIVITIES BY GENDER
AT OUTREACH VENUES



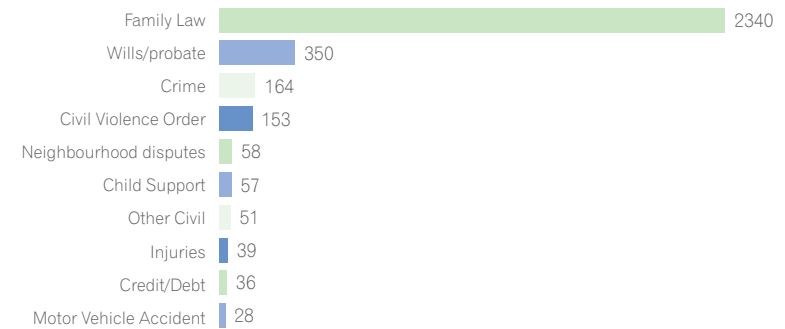
CLIENT ACTIVITIES AT OUTREACH VENUES



OUTREACH CLIENTS BY INCOME



OUTREACH CLIENT ACTIVITIES BY TOP TEN PROBLEM TYPE



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2007

JULY

- » Trust Account Seminar – Peninsula Community Legal Centre x 3
- » Mediation – Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria
- » Family Law in Practice Conference – Victoria Legal Aid
- » Dispute Resolution Seminar – Dispute Settlement Centre

AUGUST

- » Ethics in Practice – Federation of Community Legal Centres
- » Pilch Seminar, Governance
- » Paternity Testing – Victoria Legal Aid

SEPTEMBER

- » National Conference of Community Legal Centres (9-12 September 2007)
- » Social Security Appeals Tribunal – Director of SSAT QLD
- » Professional Indemnity Insurance – Risk Services Australia
- » Domestic Violence Review – Women's Legal Service
- » Mediation and Family Law - QLD University of Technology
- » Changes in Justice – Judge Bill Carter, Peter Nordon & S. Kein
- » State Domestic Violence & Family Law Interface – Legal Aid QLD
- » Australasian Residential Tenancies Conference Melbourne

OCTOBER

- » Cross Cultural Training – New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre
- » Managing Child Support Dispute Seminar – Law Institute of Victoria
- » Consumer Affairs Advocates Training
- » Worksafe Conference Melbourne
- » Pro Bono Workshop Reporting Session

NOVEMBER

- » Conflict of Interest Seminar – Law Institute of Victoria and Jobwatch
- » 'How to Write a Good CLSP Workplan' at FCLC

DECEMBER

- » New Hope Migrant & Refugee Centre Settlement Forum

2008

FEBRUARY

- » Motor Vehicle Accident Debts Seminar – West Heidelberg Community Legal Centre x 4
- » 2008 Changes to Legislation – Child Support Agency

MARCH

- » Ethics in the CLC environment; costs and CLCs – Federation of Community Legal Centres CPD Compliance Program

APRIL

- » Domestic Violence Court – Continuous Improvement – Department of Justice
- » Consumer Affairs Advocates Training
- » 2020 Summit – Monash University Clayton

MAY

- » Family Violence – Courts and Integration Conference – Just Partners (2 days)
- » Legal Liaison Meeting – Child Support Agency
- » PILCH Employee Evaluations & Terminations in the Not for Profit Sector, Maddocks x 3
- » Education & Information Advisory Taskforce, Melbourne
- » 7th International Legal Services Research Conference

JUNE

- » Driving Offences Seminar – Victoria Legal Aid
- » Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic) State Conference
- » Viewed Legal Update Material x 8

TRAINING, PLACEMENTS, WORK EXPERIENCE

COURSES/TRAINING

- » Fire Warden Training x 3
- » CLSIS Training x 2
- » Infocom x 1

INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY TRAINING/CONFERENCE

- » Connecting-Up 2008 Conference - Online and Off to the Future for Non-Profits x 2

TRAINING SESSIONS PROVIDED TO VOLUNTEERS

- » 'Resolving Uninsured Third Party Debts' by Denis Nelthorpe (6 & 7 February 2008)
- » 'Basic Trust Accounting' by Victoria Mullings (19 July 2007)
- » Orientation Training for Paralegal Volunteers (31 May 2008)

WORK EXPERIENCE STUDENTS

- » Lyndhurst Secondary College x 1
- » Patterson River Secondary College x 1
- » Carrum Downs Secondary College x 2

INCOME STATEMENT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2008

INCOME	2008	2007
Commonwealth – Attorney General	50,000	Nil
VLA Commonwealth	317,172	310,954
VLA State	803,240	701,456
Consumer Affairs Victoria	136,580	128,243
City of Casey	25,000	13,000
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council	40,000	40,000
City of Kingston	27,000	25,088
City of Frankston	35,000	10,000
City of Glen Eira	13,686	12,608
Monash University	Nil	1,000
Tenants Union of Victoria	61,904	70,904
Law Foundation	25,300	3,041
William Angliss	Nil	1,000
30th Anniversary	7,567	Nil
Disbursements Reimbursed	1,982	1,210
Fundraising/Donations	4,609	585
Interest	29,266	19,599
Membership	79	64
Sundry	9,586	6,246
TOTAL INCOME	1,587,971	1,353,997

EXPENDITURE	2008	2007
Salaries – Permanent staff	920,954	861,549
Salaries – Casual staff	115,300	55,219
Superannuation – Permanent staff	57,752	55,570
Superannuation – Casual staff	10,216	4,886
Long Service Leave Paid Out	34,920	Nil
Work Cover	4,840	3,342
Travel	57,387	23,686
30th Anniversary Costs	7,594	Nil
Advertising	5,818	1,855
Amenities	17,736	16,627
Audit	3,100	3,100
Bank charges	896	858
Minor Equipment and Maintenance	7,059	12,316

EXPENDITURE	2008	2007
CLE Expenses	5,724	Nil
Cleaning	11,487	11,031
Computer Software & Supplies	820	Nil
Conferences	6,666	4,928
Contractors	17,605	18,600
Disbursements	2,690	2,601
Electricity, gas and fuel	6,379	5,706
Employment advertising	Nil	3,294
First Aid Certificates	2,538	Nil
Incorporation Fees	35	239
Insurance – Directors & Officers	1,091	1,636
Insurance (other than PI)	4,677	3,719
Interpreter & Translation Services	1,287	Nil
Library	4,060	3,712
Memberships	9,578	10,221
Postage	6,824	6,347
Practising certificates	1,987	199
Printing, Photocopying & Publication Costs	23,549	21,245
Rates	280	(128)
Removals	840	Nil
Rent	68,262	67,381
Stationary & Office Supplies	15,030	15,218
Security	2,048	2,679
Storage	2,792	Nil
Telephone	25,317	22,360
Training	2,225	671
Sub Total Direct Expenditure	1,467,364	1,240,670
TOTAL INCOME LESS DIRECT EXPENDITURE	120,608	113,327

INCREMENTS/(DECREMENTS) TO PROVISIONS & DEPRECIATION	2008	2007
Annual Leave	(9,859)	12,724
Long Service Leave	24,714	11,134
Depreciation	8,590	8,752
Sub Total Increments to Provisions & Depreciation	23,445	32,611
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,490,809	1,273,281
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	97,163	80,716

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 30TH JUNE 2008

CURRENT ASSETS	2008	2007
Cash on Hand	250	250
National Australia Bank – Cheque A/c	4,999	12,494
National Australia Bank – Cash Management A/c	284,994	53,154
National Australia Bank – Short Term Deposit	Nil	230,000
National Australia Bank – Mastercard	2,167	Nil
Prepayments	5,200	6,552
Sundry Debtors	153,246	92,727
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	450,856	395,177

CURRENT ASSETS

Office Furniture & Fixtures at Cost	93,991	84,859
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(75,085)	(66,495)
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	18,906	18,364
TOTAL ASSETS	469,762	413,541

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Sundry Creditors	70,732	76,528
Provision for Annual Leave	33,431	43,290
Provision for Long Service Leave	104,579	79,865
Prepaid Income – Attorney's General Dept	Nil	50,000
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	208,741	249,683
TOTAL LIABILITIES	208,741	249,683
NET ASSETS	261,021	163,858

ACCUMULATED FUNDS

Retained Surplus/(deficit) at Beginning of Year	163,858	83,142
Surplus/(deficit) for Year	97,163	80,716
RETAINED SURPLUS AT END OF YEAR	261,021	163,858

STATEMENT OF CASHFLOWS

AS AT 30TH JUNE 2008

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	2008	2007
Receipts from Grants	1,623,291	1,440,795
Other Receipts	16,256	8,105
Payments to Suppliers and Employees	(1,665,336)	(1,335,725)
Interest Received	29,266	19,599
Net cash provided by (used in) Operating Activities	3,477	112,774

CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES

Payment for property, plant & equipment	(9,132)	(4,404)
Net cash provided (used in) Investing Activities	(9,132)	(4,404)

CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

Net cash provided by (used in) Financing Activities	Nil	Nil
Net Increase in Cash Held	(5,655)	108,370
Cash at Beginning of Year	295,898	187,528
Cash at end of year	290,243	295,898

NOTES TO STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW

1. RECONCILIATION OF CASH

Cash on Hand	250	250
National Australia Bank – Cheque A/c	4,999	12,494
National Australia Bank – Cash Management A/c	284,994	53,154
National Australia Bank – Short Term Deposit	Nil	230,000
	290,243	295,898

2. RECONCILIATION OF CASH FLOW FROM OPERATIONS WITH NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)

Operating Profit /(Loss)	97,163	80,716
Depreciation	8,590	8,752
Changes to Provisions	14,855	23,858
(Increase)/Decrease in Debtors	(62,687)	(68,127)
Increase/(Decrease) in Prepaid Income	(50,000)	50,000
(Increase)/Decrease in Prepayments	1,352	(1,590)
Increase/(Decrease) in Trade Creditors & Accruals	(5,796)	19,164
Cash Flow From Operations	3,477	112,774

Free Legal Service

If you need a lawyer, or information about the law, Peninsula Community Legal Centre can help.

The Centre's Head Office is located in Frankston and is open from 9 am - 5 pm Monday to Friday and provides free legal services throughout the week. The Centre also offers a drop-in session at its Pines branch office at 9A

As well as the drop-in session every Wednesday night at 7pm the Pines Office, the Centre offers telephone advice, appointment and drop-in sessions. In addition to its general services, the Centre operates a specialist Family Law Program, Child Support Program for carer and liable parents, Tenant/Consumer Advocacy Service along with Young Renters and

News

Benefits 'shock' in new laws

ings greater financial stress, and children could suffer as a result," she said. "For many parents, a loss of \$15 a week is a lot of money - it could mean that a child can no longer go to swimming for

Boost to program

Deb Morris

A \$378,000 funding boost to three programs run by the Peninsula Community Legal Centre has been celebrated in Frankston.

Legal centre staff, Frankston Council representatives, social workers and politicians gathered with Victorian Minister Daniel Andrews at the Mahogany Neighbourhood House, Frankston North, on July 13 for the official launch.

PCLC's chief executive officer Helen Constan said the three-year funding meant the centre's Young Renters Project and Civil Claims and Tenant (VCAT) workshops would build on successful pilot projects and could now be extended.

Ms Constan said the funding enabled the centre to focus on "doing the job" rather than worrying about where the money would come from.

Ms Constan said the projects were examples of the centre's capacity to respond to local issues.

The Young Renters program has been designed to help young people secure and maintain first-time rental accommodation.

Regular workshops educating participants about their rights and responsibilities as tenants will be offered in Frankston and on the peninsula, as well as in Casey.

The Civil Claims and Tenant workshops will be available to people across Victoria who have a consumer or tenancy-related problem. Details: 9783 3600.

Legal centre adds consumer award to tally

THE Peninsula Community Legal Care Centre has again been recognised for its work, this time receiving an excellence award at the inaugural Consumer Affairs Victoria awards at a ceremony in Melbourne last week.

A large crowd of community and business representatives attended to celebrate achievements in consumer protection.

The service, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, won the Metropolitan Consumer Advocacy Excellence Award for its work in establishing innovative programs to help young renters, Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal claimants, and people having a car



Legal victory: Peninsula Community Legal Centre's Chris Gallagher, Eastern Metropolitan MP and Consumer Affairs director Dr David Cousins at the awards ceremony.

Confusion over child support

PENINSULA Community Legal Centre says it is receiving an increasing number of inquiries from parents concerned about impending changes to the child support system.

Principal solicitor Victoria Mullings said many people were unaware of changes to the legislation which come into effect today.

"Many parents are shocked to learn that the changes taking effect on July 1 may mean their child support payments will drop," Ms Mullings said.

of time each parent spends with the child.

Young rental help

Young people Trina Grimme, 23, and 18, together with 18-year-old are graduates of a half-day workshop. Trina said she had found the workshop "really helpful". She had been renting since she was 16, the Pakenham student said she did the workshop. "It was a lot about my rights as a tenant," she said. "It was about issues such as if you're out and what to do and getting stuff like that." Trina is a student at Chisholm TAFE in Dandenong and is



Judgment day looms

Exclusive

Mark Cerno and Belinda Fraser

HIGHETT'S new court complex will open to the public at the end of October.

The *Leader* can reveal the first hearings are scheduled to start on October 29 at the \$28.2 million Moorabbin Courthouse, more than a month earlier than expected.

Department of Justice spokeswoman Katrina McGrath confirmed a public open day would be held on October 21.

Soon in session

What: Moorabbin Courthouse

Where: The former Gas and Fuel site, Nepean Highway, Highett

What: Six courtrooms will hear magistrates' court, children's court and Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal matters

state-run Gas and Fuel Corporation site, will include six courtrooms. It is believed an interim magistrate will

Vick Kostuk said the court would hear magistrates' court, children's court and Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal cases. There will be four holding cells and an Office of the Sheriff at the complex.

Peninsula Community Legal Centre principal solicitor Victoria Mullings said the East Bentleigh centre's staff were pleased to hear the court would open before the anticipated date of December.

Most clients would no longer have to travel to Frankston or Melbourne to have their legal issues resolved, Ms Mullings said. Sandringham state Liberal MP Murray

visitors to the Highett complex would be misled by its Moorabbin name. "I see clients will be taking a nice (long) walk from Moorabbin station," Mr Thompson said.

The court would pose a security risk for area, he said. "My advice to Highett residents is to up your cars, lock up your houses and be on the alert," he said.

Ms McGrath assured the public that security of the court would be state of the art. She would not reveal details about security at the courthouse, which will see



A cuppa for cancer

Volunteers and staff of the Peninsula Community Legal Centre took part in Australia's National Morning Tea on Thursday as part of the nationwide event that raises money for the Cancer Council Australia. The event is one of the council's foremost fund-raising events, and has raised more than \$40 million since it began in 1994.

It provides a range of free legal services from its offices in

This year the theme was "reaching out" – an approach to people with special needs and those who may face difficulty using the justice system such as people living in regional areas, seniors, young people, Aboriginal



advice: Carla Weelen-
and Saskia Weerheim of
the Community Legal

Picture:
Daryl Gordon



The legal o
Conostas said
expertise to h
ine companie
utmost resp
"Through
assisted hund
legal issues."
Ms Conostas
sharing his
expertise w
wonderful m
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Toast to decades of legal integrity

A who's-who of the legal fraternity and a number of state and federal politicians came together at the Frankston Arts Centre two Fridays ago to help celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Peninsula Community Legal Centre.

Formerly the Frankston North Legal Service, it began in 1977 when a group of Pines residents called a public meeting to address concerns



Still going strong: Volunteers and donations at the 30-year anniversary

In Frankston last February, Andrews said the pact between Consumer Affairs Victoria and the community

"Sharing of ideas between both organisations has enhanced

Balancing scales of justice

Due to client demand, the Craighouse office now provides a dedicated family law program to provide advice, courtwork and



On the case: Principal adviser Victoria Wallings, mentioned in

An outreach service is provided by appointment in Pakenham on a fortnightly basis, on Tuesdays at Living and Learning, Cardinia, 66 Henry Street, Hampton Park and on Thursdays at Hampton

from more than 120 volunteers at the centre's many branches, including the south-east.

"Without guarantees of ongoing funding and help from volun-

teers of the peninsula rounds, particularly the electronic of Carbon access to the important they provide to commu-

The centre's chief executive officer, Helen

'Access to timely, practical advice alleviates much of the pressures clients feel when dealing with the legal system.'

Chris Galacher

"It is our experience that access to timely, practical advice alleviates much of the pressures clients feel when dealing with the legal system and ultimately helps build a healthier, happier community."

This compilation includes articles from: Cranbourne Journal, Frankston Independent, Frankston Leader, Mororabbin Kingston Leader, Pines Post and The Mail (Mornington & Southern Peninsula).



HEAD OFFICE

Chatsworth House
Suite 1-4, 431 Nepean Hwy
Frankston Vic 3199

Tel 03 9783 3600

Fax 03 9770 5200

Free Call 1800 064 784

DX 19953 Frankston

Email pclc@pclc.org.au

Hours Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm

Mon evenings from 5.45pm

BENTLEIGH BRANCH

82 Brady Road
Bentleigh Vic 3165

Tel 03 9570 8455

Fax 03 9570 8466

Hours Mon, Wed

& Thurs 9am – 3pm

Mon & Thurs evenings

from 6.30pm

CRANBOURNE BRANCH

Bella Centre
Suite 12
33-39 High Street
Cranbourne Vic 3977

Tel 03 5995 3722

Fax 03 5995 3799

Hours Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm

Tues evenings from 6.30pm

PINES BRANCH

2a Candlebark Crescent
Frankston North Vic 3200

Tel 03 9786 6980

Fax 03 9785 3582

Drop-in advice sessions

Wednesdays at 7pm

