

2022-2023

# Annual Report



Peninsula  
Community  
Legal Centre

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Peninsula Community Legal Centre acknowledges the traditional owners of country, recognises their continuing connection to land, water, and community and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.





## Our Vision

**delivering justice for our community**

Promoting and protecting human rights and equality before the law

## Our Mission

**empower & support** disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our community to address their legal needs

**engage & build** an ever-strengthening and capable legal practice

**foster & maintain** a network of support for the vulnerable & disadvantaged with our community

**support** families in the provision of services that champion child welfare and safety in the eyes of the law

**deliver** a legal service that builds our community toward building one free from family violence

## Our Values

### empowerment

we work towards strengthening the capacity of all people to understand their rights, pursue their interests and understand their responsibilities

### independence

we are free from external control or influence and are therefore unfettered in our ability to speak for our clients and our community

### fairness

we treat all people justly, reasonably and in a non-discriminatory manner

### quality

we are a leading legal assistance sector organisation committed to providing quality, evidence based solutions to pressing issues facing our community

### integrity

we deliver service based upon our strong moral principles and ethics

### accessibility

we assist vulnerable and disadvantaged people to obtain justice that they would otherwise be denied

### respect

we treat others with dignity and in a manner which demonstrates regard to their feelings, wishes, autonomy and rights

# Chairperson's Message

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In 2023, Peninsula Community Legal Centre (PCLC) has approached a complex and demanding economic and social landscape with an unwavering commitment to the community in which we serve. We thank all of our incredible staff and partners for their efforts this year, and for continuing to provide access to justice, at a time where it has never been more important.

This year we've maintained a clear focus and found even more ways that we can adapt and change the ways we work in order to achieve the goals set out in our strategic plan. In addition to delivering a broad range of legal services, we have also invested time consolidating our organisational relationships, and engaged policy and decision makers to proactively share our perspective. This has enabled us to advocate for ongoing positive change.

Like many community organisations, we have faced a dynamic environment as it relates to terms of funding and cost management in a high inflation economy. This has been managed consciously by the leadership team and PCLC remains financially prudent and committed to maintaining services across all of our offices. The recent opening of our new office in Bentleigh, with the grand opening supported by all levels of government, is testament to the value seen in the services we provide by the broader community.

PCLC continued to support our community on key current issues, including family violence, elder abuse and renter assistance. There are so many valuable initiatives that have been successfully completed, many of which, such as Street Law, have been aimed at proactive, creative and educational concepts to reduce the need for legal intervention at a later time.

We continue to evolve in order to effect change for our people and communities. Continued innovation and efficiency within the practice remains vital to our future success and we have executed several projects in this space this year, and look with excitement to the ways that technology may assist generate even greater access to justice.

We look forward with a sense of purpose to 2024.

**Matthew Bolle**  
Chairperson



# Congratulations

## Jackie Galloway OAM

It is with great pleasure that we advise of the appointment of Jackie Galloway to the Order of Australia in this year's King's Birthday Honours List for services to the community through social welfare organisations.

It is also befitting for Jackie to receive this honour in her 25th year of service at PCLC.

Jackie has been, and continues to be, a powerhouse in the Community Legal Centre (CLC) sector, ensuring access to justice for the most vulnerable members in our communities. She has contributed in a sustained and outstanding way to the sector for 25 years.

Commencing with Frankston North Legal Service (as PCLC was then known) in February 1998, Jackie spearheaded services as the Tenant/Consumer Advocate dealing with tenancy issues. She then held a role as the Senior Tenant/Consumer Advocate, eventually moving to the role of Manager of the Consumer Affairs Program.

In 2003, Jackie was Acting CEO for the first time. She became Deputy CEO in 2010, and then CEO in 2012. During her tenure, she has overseen an ever-growing and highly successful Legal Centre. She is very well respected by her staff, peers, colleagues, government officials at local, state and federal levels on all sides of politics.

Jackie has initiated many amazing local programs to improve access to justice and law reform. The CLC sector is always looking to PCLC and regularly follows Jackie's lead, striving to achieve what she does with her team.

We are delighted that Jackie has received this prestigious award, which she so richly deserves.



# Our Year

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Our year at PCLC has had many highlights as well as several challenges as the team worked hard to deliver our quality and timely legal services across the vast and diverse region in which we proudly serve.

The work we do ensuring access to justice is as important today as it ever was, as the demand for our services continued to escalate. We have witnessed a substantial impact on families and low-income earners as they experience increased cost of living pressures and complex challenges impacting on their legal needs and housing.

With a vast and diverse catchment and a population of over one million people, our resources and funding are always stretched, particularly this past year with our family law, family violence, civil and tenancy services. The increased demand saw much longer waiting times for our services than ever before. We constantly juggled our resources to prioritise our services to the most in need. This was never more evident than in our tenancy program, with almost 40% of clients presenting with Notices to Vacate and imminent eviction proceedings.

It has not been surprising with the current pressures that family violence incidents have risen. Police data released in March 2023 showed a 2.5% increase in family violence incidents in Victoria. The rise was also reflected in our Specialist Family Violence Court duty lawyer data, with a 25% increase in the number of duty lawyer services conducted by the PCLC team in Frankston and Moorabbin from the previous year.

The cost of living and high inflation also impacted on the organisation. Government funding to PCLC has simply not kept pace with increased staffing and

administrative costs. Without adequate indexation and an increase to funding levels, we are concerned we will not have the capacity to meet the current and future demand for our legal services.

PCLC takes great pride in our three-pronged approach to community legal services to support our strategic goals - to improve access, promote early intervention and strive for systemic change. We do this by our direct service delivery, community legal education/engagement and law reform work.

As this year's impact report highlights, the collective efforts of our staff and volunteers have produced impressive results in the delivery of our legal services, providing 11,656 legal services on behalf of 5,830 clients, including conducting 1,523 cases and undertaking a record 2,696 duty lawyer services. Our reach into community with our education and preventative work was extensive this year with 30 workshop/presentations to community members and/or organisations and 6 community information stalls. We advocated for change in two key areas - family law and renting - with 4 law reform submissions.

Our drive to engage in and promote continuous quality improvement within the organisation was strengthened this past year. We developed our Quality Management Action Plan, incorporating our Accreditation Improvement Plan. This will form the foundation to our commitment to quality improvement over the next two years. We were pleased to review and update our Monitoring & Evaluation Framework and develop our Stakeholder Consultation Framework. We will continue this work into the next year with the development of our new communication strategy.



A key focus of the organisation this year has been the implementation of Actionstep, our new data and case management system. This was a substantial undertaking given the size of our database and breadth of our work. We commend our Director of Business & Operations and Director of Legal Services in leading this important work in consultation with the staff implementation committee.

Our work in family violence was enhanced this year with the welcome addition of the Legal Services in the Orange Door Pilot. This 12-month pilot supports our goal to provide timely legal services to primarily victim-survivors of family violence. The Pilot, in partnership with Victoria Legal Aid, provides a visiting and telephone service to clients of the Orange Door as well as a secondary consult service for workers. PCLC has welcomed the collaboration with the Orange Door team and has seen a real benefit for victim-survivors having access to this collaborative service model. We are keen to see the pilot extended and rolled-out into all Orange Doors in Victoria.

For the past five years PCLC, in partnership with the City of Glen Eira, have been conducting the Glen Eira Mums (GEMS) Project, with the provision of legal services to women. This early intervention response to family violence aims to work in partnership with maternal child and health nurses to provide women with legal assistance in an integrated, timely and safe setting. We were very excited with the news that the City of Glen Eira was awarded a National Local Government Award for Addressing Family Violence Against Women and their Children for the GEMS Project. We congratulate our Practice Manager -Family Violence, Sharon Carr, for her leadership and commitment in the ongoing development and delivery of this valuable community service.

The impact of fines, particularly toll fines, in our community, has long been of concern to PCLC. This past year saw the completion of our Victoria Legal Services Board-funded project, Unravelling the Complex Infringement System: A Health, Legal and Community Response to Enhance Pathways for Vulnerable Clients with Infringement Debt in the South-East. The project aimed to increase access to the Work and Development Permit (WDP) Scheme, improve access to legal advice for vulnerable youth with outstanding infringements and strengthen advocacy to promote legislative change in the infringements space. We can rightly be proud of the work we have achieved to increase WDP sponsors in the region, obtain positive outcomes for clients who utilised our WDP client-matching service and build on our health justice partnerships. We recognise there is more work to do committing resources to embed this integrated work into our core service delivery.

PCLC highly values and appreciates its partnerships and collaborations with funders, pro bono supporters, partners, community organisations and networks, all of whom are vital to the impact we can have in achieving access to justice.

Reflecting on the achievements and challenges of the past year, PCLC is well placed for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. This is only possible because of the passion, professionalism and commitment by the extraordinary staff of Peninsula Community Legal Centre, whose work brought about lasting impact for many of our clients and supported our vision to deliver critical legal services to our community.

**Jackie Galloway OAM**

Chief Executive Officer



# Service Delivery

2022-2023



**7,437**  
legal advices



**1,523**  
ongoing cases



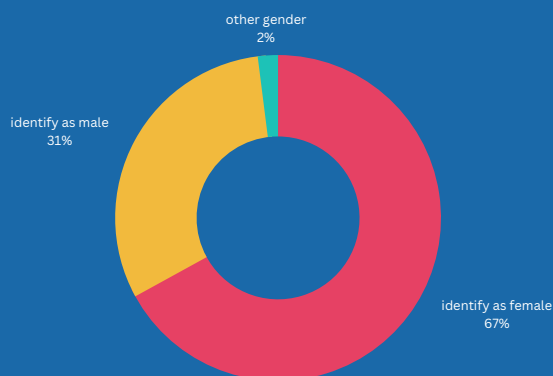
**2,696**  
duty lawyer



**11,656**  
total services



**Total clients**  
**5,830**



- 44%** experiencing family violence
- 63%** experiencing financial disadvantage
- 14%** experiencing, or at risk of homelessness
- 26%** living with a disability or mental illness
- 18%** culturally or linguistically diverse

# Client Comments



I was very nervous and worried on my first day face to face at Court. The process was greatly helped by PCLC who was supporting me throughout the whole court process. I felt very grateful as there is no family here to support me.

I cannot thank both enough for their expertise and professionalism which ensured me a highly satisfied conclusion throughout my court case. I gave 5 star rating to PCLC service.



The duty lawyer assigned to my case was outstanding and incredibly helpful. For a day I was worried and slightly frightened about, the lawyers were incredible. I'm so very grateful for their help and assistance.



I would like to say thank you for your help and support in helping to solve my case of careless driving quickly. I am extremely grateful for all your help. Thank you so much for all you did to me to receive such a favourable outcome. You gave me peace of mind. For this, I would like to commend PCLC for their time, effort, service and professionalism. You're doing an excellent job and are amazing lawyers. I am forever grateful to you.



We could not have achieved this result without you!!

Perhaps if you know how very grateful we are, plus how much this financial relief benefits my family moving forward. The difficulties of my illness have been compounded by the stresses around my financial situation. This release will only be of benefit towards my recovery and eventual movement back into life and society.



I can't thank you enough for saving me and my children from a disastrous future.

I am still recovering nicely from the separation, and without your help, I don't really know in which situation I would have been today.

Thanks thousands of times for putting efforts, caring and such professionalism into my case.



When I visited you the first time I remember being shocked by your reaction to my revelations which truly opened my eyes. You offered to personally accompany me to the police which gave me strength and empowerment and became something I could cling onto when things were difficult. You showed me there was another option and even though I was too frightened at the time to follow your advice and take it on board, it became my stronghold.



Thank you for representing me and also giving myself a chance to amend this horrible chapter and make big changes moving forward...



PCLC worked tirelessly with me to understand what happened. My court case was dropped, all charges dropped, no fine!



Professionalism, empathy and amazing abilities to negotiate, even with my son not appearing on the day, astounded me. PCLC achieved an outcome that I didn't think possible. One I could have only hoped for. Also, I believe it is an outcome that allows scope for positive change.

## Our reach

We are committed to being flexible, innovative and responsive to address the complex legal needs of our clients and communities across a broad geographical area



### 4 branches

Frankston, Cranbourne, Bentleigh East & Rosebud



### 18 visiting locations

regular visits to community organisations



### 5 courts & tribunals

court representation and duty lawyer services

## Catchment area



**1,768,000**

catchment population



**6 local government areas**

general program



**10 local government areas**

Tenancy Assistance Advocacy Program





# Our People

## Management Committee

**Chairperson** Matthew Bolle  
**Vice Chairperson** Thierry Pascal  
**Treasurer** Renee Thorn  
**Secretary** Samuel Ellemor

## Members

Lisa Bremner, Luke Denham,  
 Paul Hodgman, Jodie De Gregorio

## Executive Team

**Chief Executive Officer** Jackie Galloway  
**Director of Legal Services** Sokha Um  
**Director of Business & Operations** Sue Vincent

## Leadership Team

### Practice Managers

**Family Law** Brendan Stackpole  
**Family Violence** Sharon Carr  
**Civil & Crime** William Betts

**Coordinator Business & Operations** Hellen Argiriou

## Finance

Mark Duque

## Engagement, Systems & Project Workers

Engy Abdelsalam  
 Jackie Currie  
 Kay Taranto  
 Kirsten Young  
 Mark Patton  
 Krissy Beckerleg

## Administrative Team

Jasminka Kumbaric  
 Nina Mitris  
 Caitlin Ruka  
 Louise Grant  
 Melanie Jones  
 Melissa Liapis

## Senior Lawyers

Chris Daniels  
 Chris Gunasekera  
 Kate Bell  
 Saskia Rijfkogel  
 Sousan Gholami

## Legal Team

Alison Laird  
 Ash Galvin  
 Ashleigh Walker  
 Cathie Currie  
 Christine Ng  
 Daniel Hombsch  
 Emily McAlister  
 Emily Mineo  
 Fei Su  
 Joseph Oliver  
 Kathleen Hyland-Egan  
 Laura Di Felice  
 Michele Simpson  
 Nina Zec  
 Robert Braun  
 Sandy Kaur  
 Steven Eley  
 Tanka Lakic  
 Teddy Polydor  
 Terry Meehan  
 Theresa Lam  
 Vanessa Saunders  
 Warren Wheeler  
 Yih Laine Teen

## Paralegals

Casey Hill  
 Faaizah Esaq  
 Kate O'Brien

## Challenges & Achievements

Our civil law practice deals with issue such as credit and debt matters and wills and probate. Over the past year, PCLC has reviewed our civil law practice with the aim of expanding its capacity to provide advice and assistance with more complex civil matters, with the aim of providing a more holistic and “wrap around” service that can assist vulnerable clients with multiple legal issues.

The civil practice observed the widespread presence of civil credit and debt matter, as many households in our region struggle with cost-of-living pressures. Protective household expenditure items such as insurances are often being relinquished due to a lack of finances, and the team are increasingly assisting disadvantaged community members who are facing large debts due to being uninsured. These economic pressures have also had flow-on effects into both the criminal law and family law arenas, with clients finding it difficult to engage private solicitors and creating additional demand for our services. Our civil team managed to get over \$340,000 in civil debt waived this financial year. Wills, probate and end-of-life legal issues continued to be in our top five problem types in the Civil practice at 15%. This is not surprising with the Centre servicing the local government area of the Mornington Peninsula, which has one of the largest older persons populations in the State.

The prevention of Elder abuse continues to be a priority for PCLC. In response to demand, PCLC has continued to develop its Elder Law Clinic in Rosebud, expanding our collaboration with the health and care sectors as well as developing useful resources in partnership with the Respecting Seniors Network. We would like to acknowledge and thank volunteer John Corcoran OAM for his strong commitment to the Elder Law Clinic. This past year we continued our work, particularly with older persons in CALD communities, raising awareness of financial abuse for older people and where to seek help.

1,236

Clients



1,708

Total services



1,467

Legal advice



200

Representation



41

Court appearance



\$340,000

Civil debt waived





With the success of the Elder Law Clinic and in partnership with other service providers, PCLC has expanded its specialised clinics and programs to include:

#### Migration Clinic

Targeting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients who have applied for or who hold a Partner visa, presenting with family violence issues. A common theme emerging is the complexity of the immigration system for victim-survivors and the limitations of the clinic to address broader immigration issues. PCLC will continue to review the progress of our work in the clinic.

#### Mobile Integrated Mental Health (MIMH) Program

Addresses the pressing legal needs of clients experiencing mental health issues, with an integrated and flexible service model. Despite the evident need, referrals to this program have not reached expectations. PCLC will continue to collaborate and work with the mental health sector to raise awareness.

#### Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS)

Our visiting service across two YSAS locations supports vulnerable young people who have a broad range of issues and often complex needs with legal support and assistance. This integrated service with youth workers supports a early intervention and preventive approach.

In an effort to make more efficient allocation of its limited staffing resources, PCLC initiated a pilot restructure and rationalisation of intake appointments and outreach programs. This strategic move aimed to optimise our capacity to better serve the community and enhance reach. The pilot rationalisation and streamlining of our intake appointments is an attempt to make it easier for clients to access our services and enables our caseworkers to undertake more intensive casework.



## Empowering a victim-survivor

Talia endured long-standing family violence at the hands of her husband. She sought assistance to secure a family violence intervention order (FVIO) and navigate her divorce, complicated by language barriers. Additionally, she faced a criminal charge for driving while suspended due to accumulated fines. Our Family Violence Team provided essential support and acted as her duty lawyer, resulting in the grant of a 3-year FVIO. When her husband applied for a rehearing, our team assisted, and the application was denied, confirming the FVIO. We also assisted with her divorce application, managed service on her husband, and represented her at the hearing. Recognising that family violence contributed to Talia's fines, we applied for their cancellation under the Family Violence Scheme, with success. Following the summary case conference, Victoria Police, on being satisfied with our case, agreed to drop the "drive while suspended" charge as her license suspension had been retroactively unjust. Ultimately, Talia's fines were cancelled, her divorce granted, and the driving charge withdrawn. Our support helped Talia address multiple life-altering challenges simultaneously and she now feels empowered to move forward.

## A triumph over debt

Sarah, a single mother, faced a daunting debt problem. She struggled with severe depression, anxiety, and health issues, including a heart condition. Two of her children had disabilities, and she relied on Centrelink benefits, renting her home without any assets. The weight of an \$8,000 debt for her father's funeral in 2020 burdened her further. Sarah's situation escalated when the funeral home pursued a civil claim against her in court. Her total debt, including legal costs and interest, ballooned to over \$11,000. She made sporadic payments and felt overwhelmed. PCLC stepped in, offering a lifeline. Although legally Sarah wasn't obliged to repay the debt due to her financial struggles, she insisted on doing so to clear her mind and debts. PCLC negotiated a manageable payment plan, until the full amount was settled. Sarah was relieved and grateful for PCLC's support during her vulnerable time.



# Criminal Law

## Challenges & Achievements

PCLC's criminal practice and expertise continued to build during the past year. Much work was done by its Practice Manager of Crime & Civil and Accredited Specialist Criminal Lawyer to mentor and enhance our in-house expertise to advocate for vulnerable clients. Many of these clients do not qualify for a VLA grant of assistance for representation, and face being unrepresented in the criminal justice system without PCLC stepping in.

The past year could be considered a year of transition back to the pre-COVID norm of in-person hearings. This move, however, brought its own challenges due to limited staff resources and the need to balance court appearances with other commitments. PCLC's lawyers conducted 120 court representations over this reporting year.

The expansion of our criminal law practice has meant that PCLC has been challenged with many unusual and confronting types of offending. This has included more serious offending and more complex prosecutions. This also had necessitated its team expanding their theoretical knowledge and skills.

The PCLC Criminal Law Program has also expanded into representing clients at more complex hearings such as Contest Mentions and Contested Hearings. This development has marked a significant milestone in our commitment to defending the rights of our clients. The expansion allowed our team to advocate for individuals who chose to plead not guilty, ensuring their cases received thorough legal representation.

Notably, there was an increased focus within the Criminal Law Program on aiding individuals charged with breach of Family Violence Intervention Orders (FVIO) who had been misidentified as perpetrators of family violence. These cases highlighted the need for specialised support and legal advocacy to rectify misconceptions and protect the rights of individuals who had been wrongfully accused.

502

Clients



714

Total services



541

Legal advice



133

Representation







## A second chance

Alex, a 32-year-old client lived with his disabled mother and brother with serious illness. Alex cared for them both. Unexpectedly, Alex faced seven criminal charges, including burglary and theft, accused of stealing from petrol stations. The police searched his home and did not find any stolen items, just some clothing they thought matched the alleged burglar's clothing. There were also more charges, like drug possession and unlicensed driving. At first, Alex denied everything but later admitted to some charges. PCLC came to his aid and fought hard, attending hearings, cross-examining witnesses and challenging evidence, with the Court finding there wasn't enough evidence to convict Alex on some charges. The next day, PCLC negotiated a plea on the remaining charges. Alex got a Community Corrections Order (CCO), avoiding jail. Both Alex and his mother were relieved. Without PCLC's help, Alex might have ended up in prison.

## Michael's turnaround

Michael, a 23-year-old heavy cannabis user, spiralled into depression and unemployment during the COVID lockdowns. One night, fuelled by frustration, he sent a threatening message to a politician's public Facebook account, including a picture to support the threat. Understandably, the Australian Federal Police took the threat seriously. Months later, they arrested Michael for threatening to assassinate a public official. Online threats fall under Commonwealth jurisdiction, with severe penalties expected. By the time the matter reached court a year later, Michael had made positive changes. He had addressed his substance abuse and mental health issues, undergone detox and had returned to part-time work. He realised the impact of his actions on the recipient of the message.

PCLC, which had represented Michael in the past, gathered references and supporting materials and made a plea on his behalf. After lengthy negotiations with Prosecutions, it was agreed to a lengthy recognizance release order (like a good behaviour bond) with conviction, instead of imprisonment. Michael was relieved, avoiding prison but learning a valuable lesson. While the incident remains on his record, it served as a sobering experience following his encounter with the Federal Police.

# Family Law

## Challenges & Achievements

We continued to experience a consistently high demand for family law advice and casework throughout this financial year. We are pleased to report that many of our long- standing complex cases were successfully resolved in this period.

PCLC's Family Violence to Family Law (FV2FL) Continuity Program, which provides legally-aided family violence-related family law casework services, had an increase in litigation this past year, with fewer matters going to early intervention Lawyer-Assisted Family Dispute Resolution, often due to the clients engaging with legal services much later in the process. The team also observed an increasing complexity in those litigation matters which required considerable time and expertise within a trauma-informed approach. The frequency of trials, additional court documentation requirements and delays in obtaining aid all continued to add to the challenges of this busy practice area. Despite the increased pressures, the Program lawyers were able to achieve outstanding results, resolving matters for some exceptionally vulnerable clients, leading to safer outcomes for clients affected by family violence and their children.

PCLC's Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS) duty lawyer presents at the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia in Dandenong each weekday, providing vital family law advice and assistance to unrepresented litigants affected by family violence. The FASS team often play an important role negotiating with other parties where there are listed hearings and resolve many matters by way of consent orders, with great benefit to all parties and the Court. They also assist with urgent applications such as for recovery orders and airport watchlist orders. FASS services were delivered this year using a hybrid delivery model (in-person and remote) as many early Court events took place online.

1,586

Clients



2,534

Total services



1,858

Legal advice



149

Representation



425

Duty lawyer





In one matter this year, a FASS duty lawyer assisted a client with significant disabilities and who was experiencing homelessness to file a property application where the applicable time limit was about to expire. In another, a FASS duty lawyer assisted a father, who was the primary carer, by drafting urgent recovery order application documents where the mother had withheld the children and they were at risk of significant harm by one of the mother's relatives. The matter was listed on an urgent basis, and the Court made the recovery order, returning the children to the father's care.

For clients ineligible to receive legal aid but unable to afford a private lawyer, our generalist family lawyers provided legal assistance to those who would otherwise miss out. These range from divorce matters that have become increasingly complex and hard to navigate without legal help, to small-pool property matters and even assisting to have a child that was abducted overseas and brought into Australia returned to the child's mother. They often prepare important Court documents for unrepresented litigants in parenting matters, which can change the outcome of cases significantly.

The family law practice continued to strengthen its family law property work in this past 12 months. We successfully settled 25 matters over the twelve-month period at a combined monetary value of over \$2.7 million. These settlements will have a significant impact for these vulnerable women's capacity to rebuild their lives post-separation.

In response to concerns from our family lawyers, PCLC developed a training resource for workers supporting family violence victim-survivors to help them

understand the often complex Commonwealth family law system, and the intersection between the family law system and the State-based family violence system. PCLC consulted widely with the family violence sector to develop the materials. The material is hosted online through an e-Learning platform integrated into the PCLC website and made up of a range of materials in collaboration with a range of services, including an award-winning short film about the impacts of separation from a child's perspective. The platform has been shared with several key family violence services in the region. The key message to family violence workers was to refer clients for legal advice early and often.

In early 2023, PCLC welcomed the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Government's Consultation on the Exposure Draft – Family Law Amendment Bill 2023. We were generally supportive of the proposed amendments which aim to ensure the best interests of children are at the centre of all parenting decisions. The proposed amendments will go some way to help simplify the law, particularly for the benefit of unrepresented litigants, and address some additional areas of family law we considered in our submission required priority reform, building on our previous submissions on the family law system. We are watching the progress of the legislation with keen interest as the changes may bring tangible benefits for our clients.

The long-term impact of the pandemic, cost of living pressures, the housing crisis, and significant levels of family violence in the community are likely to mean that the huge demand for family law casework will be ongoing.





## International child abduction

Cecilia was warmly referred to PCLC by a member of her community in Melbourne as part of the Centre's Strengthening Legal Pathways for CALD Women project. Cecilia lived outside Australia. She was emotionally and physically abused by her ex-husband, John, including during her pregnancy. Cecilia separated from John while pregnant and was the sole carer to their young son. There were Court orders in their country of origin to this effect, which also only allowed the child to spend time with John under supervision due to the past family violence. John had connections to Australia and regularly threatened that he would abduct the child and take him to Australia, and that Cecilia would never see him again. Cecilia did everything she could to try to prevent this from happening, including making multiple reports to authorities about the risk of abduction.

Nevertheless, the father obtained a passport for their son and took him to Australia without Cecilia's knowledge or consent, and in contravention of the Court orders made in Cecilia's country of origin. There were no Australian Court orders relating to the child. Our family lawyer had to conduct research as to Cecilia's rights to take legal action in Australia to locate and recover the child, and also to make enquiries as to any financial assistance/funding available to Cecilia if legal action could be taken given that she was located overseas.

While these enquiries were being undertaken, John commenced parenting proceedings in an interstate registry of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia seeking orders relating to the son. Our lawyer referred Cecilia to the Legal Aid Commission in that state, which provided an almost immediate grant of aid to Cecilia to provide a family lawyer in that state to represent her and assist her to respond to the father's application.

In the end, orders were made by consent for Cecilia to come to Australia to collect the son and return to the country in which they reside. The consent orders also included an order that the son be placed on the airport watch list so that John cannot remove the son from Australia in the meantime. PCLC is supporting Cecilia with further assistance to enable her to reunite with her son. Without our family lawyer's extensive knowledge and legal strategy, Cecilia and her son may have received a very different outcome.

“ I want to thank you and show my appreciation for your huge help to me since day one in a timely and experienced manner on my case. I would never have made it this far without your help.” *Cecilia*





## Kinship Responsibilities

Charlotte presented to one of our family lawyers on duty as a FASS lawyer on a Friday. She was a kinship carer for a three-year-old child and had cared for the child since he was a few months' old due to the parents' inability to provide appropriate care. There was a history of Child Protection involvement due to family violence and neglect of the child. Despite Child Protection placing the child with Charlotte, there were no formal orders giving her parental responsibility for the child (a situation that is common with kinship carers).

Unfortunately, the child has severe and ongoing health issues. The child had critical surgery scheduled. However, Charlotte's consent to the surgery alone was insufficient to meet the hospital's legal requirements. The child's parents, though contactable with some effort, were unwilling to make any medical decisions for the child. The father was living overseas.

Our FASS lawyer swiftly began preparing an urgent Application for Consent Orders and a proposed Minute of Consent Orders that would provide our client with interim sole parental responsibility. The lawyer was able to obtain the mother's agreement and signature on the proposed consent orders over the course of the weekend,

demonstrating great commitment to the matter by working out of hours.

Although the FASS lawyer was able to contact the father overseas and he verbally agreed to sole parental responsibility orders for Charlotte, he was unwilling to sign any documents.

The lawyer filed the signed documents with the Court first thing on Monday and obtained an urgent same-day hearing of the matter. As the father's signature could not be obtained, the Court made orders requiring our client to urgently file an extra affidavit setting out matters such as the father's verbal consent, which was done with the assistance of the FASS lawyer. The Court then made interim orders for Charlotte to have sole parental responsibility for the child, meaning that she could then provide the necessary consent for the surgery to take place.

Although at the extreme end of what duty lawyers confront, this case is an excellent example of what the FASS service can achieve. In this matter, a vulnerable client was assisted in urgent and grave circumstances with the preparation of Court documents and representation. The Court was highly responsive and provided great assistance in progressing the matter.

# Family Violence

## Challenges & Achievements

PCLC's family violence lawyers and paralegals provide duty lawyer services to Frankston and Moorabbin Magistrates' Courts. Both are very busy specialist family violence courts. During the year both courts resumed their full, in-person service post-pandemic. The team continued to provide a full suite of services to complement our duty lawyer assistance. Intake and response services were available at three of our offices, along with our visiting service at the Orange Door, Maternal Child & Health Centres and Casey Women's Clinic. Our family violence duty lawyer services far exceeded our targets this past twelve months, with resources needing to be regularly redirected into the court-based service to meet demand. This in turn had an impact on our capacity to fully deliver the intake and response services as scheduled.

PCLC's family violence team continued to provide more intensive assistance to vulnerable clients both at court on the day, and prior to the hearing. They continued to work closely with the Centre's casework team to provide an integrated and wrap-around casework service for those clients experiencing family violence.

The one constant theme for the program this past year was 'resilience', with the team having to grapple each day with the increasing rates of family violence incidents and trying to reconcile the severity and impact on our vulnerable clients. During this period, the family violence team also had to adapt to the State-wide roll-out of the court automated referral system. The new system and demand for duty services required a review of our processes, and we were fortunate to be able to welcome extra paralegals to the team to assist with what is a steady influx of referrals through the court portal and from the vast array of family violence and community services in the region.

1,669

Clients



4,024

Total services



1,643

Legal advice



38

Representation



2,215

Duty lawyer





In late 2022, we commenced the Legal Services in the Orange Door Pilot project. The Pilot provides an in-reach legal service in the Bayside Peninsula Orange Door, staffed by PCLC and our partner Victoria Legal Aid. We welcomed the opportunity to strengthen our relationship with the Orange Door, while providing new pathways for those experiencing family violence to receive legal assistance.

The family violence team has continued to work collaboratively with maternal health centres and other community agencies, including a women-only organisation in the city of Casey, and to provide community legal education to workers or client groups. PCLC was really pleased to hear the news that the City of Glen Eira won a National Award for Local Government in the Addressing Violence Against Women and their Children for our Glen Eira Mums (GEMS) Project.

The year also brought a marked increase in family violence cases being heard in the County and Supreme Courts. Several of these cases have changed the way in which courts deal with family violence applications and kept our team on their toes. There is never a quiet moment in the family violence team.





## Technical legal assistance to ensure safety

Rosie and her four children were protected persons in an indefinite family violence intervention order (FVIO) with full no contact conditions against her ex-partner, Lachlan. Rosie and Lachlan share one child. Lachlan had been imprisoned for seriously assaulting and raping his most recent partner. Lachlan had also breached the FVIO previously, strangled Rosie in the presence of her other children, and threatened to destroy everything, pouring fuel around her home and car. Shortly after being released on parole, Lachlan applied to vary the FVIO to allow him to see the child. Given the seriousness of the incidents and Rosie's fear for both her and her children's safety, she was strongly opposed to Lachlan spending time with the child and was too afraid to attend Court. PCLC provided Rosie with assistance and advised that the matter appeared to be ultimately heading to the Federal Circuit and Family Court for determination of parenting issues due to the serious safety concerns. We advised Rosie that she could agree to vary the FVIO so that Lachlan could see the child if there was a written agreement allowing him to do so. This would still protect Rosie and all of the children but also allow Lachlan to spend time with the child if there was a written parenting agreement reached through lawyers. Our lawyer assisted Rosie with negotiating a resolution with Lachlan's representative – noting the seriousness of the incidents and the breach. The FVIO matter was eventually resolved with the slight variation proposed and remained an indefinite order.

## Effective provision of service is integral

Simone, an adolescent, was at Frankston Magistrates' Court on summons by police for an application for a Family Violence Intervention Order ("FVIO") against her, where the protected person was Simone's mother Gail. Gail and her partner Pat were known to Victoria Police and Child Protection due to many interventions where Gail and Pat had inappropriately disciplined Simone as well as having committed family violence against her. Unfortunately, Simone could not live with her biological father as he had abused Simone as a child, and it was deemed unsafe by Child Protection. The FVIO application against Simone resulted from an incident in the family home where Simone and her mother Gail were arguing then Pat became involved and attempted to burn Simone with a cigarette. This type of violence was common for Simone. In an attempt to avoid being burned, Simone ducked out of the way, pushing past Gail doing so. This led to Gail reporting to police that Simone had shoved her. Simone, at Frankston Magistrates' Court, sought advice and assistance from a PCLC duty lawyer. Simone was also assisted by a support worker at Court who was regularly engaged with Simone to assist her in her family situation. The lawyer took instructions from Simone and after much effort, successfully argued to the Court that Victoria Police had wrongly taken out the application and as such, the Magistrate struck out the application.

# Housing

## Challenges & Achievements

PCLC experienced a surge in private renters, rooming house residents and caravan park residents facing real concerns about their housing security this past year. Increasingly renters presented with notices to vacate and significant rent increases this past year, often anxious at the prospect of having to leave their homes and try to secure affordable accommodation in a record tight rental market.

In response to the increased demand, our Tenancy Assistance and Advocacy Program ("TAAP") team had to focus resources on prioritising renters at risk of eviction. A case management strategy was developed to enhance our integrated practice to support at-risk renters and prevent homelessness. However, these often intensive matters required additional time to consider supporting materials, prepare for hearing, and work with our housing colleagues to develop sustainable plans. For those matters where the tenancy was not sustainable, the team worked hard to facilitate support and provide appropriate referrals to housing support agencies for vulnerable renters. Given the nature of the housing crisis, we were pleased with the outcomes for our renters, successfully preventing the eviction in 40% of our matters.

We were concerned that renters were not getting advice when faced with notices of significant rent increases, often holding on to the hope of securing another property. This was evident with the number of enquiries to our Triage & Response Service. This service primarily provides assistance in urgent rental matters such as imminent eviction and health and safety issues. In this past year 16% of enquiries into the service required a rapid response, with 5% requiring same day assistance.

967

Clients



1,849

Total services



1,322

Legal advice



448

Representation



15

Duty advocate service







PCLC's TAAP team represented renters in 328 hearings, in VCAT and the federal jurisdiction in the Magistrates' Court. We were pleased to resume our Duty Advocate Services (DAS) at VCAT in both Frankston and Oakleigh. We welcomed VCAT resuming in-person hearings, albeit in a limited capacity. However, we noted an increasing number of VCAT hearings being listed with minimal notice, which required a shift of internal resources to prepare the cases and coordinate with other professionals/court and community services. This had an impact on our waiting times for appointments. On the other end of the scale, we saw lengthy delays for some client matters to be listed.

We valued the opportunities to collaborate with the housing and homelessness sector to support rough sleepers and people at risk of homelessness in the Frankston area, taking a lead role in the work of Frankston Zero. A housing forum and a series of roundtables were well attended and gave the opportunity to seek solutions to the housing crisis. The report findings will be the focus of Frankston Zero in the next few years.

PCLC is committed to ensuring better outcomes for renters and improving legal, justice and social service systems. We made a submission to the Commonwealth Senate Inquiry into the Worsening Rental Crisis in Australia and the Victorian Legislative Assembly-Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into the rental and housing affordability crisis in Victoria. We also joined with the National Association of Renters' Organisations by endorsing its statement to highlight the need for urgent action to address the challenges faced by renters and ensure access to safe, secure, affordable and healthy homes.





## Homelessness pressure alleviated during the nasty rental crisis

Noel was a young rooming house resident renting in the City of Frankston. He was the last remaining resident in the rooming house. He received a notice to vacate claiming he allegedly damaged the premises. Within days the rooming house operator attended the premises and removed all items from the property, including light globes, in an apparent attempt to compel Noel to vacate. PCLC's TAAP worker made an application to VCAT for restraining orders and return of items. VCAT, on being satisfied with their submissions, made orders in first instance for the operator to return items to the house, plus orders restraining the operator from attempting an unlawful eviction. VCAT further dismissed the operator's application for possession.

## Another eviction prevented during tight rental crisis

Wendy was a sole parent of one dependent child renting in the City of Kingston. She was a victim-survivor of family violence and had rental arrears of several thousand dollars. Wendy did not attend her possession order hearing in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court (MCV) and a possession order was granted in her absence. Her rental provider subsequently sought a warrant of possession from Police for the eviction. Immediately after PCLC's TAAP lawyer received Wendy's instructions, they made an application to MCV seeking a stay on the warrant of possession and a re-hearing of the possession order application. The real estate agent was cooperative after PCLC intervened on behalf of Wendy. The Magistrate ultimately agreed to allow a renewal application and a re-hearing of the substantive possession rent arrears matter. Wendy was eventually successful in the re-hearing and obtained a payment plan. PCLC's TAAP lawyer further liaised with the Salvation Army and Launch Housing to pay off the rental arrears and Wendy's tenancy was saved.



# Fines & Transport Law

## Challenges & Achievements

The quantum and impact of Infringements in our region continues to drive the work we undertake on behalf of vulnerable community members. The cost of living crisis exacerbated the need for support, with an increasing number of clients presenting to our fines clinic for the first time, as they faced choices such as paying the rent or electricity bill or paying a fine/fines.

In this period, the PCLC fines clinic team assisted 565 clients with an average of \$13,000 in outstanding fines. Of these clients, only 13% were able to proceed to any form of Application for special or exceptional circumstances, Family Violence scheme application or internal review. PCLC's team managed to have over \$776,000 in outstanding fines revoked during this period. 39% of the revoked fines related to successful Family Violence Scheme applications, followed by 33% related to successful Special Circumstances applications for issues such as mental illness, homelessness, and serious addiction to drugs and/or alcohol.

For many of the remaining clients, the Work and Development Permit (WDP) Scheme was their only option. Our team continued to work collaboratively with Fines Victoria and WDP sponsors in the South-East to deploy a non-financial option (such as undertaking treatment or other activities) to address outstanding fines for many clients. We would like to acknowledge the Victoria Legal Services Board for their support of our WDP "Unravelling the Fines System" Project.

PCLC continued to advocate for a fairer, more just infringement system that provides people with limited means to address their outstanding fines. PCLC recognises that the Work and Development Permit Scheme (WDP Scheme) is a great option for our fine clinic clients. However, in our view, the Scheme has not reached its full potential to date. We were pleased to take the opportunity to provide a Stakeholder Response to the Work and Development Permit Review Consultation Paper.

PCLC will continue to work collaboratively with the Scheme and the health and community services to improve outcomes for our vulnerable community members.

565

Clients



827

Total services



606

Legal advice



203

Representation



\$776,943

Fines saved



\$240,449

WDP fines value





## A brighter future

Pablo, in his late 20s, presented to PCLC with a large fine debt of over \$206,000. Having come from an abusive home, he had no family support. He had also had a drug addiction since his teens, falling in with the wrong crowd, and he had significant mental health concerns. He had previously moved house multiple times and was neither able to cope with his job nor hold on to it. Pablo's mental health deteriorated through COVID and when seeking help, was overwhelmed by the lack of mental health resources available and gave up hope. Pablo was living in fear of being arrested and jailed for the fines. When he attended our fines clinic, he felt his life was over. Pablo had no history of ongoing engagement with a health professional and could not satisfy what he needed for an application for enforcement review with Fines Victoria. With no income, PCLC was able to assist Pablo with funding an assessment and report fees using our disbursement funds supported by our Pro Bono partner, Russell Kennedy Lawyers, from a clinical psychologist that enabled an application to be made under special circumstances. Pablo's application was successful, and enforcement revoked for the fines. This has been a turning point for Pablo and his efforts to turn his life around. He was extremely grateful for PCLC's assistance and the ability to fund the report needed for his application. This reinforces how significant it is for vulnerable people to have access to PCLC's services.

## Supporting the road to recovery

Fiona engaged with PCLC having been issued with a 7 Day Notice for over \$335,000 in outstanding fines, all of which were toll fines. This meant that during the 7 day period, the Sheriff could seize Fiona's property, wheel clamp her vehicle, detain her vehicle or remove her vehicle's number plates. Fiona had been pressured by her former partner to use the toll road to travel to and from work, a trip that would take her approximately two hours each way. She was financially reliant on her former partner who refused to give her money to pay the tolls or infringements. PCLC's team immediately assisted Fiona to submit an urgent Family Violence Scheme (FVS) application pending the receipt of supporting materials. This allowed Fiona to obtain supporting evidence from her treating professional, but it also ran the risk of her FVS application being considered on the basis of the support material provided (none at this stage) should Fiona take too long to obtain anything, meaning the application would fail and enforcement would proceed. With her application noted as urgent and processed by Fines Victoria, Fiona did not have to worry about being susceptible to Sheriff or Police involvement whilst trying to obtain supporting material. Fiona's FVS application was ultimately successful based on a Police application for intervention order against her former partner for an earlier incident, as well as her statutory declaration about her experience of family violence contributing to her incurring of fines. This resulted in Fiona's debt of over \$335,000 being completely withdrawn.

# Rooming House Outreach Program

## Challenges & Achievements

The work of PCLC's assertive rooming house outreach program (RHOP) funded by DHHS goes a long way to give voices to marginalised rooming house residents. These residents often fall through the cracks of the housing system, and report feeling abandoned and forgotten.

PCLC's Rooming House Program (RHOP) visited 355 rooming houses this past year across the Southern and Eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The increased cost of living and the lack of affordable housing was having a disproportionate impact on our rooming house residents. We were increasingly concerned about price-gouging and questionable conduct by operators in the pursuit of maximum rent, with one couple reporting to our rooming house outreach workers that they are paying \$700 per week for a room in a local rooming house to avoid being homeless. The program identified 54 residents that were inappropriately housed, providing support and warm referrals to housing agencies.

The RHOP workers noted a surge in the lack of compliance with rooming house standards. The program lodged 34 enquiries with regulators outlining our concerns with the condition and lack of standards of some rooming houses in the region. The failure by operators to conduct essential repairs and maintenance in common areas, in addition to facilitating overcrowding in premises and inadequate management, contributed to ongoing problems faced by residents.

PCLC followed up on our Open the Door report findings with submissions to the Senate Committee - Inquiry into the Worsening Rental Crisis in Australia, the Victorian Legislative Assembly-Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into the rental and housing affordability crisis in Victoria. We also made submissions in response to the Rooming House Minimum Standards Issue Paper (Workstream Two) and the draft Residential Tenancies (Rooming House Standards) Regulations 2022.

355

Visits



348

Residents contacted



54

Referrals to housing services



223

Vouchers supplied



239

Health packs





## Renter facing illegal eviction

Our RHOP team received a call from Elizabeth, a rooming house resident the program had visited 6 months prior. Elizabeth was quite distressed. She had received a text from the rooming house proprietor advising her she must move out immediately. RHOP workers visited Elizabeth the next day, finding that the proprietor had disconnected the electricity in an attempt to get the residents to leave. RHOP promptly arranged for the Centre's tenancy team to assist with an urgent application to VCAT, seeking to have the power restored.

RHOP reported the proprietor's actions together with other breaches to the regulators, as well as contacting local housing organisations for support to residents.

RHOP returned to the premises a couple days later with health services to check on the residents, to find the power restored. However, we were concerned for Elizabeth's safety after someone had entered the premises the previous night causing damage to the locks. Alternative accommodation was arranged and RHOP arranged for social work support to transport Elizabeth to her new premises. PCLC was also able to successfully settle a debt matter for Elizabeth.

The rooming house was in such a poor state it was demolished not long after the residents left.

## Living standard struggles restored

Victoria was a single rooming house resident renting in Melbourne's Southeast, reliant on government benefits as her sole income. Victoria had been living at the premises for the past six years. She had often been subjected to notices to vacate in the past when she tried to exercise her rights to address the conditions of the rooming house. These proceedings were all unsuccessful, with VCAT dismissing the applications.

On a visit to the rooming house, Victoria raised concerns with the workers about maintenance issues, including mould and non-functioning appliances, as well as the general rooming house standards. Along with serving notice for the outstanding repairs, the team requested a visit from the local council to assess whether the house met the minimum rooming house standards under the regulations.

With the assistance of PCLC's RHOP, the operator subsequently addressed the maintenance issues.



# Street Law Coffee Van Project

## Challenges & Achievements

Our innovative Street Law Coffee Van works to bring the law to the people in local communities that have historically been underserved. With the support of the Mornington Peninsula Shire and the Lynbrook Hotel Community Contribution fund, PCLC was able to keep our Street Law Coffee Van on the road this past year, albeit on a limited basis, to deliver the service in the Mornington Peninsula Shire and the Casey region.

Over the past year the Street Law Coffee Van conducted 49 program visits to a broad range of community venues, including community lunches, emergency relief centres, community centres and homelessness services. The program conducted 699 legal health checks with 20% of participants identified as having a legal problem. The Street Law lawyer provided 48 clients with legal advice on the day of the visits, and 59 clients were referred into PCLC for follow up by the Street Law lawyer or PCLC specialist teams for assistance. Our community engagement officer identified a number of clients requiring additional support services, providing 110 non-legal referrals.

We would like to thank all our partner organisations who supported the project this year.

916



Total services

699



Legal health checks

169



Referrals

107



Advice

18



Partner organisations



## Getting back on the road

Trevor visited the Street Law Coffee Van program and over a cup of coffee with the Project's Community Engagement worker revealed he had a upcoming court hearing regarding a charge of driving a motor vehicle without authorisation to do so.

Trevor was immediately referred to the Street Law lawyer for assistance. Unbeknown to Trevor, his medical practitioner had not forwarded his annual medical review assessment to VicRoads, resulting in the suspension of his licence.

The Street Law lawyer assessed the brief and provided some preliminary advice on the spot and arranged a follow up consultation. At this consultation Trevor was provided with a range of options, timeframes and also the risks and benefits associated with each option.

The Street Law lawyer agreed to assist Trevor at the Case Summary Conference, arguing that Trevor had an honest and reasonable belief that he was licensed. The lawyer presented that the VicRoads practice was for correspondence to be sent directly from the medical practitioner to VicRoads without any correspondence being sent to the client, therefore Trevor would have reasonably expected that this had occurred as he had not received any notification from VicRoads either way.

Trevor was most relieved with the news that the matter had been withdrawn, no court appearance was required and he is able to continue driving now licensed.







## Our Volunteers

### Volunteer Lawyers

Manal Amro	Vinu Kumar
Matthew Andrews	Alice Land
Anna Araneta	Elizabeth Lee
Katherine Awad	Joshua Levenda-Freeman
Veronica Bar	Stephanie Mahon
Kristen Beagley	Honorata Malewska
Helen Betros	Alex Marcou
Joshua Butland	Luke Martin
Emily Cain	Taylor Maskew
George Chabvonga	Laura McDonnell
Richard Chapman	Louise Naylor
Damien Christmas	Jack Noone
John Corcoran	Sherene Ozyurek
Michael Denison	Thierry Pascal
Despina Djumas	Villy Raki
Amelia Edwards	Patricia Samson
Sue Ellison-Whyte	Lily Sarkar
George Erlichster	Thirumalai Selvi Shanmugam
Claire Finegan	Joel Silver
Marcus Frajman	Nicholas Smith
Loredana Giarrusso	Angelica Suarez
Olga Hempel	Claire Williams
Christopher Hill	Maria Zambrano

### Volunteer Paralegals

Natasha Adams	Barbara Padfield
Laili Aladin	David Pascal
Tayla Archard	Janet Power
Georgia Arranga	Aaron Rielly
Jasmine Baird	Rosemary Rowlings
Faith Brack	Rosemine Roy
Laura Buckley	Hayden Silver
Holly Cunningham	Jessica Toomey
Olivia De Rozairo	Karolina Wlodarczak
Aija Dowling	Gabriela Zanin
Jay Fergus	
Anna Grage	
Nadeera Gunawardena	
Ines Hage-Nebyl	
Emma Higgins	
Minoli Jayamaha	
Lauren Kavanagh	
Ruby Leonard	
Justin Leung	
Rachel Malley	
Danielle McCartin	
Natasha Mirvis	
Emma Morgan	

### Practical Legal Trainee

Kathryn Ashe  
Iona Moller

### Field Placement

Sarah Gertrude  
Ruby Murphy  
Alexandra Petherick  
Faaizah Esaq  
Esra Ikiz  
Joanna Denoual

## Life Membership Award & Volunteer Long Service Award - 35 years



Chris is a committed, passionate and long-standing volunteer at Peninsula Community Legal Centre. For over 35 years, Chris has made an exceptional contribution to the local community through his volunteer work as a lawyer with PCLC.

Chris brings more than his legal expertise to his volunteer work, he treats clients, staff and fellow volunteers with the utmost respect and courtesy. Throughout his time at PCLC he has assisted hundreds of clients with a wide range of legal issues.

## Volunteer Cath Neilsen Award

John Corcoran

## Volunteer Long Service Awards - 10 years

Luke Denham  
Aija Dowling  
Anna Grage  
Danielle Martin  
Thiery Pascal  
Villy Raki

## Volunteer Excellence Awards

Nadeera Gunawardena (below)  
Danielle Martin







**In Australia,  
when I came  
here, I saw that  
anything could  
be possible."**

**Sousan Gholami**  
Senior Lawyer



Get the full story only in this weeks **Gazette**









# Community Engagement & Education

During this period, PCLC's work in community legal education (CLE) exceeded all expectations. A wide range of CLE sessions were delivered in a number of community venues to a broad range of audiences, including a new partnership with Alfred Health in an online legal series for carers and their community. We continued our partnership with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria with elder law talks, and conducted a number of sessions on a wide variety of legal topics including elder law, tenancy, family law, traffic and fines, scams, and family violence in community houses and with partner schools across our catchment.

PCLC also attended a wide range of community events across our catchment throughout the year, ranging from the Frankston Mayor's Party in the Park and Pet's Day Out to the Cardinia Refugee Day Festival, which attracted combined crowds of more than 10,000 people, to smaller BBQs and gatherings at local community houses. Our Street Law Coffee Van team partnered with Chelsea Heights Community Centre and Orwil Street Community House in Frankston to conduct legal health checks and to provide legal information and advice sessions as part of Victorian Law Week in May 2023.

Connecting with our community through these CLE and engagement activities is a crucial part of our work to improve our community's access to justice.

2,081

CLE presentation participants



148

Social media posts



30

CLE presentations



22

Law reform activities



6

Information stalls



4

Law reform submissions



4

Community resources







[Arabic Women Carers](#)



[SMRC Carers Group](#)



[Spanish Group](#)



[Law Week - Chelsea](#)



[Street Law BBQ](#)



[Al-Emaan Group](#)

## Family Violence Worker Legal Resource

During this period, PCLC developed a comprehensive series of freely accessible video courses and an online resource hub to explain the multiple complicated legal systems and issues when there is a family violence context. This resource is aimed at community workers supporting family violence victim-survivors, to help them empower those they work with. The material is hosted online through an e-Learning platform integrated into the PCLC website and made up of a range of materials, in collaboration with a range of services, including an award-winning short film about the impacts of separation from a child's perspective. The platform has been shared with several key family violence services in the region.

## Youth Project - This is not who I want to be

PCLC's theatre project for CALD youth was successfully piloted in November 2022 for fifty Year 9 students who have recently arrived in Australia. The project focuses on Australian laws on family violence and forced marriage and uses theatre as a creative strategy to convey sensitive information in an age-appropriate and engaging way. Following the success of the pilot sessions, the project was rolled out in another three secondary schools with high numbers of CALD students who have recently arrived in Australia in the City of Casey in 2023.

*"Because I have seen these kinds of violence, I can now have a talk with the lawyer without anyone knowing."*

*"It was so surprising to see that the students who were most engaged were the ones that the school struggles with and who are usually very disruptive, mostly the boys. Seeing them so engaged and asking questions and responding was great to see."*

## Elder Law - Inheritance: not an entitlement

PCLC and the Frankston Mornington Peninsula Respecting Seniors Network launched a new discussion guide on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in June aimed at promoting better understanding of the issue of inheritance impatience and how it can lead to elder abuse. The "Inheritance: not an entitlement – How to talk about inheritance impatience and elder abuse" discussion guide can be viewed on our [You Tube channel](#). The discussion guide aims to dispel common myths stemming from a sense of entitlement to an older person's assets or future inheritance and it was launched by Dr Kay Patterson AO, Australian Human Rights Commission, Age Discrimination Commissioner, in a short video that you can view on our [You Tube channel](#).

## Our community relationships

PCLC is highly engaged and connected with our local community. We value our relationships with community partners who enable us to proactively engage and respond to the legal needs of our community within an integrated service response.

We also engage in a broad range of initiatives and partnerships with the legal assistance sector and government to facilitate empowerment and access to justice for clients and communities.



**614**

stakeholder engagements



**54**

community partners



**18**

practice working groups



**17**

community networks



**12**

steering committees



# Financials

## Comprehensive Income

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2023

CONTINUING OPERATIONS		2023	2022
Income			
Grant funding	2	5,502,566	5,154,642
Other income	3	83,279	73,923
		<b>5,585,845</b>	<b>5,228,565</b>
Expenses			
Communication expenses		(44,045)	(51,736)
Depreciation expenses		(31,987)	(89,606)
Employment expenses		(4,882,235)	(4,481,158)
Finance expenses		(14,612)	(15,177)
Occupancy expenses		(264,500)	(255,134)
Office & administrative expenses		(244,522)	(254,423)
Repairs & maintenance expenses		(49,219)	(47,504)
Resources expenses		(67,873)	(40,808)
Travel & accommodation expenses		(22,211)	(12,110)
		<b>(5,621,204)</b>	<b>(5,247,656)</b>
<b>NET PROFIT</b>		<b>(35,359)</b>	<b>(19,091)</b>
Other Comprehensive Income			
items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss when specific conditions are met		-	-
items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		-	-
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>		<b>(35,359)</b>	<b>(19,091)</b>



## Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023

		2023	2022
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Cash at bank and on hand	12a	1,614,056	1,515,453
Receivables	4	90,374	74,473
Investments - term deposit		1,000,000	1,000,000
Other assets	5	21,946	21,731
Total current assets		2,726,376	2,611,657
<b>Non - Current Assets</b>			
Fixed assets	6	77,187	74,644
Total non current assets		77,187	74,644
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>2,803,563</b>	<b>2,686,301</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	7	137,172	153,691
Payroll liabilities	8	240,749	216,400
Grants in advance	9	365,888	351,579
Employee provisions	4, 10	794,706	640,196
VLA unused funds	13	407,885	422,061
Total current liabilities		1,946,400	1,783,927
<b>Non - Current Liabilities</b>			
Employee provisions	4, 10	62,612	72,464
Total non current liabilities		62,612	72,464
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>2,009,012</b>	<b>1,856,391</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>794,551</b>	<b>829,910</b>
<b>Equity</b>			
Retained Earnings		794,551	829,910
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>794,551</b>	<b>829,910</b>

# Thank you

We are extremely grateful for the support of a committed and generous network of supporters who share our vision and commitment to increase access to justice and make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable community members.

## Probono Partners

Our pro bono partnership with [Russell Kennedy Lawyers](#) continues to strengthen our capacity and legal practice capabilities to provide free legal services to the most in need. This past year Russell Kennedy Lawyers have provided legal mentoring, professional development, elder law clinic, PCLC's disbursement fund, governance, and business support. Special thanks to Emma Dunlevie, Principal and John Corcoran AM, Principal and the entire Russell Kennedy team.

## Legal Community

PCLC highly values the support from our Legal Community who often supports the legal centre's client's with services on a pro bono basis or with significantly reduced fee briefs, specialist mentoring, contribution to our volunteer program and professional development sessions to our staff.

## Legal Mentors

Sherene Ozyurek - FCG Legal  
Gamini Jayasinghe - Easton Legal  
Ananda Jayasinghe - Easton Legal

John Corcoran - Russell Kennedy Lawyers  
Fleur Leishman - Northern Suburbs CLC WA  
Graeme Freeman - Freeman Family Law

## Counsel

Marie Wilkening-LeBrun - Howells List  
Carol Mcomish - Svensons List

## Legal Firms

Easton Legal  
FCG Legal  
Justice Crew Legal Services  
Maurice Blackburn

MDL Law  
Victoria Legal Aid  
Southern Legal

## Sponsors

Russell Kennedy Lawyers, generously supports our client disbursement fund providing much needed assistance to support clients with their disbursements related to their legal matter.

## Funders

[Australian Government Attorney Generals Department](#)  
[State Government Victoria Department of Justice & Regulation](#)  
[Victoria Legal Aid](#)  
[Department of Families, Fairness & Housing](#)  
[Consumer Affairs Victoria](#)  
[City of Glen Eira](#)  
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