

# Annual Report

2022-23



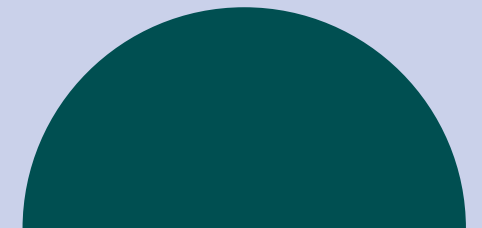
50 years of community justice





## Acknowledgement of Country

Southside Justice acknowledges over 65,000 years of continuous custodianship and care by the Boon Wurrong people of the Kulin nation for the lands and waters where we live and work. We acknowledge the Boon Wurrong people as the traditional and rightful owners of these lands, whose sovereignty has never been ceded. We pay respect to elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, recognising their ongoing leadership and strength of the world's oldest living culture.



# Shaping our future

**Southside Justice, formerly known as St Kilda Legal Service, was established as one of Victoria's first community legal centres. Set up as a collective by a group of passionate volunteers with the goal of enhancing access to justice for people disproportionately affected by systemic inequity.**

This year, the organisation turns 50. A lot has changed in this time, but our purpose remains steadfast.

## To increase access to legal support, promote fairness and advocate for social justice.

Our local area is home to over 300,000 people and includes some of the most affluent suburbs, yet:

- An estimated 25,000 people are on low incomes
- Housing is increasingly unavailable and unaffordable
- Income disparities are growing, and the gulf between generations, and their relative opportunities, health and security, is widening.

Compounding these local issues, are the universal high rates of family violence, a public and community housing crisis and a broken income support system.

We know that finding legal help is not always easy and people often disclose legal issues to other health and support professionals. This year we made a concerted effort to get out and about and meet our local community agencies. We have forged new relationships and established new partnerships to provide better and more holistic outcomes for the people we collectively support.

We operate in an increasingly competitive landscape. In some contexts, this has helped us improve our operations and services. In others, it has exacerbated challenges and limited the impact of our work and reach.

In 2018, we established the first state-wide LGBTIQ+ legal service. We have a feature piece at pages 11 and 12. We are immensely proud of all the service has achieved and its ability to demonstrate legal need in the LGBTIQ+ community now and for the future.

We were pleased to receive a grant from the Victorian Legal Services Board for our Sex Worker Legal Program. This has enabled us to build the capacity of the program and deepen our partnership with Vixen, Victoria's peer sex worker organisation. We also acknowledge the Department of Justice and Community Safety for its funding support.

An absolute highlight for the year was the formal opening of our new office. We thank David

Tournier for a memorable Smoking Ceremony and N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs for a moving and powerful Welcome to Country. As a key supporter of Community Legal Centres, the Honourable Mark Dreyfus KC MP officially opened our office, noting the unique and important role we play in providing access to justice to those most in need.

This year we commenced the important and deep work on developing our new strategy. The four key insights that came from the range of discussions with staff, board members, partners, stakeholders and funders highlighted for us:

- Never lose sight of the needs of people across our community; especially those facing the greatest systemic inequity.
- The security and wellbeing of our workforce is key to our existing and future success.
- Evidence matters; we need to ensure we are capturing and evaluating what we do so as to better tell our story and develop our practice.
- Going it alone is not easy nor the way, partnerships will be our central focus to better deliver and reach those that seek our support and that we advocate for.

These insights have proved extremely valuable in setting our future direction, and we look forward to sharing Our Strategy in late 2023.

Staff satisfaction and wellbeing is a key priority for the executive and the Board. In a 2023 staff satisfaction survey, 100% of staff strongly agreed that Southside Justice is a great place to work and 100% of staff strongly agreed/agreed that they can maintain a healthy work/life balance working at Southside Justice. We wholeheartedly thank each staff member, past and present, for their unwavering commitment, passion and camaraderie.

This year the Board endorsed staff entitlements for paid superannuation on unpaid parental leave and 20 days per annum for gender affirmation leave. Both of these entitlements reflect a commitment to staff wellbeing, diversity and inclusion.

We are deeply indebted to our talented and entrusted Board – Amanda Storey (Deputy Chair), Elliot Anderson (Treasurer), Brendan Lacota (Secretary), Stephen Somerville, Sonia Clarke and Peter Dikranis. We thank outgoing board members – Linda Glucina and Diane Preston – and acknowledge the substantial contribution they both made during periods of significant change.

As we write this reflective piece on the year that was, we are in the midst of organising our 50th anniversary celebration. Half a century of unwavering commitment, dedication, and community spirit have brought us to this remarkable milestone, and we want to acknowledge and thank everyone who has been part of our journey.

With thanks,

**Denis Nelthorpe,**  
Chair

**Mel Dye,**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Our new office

## Southside Justice is formally opened

**After a long journey (48 years to be exact), we formally opened our new office on 4 May 2023.**

We thank the many friends and supporters that helped us get to this milestone and those in attendance to mark this momentous occasion.

Specifically, we wish to extend our recognition to the presence of the Honourable Mark Dreyfus KC MP - Attorney General, Zoe Daniel - MP for Goldstein, Heather Cunsolo - Mayor of Port Phillip Council, Fiona McLeay - Commissioner & CEO of the Victorian Legal Service Board + Commissioner, Tania Wolf - President of the Law Institute of Victoria, Louise Glanville - CEO of Victoria Legal Aid and Louisa Gibbs - CEO of the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

We particularly acknowledge the presence of Deborah and Barbara, family of Roberta Perkins. Roberta was a trailblazing advocate for trans and sex worker rights. To recognise and celebrate Roberta's life and work, we have named one of our meeting rooms in her honour.

Our new office would not have been possible without the support of Just World Group, the Victorian Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes and the Federal Member for Macnamara, Josh Burns.

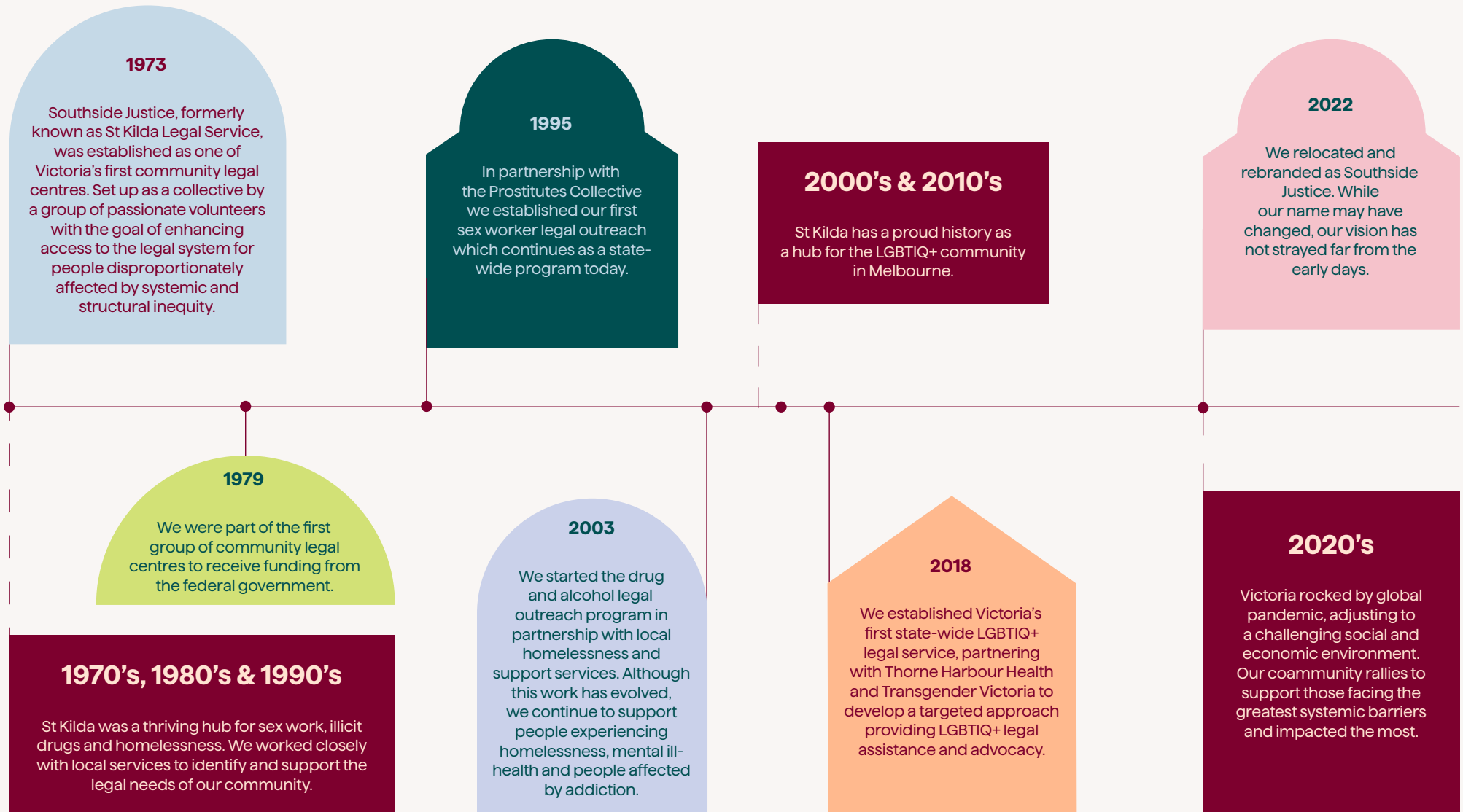
Our new office is a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive space for staff, visitors and importantly, the people we work with, for and alongside.



# Celebrating 50 years of community justice

For 50 years we have played a unique and important role in advancing the rights of people and for social justice.

Today, we continue to work with our partners to support people, challenge injustices and advocate for fairer outcomes and laws.



# Our community

## Working with and for

**Our community is a cornerstone of our work. The lives and experiences of the communities we work with and for drive our work.**

### We primarily exist for:

- People impacted by inequity and the lack of fairness in the legal system who live and access services in the local government areas of Bayside, Port Phillip and Stonnington.
- Communities that require tailored advocacy to increase access to justice through our targeted statewide legal programs.
- People who can achieve fairer outcomes and increased access to the legal system through collective advocacy with our partners.

We aim to work collaboratively with partners and local agencies to identify and support people in our community. By adopting this integrated approach, we are better able to address intersectional needs and collectively provide tailored and holistic support.

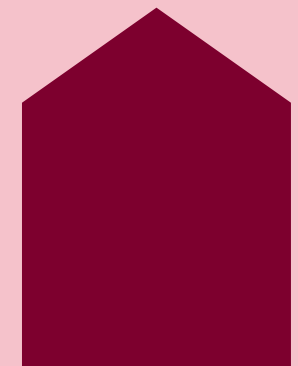
We have partnerships or referral arrangements with the following organisations:

- Better Health Network
- Good Shepherd
- Jewish Care
- Lauch Housing
- Maternal Child and Health Services
- Melbourne City Mission
- Orange Door
- Port Phillip Community Group
- Sacred Heart Mission
- Salvation Army
- St Kilda Gatehouse
- Vincent Care – Olive’s Place
- Vixen
- Uniting

This list is not expansive and we welcome referrals from any community organisation in our local government areas. Our referral form is located at [https://southsidejustice.org.au/our\\_work/online-referral](https://southsidejustice.org.au/our_work/online-referral)

Katie from the Women’s House at Sacred Heart Mission said this about working collaboratively with Southside Justice:

**“Working side by side with Southside Justice allows the people we support to feel that there is continuity, shared goals and purpose. Communities of support coming together strengthen resources and our service users’ connections, and mean ultimately we are increasing positive outcomes for people.”**



# Our role

## The work we do

Our impact is measured not just in the number of people we support but in lives positively changed. Throughout the year, we have witnessed numerous success stories where our legal support has empowered individuals to overcome challenges and pursue a path toward a better future. These stories stand as a testament to the meaningful impact of our work on the lives of individuals and communities we are dedicated to supporting.

In 2023-24 we will develop a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework. This will encompass a range of indicators that will help us to evaluate our performance and impact, making sure we celebrate our success and learn from everything we do.



**We support**  
people facing the greatest need in our community to understand their legal rights and access the support and services they need.



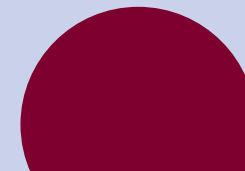
**We advocate**  
for people to achieve fair and just outcomes, for better laws and systems that promote fairness and progress social justice.



**We collaborate**  
with community and sector partners at the right time and place to help people overcome complex problems and to improve their lives.

Here's what Brad said about our support and advocacy

**“Some years back I was having a rough time and ended up living in my car for a bit over a year. During this time, I incurred a lot of fines that I was unable to afford. I’ve been able to pull myself out of homelessness since then, but the fines hung over my head and prevented me from moving on with my life. I mustered up the courage to deal with all my legal matters and contacted Southside Justice. Since that call I felt I was cared for, supported, and hopeful that these people were the key to helping me work through the legal issues weighing me down.”**





# Farah's story

## Seeking a just outcome

**When a mechanic illegally sold Farah's (she/her) car, we advocated on her behalf and achieved compensation so that Farah could buy a new one.**

Farah is a survivor of family violence who fled to safe housing in regional Victoria, where she struggled to find long term housing. She was referred to Southside Justice by Sacred Heart Mission.

When we met Farah, she already had a Family Violence Intervention Order in place and was safe. She was seeking justice and hoped to get compensation so that she could buy a new car.

Farah's family violence support worker had organised for her car to be towed to a mechanic for assessment and repair. They also asked if it could be stored at the mechanic until longer term housing was available. The mechanic repaired the vehicle, agreed to store it, and received payment from the community service that was supporting Farah. Later the mechanic claimed that after 28 days they sent the car to the wreckers. But in fact, the mechanic sold it for a profit.

On Farah's behalf, we wrote to the mechanic. When they were unable to produce paperwork to prove the car had been sent to the wreckers, we searched VicRoads' registration database. We found that the vehicle was still on the roads and had been registered to a new owner a few months after Farah left it with the mechanic. We then tried to negotiate directly with the mechanic on Farah's behalf but were unsuccessful. So, we applied to Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the matter settled at the pre-hearing mediation.

Farah has now received the final instalment of the settlement. She is pleased to be able to move on from a time of significant crisis with funds for a new car, and a sense of justice having been served.

Name has been changed to protect confidentiality.



# Sex Worker Legal Program

**Following passage of Victoria's historic sex work decriminalisation reforms in 2022, we expanded our services for sex workers in our local community into a state-wide Sex Worker Legal Program (SWLP).**

Working in partnership with Vixen and collaborating with community partners like RhED (Better Health Network), SWLP provides previously criminalised workers with unprecedented support and confidence to access legal advice and engage with the law to advance their safety, equality and human rights.

In its first full 12 months of operation, the SWLP has:

- Provided information, referrals, legal advice, ongoing case work and support to sex workers across Victoria in areas of law including discrimination, sexual harassment, criminal law, victims of crime assistance, contractual and employment disputes, tenancy, family violence and personal safety intervention orders.
- Delivered sex worker awareness and substantive law training on decriminalisation and discrimination to over 100 legal practitioners in Victoria who work in community legal centres, Victoria Legal Aid and pro bono law firms.

- Secured a grant of funding from the Victorian Legal Services Board to support us in co-designing the program's strategy together with Vixen, Victoria's peer sex worker organisation.
- Co-designed and commenced implementing our monitoring, evaluation and learning framework in partnership with Vixen.

Alex from RhED at Better Health Network shared their views about the benefits of a specialised legal program for sex workers:

**“Having a safe, flexible and sex worker affirmative legal practice to support our RhED clients has been extremely beneficial to ourselves and our clients.**

**“Southside Justice understands the complexities of sex work and the discrimination and marginalisation sex workers face. They have been strong allies and advocates for sex worker rights and have a thorough understanding of the new decriminalisation laws.”**

## Janet's story

### “One step forward in my life”

Janet (she/her) sought advice about getting intimate images of her removed from an escort agency website. She had previously worked at the agency and provided the photos for promotional use. Once she stopped working at the agency, Janet repeatedly asked them to stop using her photos – however they ignored her and continued posting images of Janet online without her consent. On Janet's behalf, we wrote to the agency requesting the images be removed, which they were within a few days.

**“I am overwhelmed with the result that you've helped me reach. This is one step forward in my life, and without your help, I would be lost and constantly looking over my shoulder or being on guard, just in case someone finds out about my past.”**

Name has been changed to protect confidentiality.

# Celebrating Victoria's first LGBTIQ+ Legal Program

In a first for Victoria, we established a statewide LGBTIQ+ legal program in May 2018. This targeted program built on the decades of experience responding to the legal needs of the LGBTIQ+ community. It enabled us to develop key community partnerships and engage in systemic advocacy to improve the LGBTIQ+ community's access to the legal system.

## Our LGBTIQ+ Health Justice Partnership

The program was established through a health justice partnership with Thorne Harbour Health, funded by the Victorian Law Foundation and a private donor. This partnership deepened our connection to the LGBTIQ+ community beyond our local government area and enabled the program's lawyer to provide in situ legal assistance to more clients across the state.

During the first two years of the program two key resources, the [LGBTIQ Legal Needs Analysis](#), and the [LGBTIQ Inclusive Practice Toolkit](#), were developed to increase the legal assistance sectors' understanding of LGBTIQ+ legal needs. These resources continue to support community legal services increase safety and accessibility for LGBTIQ+ clients across Australia.

In 2019, the LGBTIQ+ Legal Service won Community Organisation of the year in recognition of outstanding contribution to the legal assistance sector.

## Roberta Perkins Law Project

In 2019 the program established the Roberta Perkins Law Project in partnership with Transgender Victoria. It aimed to increase the delivery of legal services to trans and gender diverse people across Victoria. The Project enhanced our understanding of trans and gender diverse experiences within the legal system. It particularly provided much needed assistance to trans and gender diverse people in Victorian prisons, advocating for appropriate placement and the ability for criminalised trans people to change their name and sex.

## LGBTIQ+ experiences of family violence

In 2020 we launched Victoria's first targeted LGBTIQ+ family violence legal clinic, providing legal assistance, systemic advocacy and community legal education on LGBTIQ+ experiences of the family violence legal system. We worked closely with Switchboard Victoria's Rainbow Door Service to provide holistic legal assistance to many of their clients affected by family violence.

In 2022 we partnered with Monash Centre for Gender and Family Violence Prevention in a research project that explored our clients lived experience of the Victorian family violence legal system. The final report, 'Can't you girls work this out?': LGBTQ+ victim-survivors' experiences of Victoria's family violence intervention order system, is the first study of its kind in Australia, adding to the emerging evidence base on LGBTIQ+ experiences of family violence and the legal system.

We helped 700 LGBTIQ+ people across Victoria between 2019-2023, providing:

**2,693**

legal services

**1,142**

legal advices

**471**

legal representation cases

**1,210**

information and referral

**900**

people attending our training

## LGBTIQ+ Legal Program Strategy 2021 – 2023

In 2021 we undertook a review of the program and consulted with key community partners and stakeholders to develop our program strategy 2021-2023. The Strategy ensured the program worked in areas in which we could have the greatest impact for people with the greatest legal need. It aimed to offer specialised legal assistance that targeted legal issues impacted by our clients LGBTIQ+ identities and linked to experiences of violence, discrimination and harassment.

## Entrenching our learnings

We remain committed to entrenching our learnings across the organisation and sharing them across the legal sector. We have developed a [guide to supporting staff](#) to address sensitive discussions with LGBTIQ+ clients, and we are leading in the provision of gender affirmation leave and support in the legal assistance sector through our new [Gender Affirmation Policy](#).

It has been an honor to work with, advocate for and celebrate the lives of LGBTIQ+ Victorians over the last five years.

# Liam's story

## A targeted service to help create a second chance

Liam (he/him) is a cis gay man born in New Zealand. Liam contacted our targeted LGBTIQ+ legal program for help with criminal charges. When we first engaged with Liam, he was experiencing heightened levels of anxiety about the charges. Liam had no criminal history and was worried about the impact of a criminal conviction on his visa status.

Liam explained to us that he attended a public toilet block in Melbourne believing it was a 'beat', where he could meet other gay and queer men. 'Beats' have a long and continuing history as safe spaces for gay and queer men to meet for sex. Unfortunately, Liam was wrong about the location of the beat and a man who Liam believed was attending for the same reason reported him to the police. The police attended and Liam was arrested.

We helped Liam to apply for diversion, which after some negotiations with the police, they agreed to. We also referred Liam to an LGBTIQ+ friendly immigration lawyer who provided advice to Liam about the impacts on his visa.

We represented Liam at Court and the Magistrate granted diversion. This means if Liam follows the conditions to be on good behaviour and continue to see his psychologist, the police will drop the charges and there will be no criminal record.

Liam was extremely relieved with the outcome and now feels he can get on with his life.

**“The LGBTIQ+ Legal Program made this process so much easier for me. With this being my first encounter with the law in this manner, I was truly terrified of what may come. My lawyer was so professional and patient with me. Their assistance was pivotal in making it through to the other side and guiding me on what I needed to do throughout the process.”**

\* Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.



## Our year in numbers

# We helped 1088 people

\* Due to funding constraints this year we had to reduce family law services offered to our community. Family law is an area of significant unmet legal need, and with additional funding support, we are committed to offering more family law legal assistance.

Note – At 30 June 2023, our total FTE staffing was 8.7. With external support for finance and IT.

### Of our clients

**81%**

were experiencing financial hardship

**74%**

were experiencing family violence

**37%**

indicated they live with a disability or mental illness

**26%**

were experiencing homelessness

### And provided these services

**862**

legal advice

**323**

legal tasks

**599**

duty lawyer services

**613**

information and referrals

**128**

legal representation cases

### In these areas of law

**52%**

Civil

**27%**

Criminal

**21%**

Family law\*



# Our finances

## Achieving our purpose in the most effective and financially sustainable way

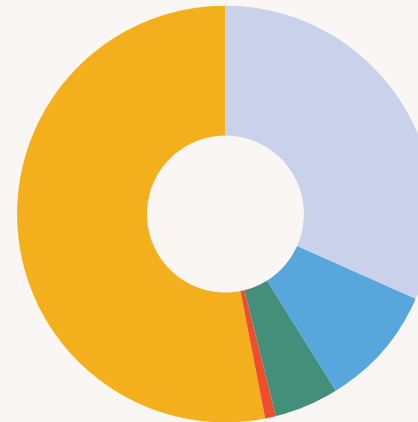
The audited financial results for the 2022-23 financial year is a surplus of \$8,122. At 30 June 2023, we maintain net assets and retained earnings of \$237,875.

## Our annual income for 2022-23 totalled \$1,477,181.

In 2022-23, we received funding from the sources shown in the charts. As highlighted, our work is made possible largely thanks to the financial support of the Victorian Government, both through our Community Legal Service Program (CLSP) funding and project funding for the LGBTIQ+ Legal Program and the Sex Worker Legal Program.

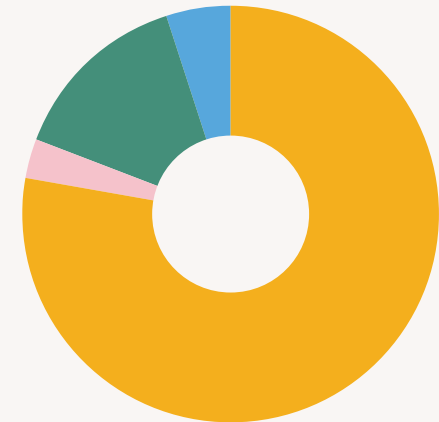
In the future, we aim to achieve a sustainable diversification of our funding sources, ensuring financial resilience and fostering long-term stability for our organisation.

### Income



- 51% State Government – CLSP
- 33% State Government – Specialised Programs
- 10% Federal Government
- 5% Victorian Legal Services Board
- < 1% Donations
- < 1% Interest
- < 1% Other

### Expenses



- 78% Employee
- 3% Administration & finance
- 14% Overheads
- 5% Program costs

# Thank you

## We're appreciative of the support and funding from:

### **Barristers**

Bonnie Renou  
Evelyn Tadros  
Melinda Jackson

### **Community legal centres**

Human Rights Law  
Centre  
Inner Melbourne  
Community Legal  
Job Watch  
Justice Connect  
Tenants Victoria

### **Government & Statutory Authorities**

Commonwealth  
Government of  
Australia  
Department of Justice  
and Community Safety  
Victoria Legal Aid  
Victorian Government  
Victorian Legal  
Services Board +  
Commissioner

### **Law firms**

Ashurst  
Clayton Utz  
Herbert Smith Freehills  
Kerdo Legal  
Maddocks  
Maurice Blackburn  
Ryan Carlisle Thomas

### **Organisations**

Ensemble Strategy  
Josef Legal  
Just World Investments  
Nous Group





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