

Victorian Legal Services
BOARD + COMMISSIONER

GRANTS PROGRAM
Celebrating
10 YEARS
2007–2017

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12
HEALTH-JUSTICE
PARTNERSHIPS
ESTABLISHED

\$35
MILLION
AWARDED

8
AWARD-WINNING
PROJECTS

75
RESEARCH
REPORTS
PUBLISHED

10
YEARS

3
IMPORTANT
THEMES
FUNDED

200
PROJECTS
FUNDED

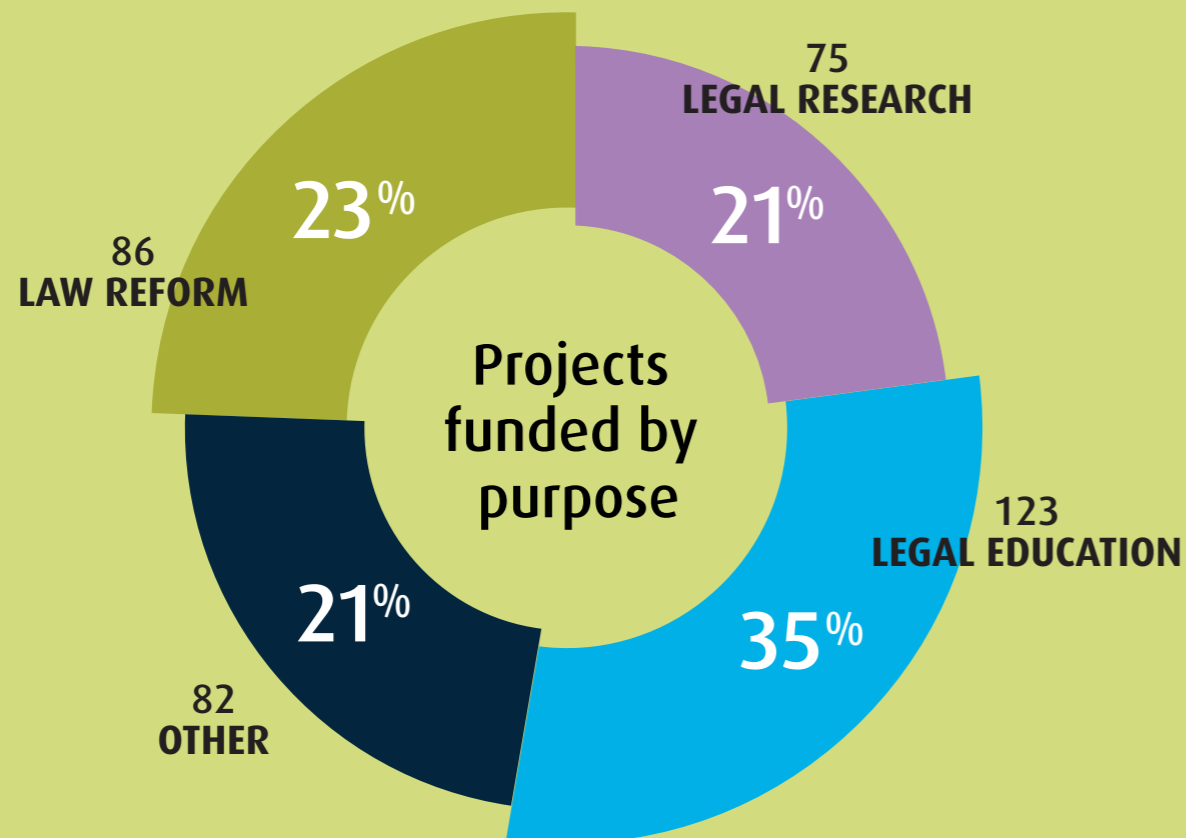
500
FUNDING
APPLICATIONS
RECEIVED

Program Overview

The Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program was first established in 2007 under the *Legal Profession Act 2004*, which now comes under the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014* (Vic).

The aim of the Grants Program is to distribute funding to projects which:

- + Improve the administration of laws;
- + Increase access to justice;
- + Improve legal services; and
- + Inform and educate the wider community about legal services.

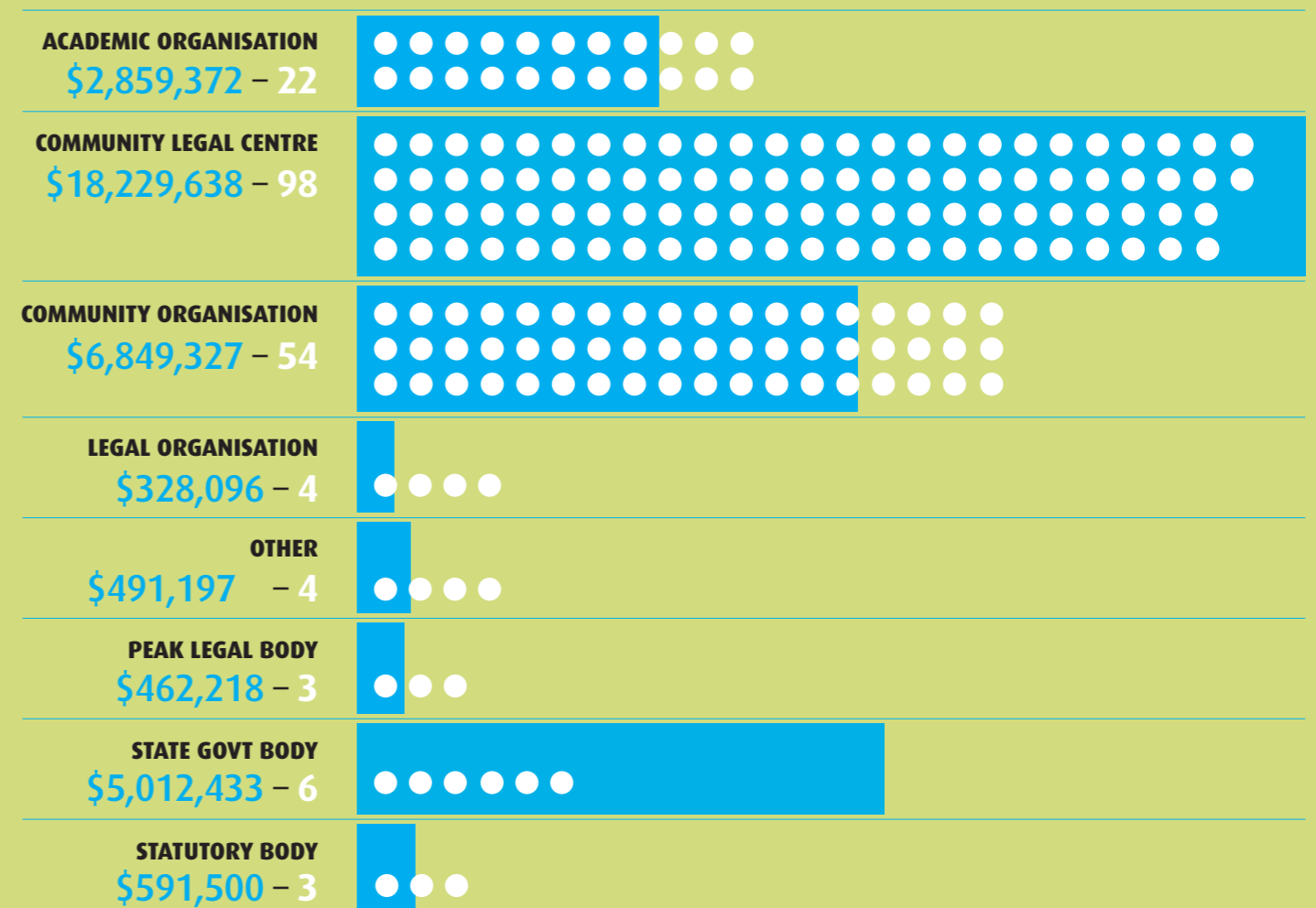


Projects may fit within more than one segment.

Since the first grants funding round opened for applications in September 2007, the Grants Program has received almost 500 funding applications and funded nearly 200 projects with \$35 million of funding.

Number of projects funded and amount provided

■ Funding
● No. of Projects



Priority Themes

The Grants Program has conducted three themed funding rounds that have concentrated support around a particular important legal issue. This has proved a successful strategy contributing to long term systemic and policy changes.

2011

Prevention of Violence Against Women

Initially eleven projects were successfully granted funding of \$3 million during the 2011 Major Grants Round to address violence against women. A further five projects were funded during subsequent funding rounds in 2012 and 2013. The work that was funded was always envisaged as having a strategic collective impact to influence policy and practice. To this end the projects trialled new service delivery models, released reports making policy recommendations, collected evidence, have been strong advocates, and made a huge difference in many people's lives.

Twelve projects that were funded by the Board under this theme made a submission to the Royal Commission on Family Violence referencing work funded.

Their influence is evident in the number of mentions in the final report and the influence they have had on the final recommendations.

(See next section)

2014

Health Justice Partnerships

In 2014 Health Justice Partnerships were a new way of delivering legal services. The Board changed the landscape in Victoria by funding 12 new Health Justice Partnerships (or HJPs) to assist people with legal issues in places where they are more likely to seek help such as hospitals and community health clinics. The HJPs variously focused on young people, seniors, newly arrived migrants, women experiencing violence, new mothers, and people experiencing mortgage stress. Services were delivered in metropolitan and rural settings. This model is now being replicated across Australia and a new national body, Health Justice Australia, has been set up to promote this model. The first national conference has been held in 2017.

The Department of Justice and Regulation *Access to Justice Review Report* published in October 2016 commended this model and has recommended continuation and replication to improve access to legal services.

Board funded HJPs were also commended in the Family Violence Royal Commission Report as a recommended practice.

2017

Preventing women's contact with the criminal justice system

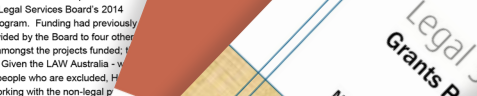
From 2006 to 2016 Victoria's female prison population increased by 75%.

Remand numbers are particularly high among women. Corrections Victoria data indicates that in 2016, 36.9 per cent of all women prisoners were unsentenced compared with 24.9% in 2007.

Few women in custody are serious violent offenders.

The Board has allocated almost \$2M under this theme to 3 innovative projects with the following aims:

- + Reduce female encounters with the justice system;
- + Reduce the factors driving growth in the female prison population;
- + Reduce female incarceration and recidivism rates;
- + Provide models for reform.



Influencing Policy and Reform

Many of the projects funded by the Board utilise their experience and research to make submissions to government inquiries and to influence practice and reform in the legal system. Results are not always apparent for many years but many have had, and continue to have, significant impact.

Magistrates' solution focused *Bench Book* widely used (2007)

The *Bench Book* produced by Dr Michael King at Monash University with funding in 2007 assists judges and magistrates to take a therapeutic approach to their judging to support the positive behavioural change of offenders.

In 2016 the Mental Health Review Board announced that the *Bench Book* will be the principal source used to inform the guide for members of the newly established Mental Health Tribunal.

Family Violence Royal Commission Recommendations

In 2015 the Victorian Government announced a Royal Commission into Family Violence. Twelve projects that were funded by the Board under the theme of Prevention of Violence Against Women made a submission to the Royal Commission referencing work funded.

Their influence is evident in the number of mentions in the final report and the influence they



Meeting of funded projects

have had on the final recommendations. For instance Women's Legal Service's *Stepping Stones* (SS) Report is cited 36 times in the final *Family Violence Royal Commission Report*, and they adopted 11 of the 27 recommendations proposed in the SS report in some form.

Will Somebody listen to me? 2012-2015 – Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre's final report outlines the experiences, suggestions and concerns of women who had or were experiencing family violence in Regional Victoria. Findings and recommendations in the report were frequently referenced by the Royal Commission Report.

The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service made

significant contribution to the Royal Commission through our support to their policy and advocacy program. The Victorian Government have subsequently announced (13/4/2016) \$25.7 million in dedicated funding for Aboriginal communities to address family violence.



Addressing systemic abuse in the taxi industry (2010-14)

Footscray CLC and the Federation CLC utilised individual casework to address exploitation of drivers in the taxi industry.

The Taxi Driver Legal Service provided legal advice, and conducted litigation, on behalf of vulnerable drivers who were experiencing complex legal problems. This service coincided with the Victorian Government's inquiry into the taxi industry. The service shared the issues arising from the casework with the Taxi Inquiry. This had a significant impact on reforms many of which were accepted and implemented including a requirement for taxi owners to indemnify taxi drivers in the event of an accident, to obtain APRA approved insurance and to pay a higher proportion of the fare to drivers.

Influencing Policy and Reform (Cont.)



Acting on the Warning Signs (AOWS) model to be rolled out across Victorian hospitals (2011–15)

The AOWS model, which is a partnership between Inner Melbourne Legal Service and Royal Women’s Hospital, targeting family violence has generated significant momentum, achieved whole-of-hospital support and improved legal access for vulnerable women.

It has caught the notice of the Victorian Government and they have sought the hospital’s assistance in rolling out this model to other hospitals across Victoria.



First culturally-appropriate legal centre for victims of family violence (2011–15)

The inTouch Legal Centre was the first of its kind in Australia. It established a community legal centre within the inTouch Multicultural Centre against Family Violence. This idea has now been taken up in Queensland.

Stepping Stones influences banking policy (2013–15)

The 2015 *Stepping Stones* report was launched by Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty. She provided an introduction into the economic

barriers experienced by women after family violence.

The project findings continue to influence high level change in community and business sectors, for example new funding for specialist family violence financial counsellors and contributing to the development of family violence guidelines for the Australian Bankers Association and the Essential Services Commission.

First Protected Person’s Space in a Magistrate’s Court (2012–14)

In November 2012 the Family Violence Integration Project, led by Eastern Community Legal Centre launched the Protected Persons Space at Ringwood Magistrates’ Court, the first of its kind in a Victorian Magistrates’ Court. This space is a separate waiting area for vulnerable court users feeling intimidated or unsafe.

All Magistrates’ Court of Victoria headquarter courts are now required to provide safe waiting areas within 5 years as a result of the Royal Commission.

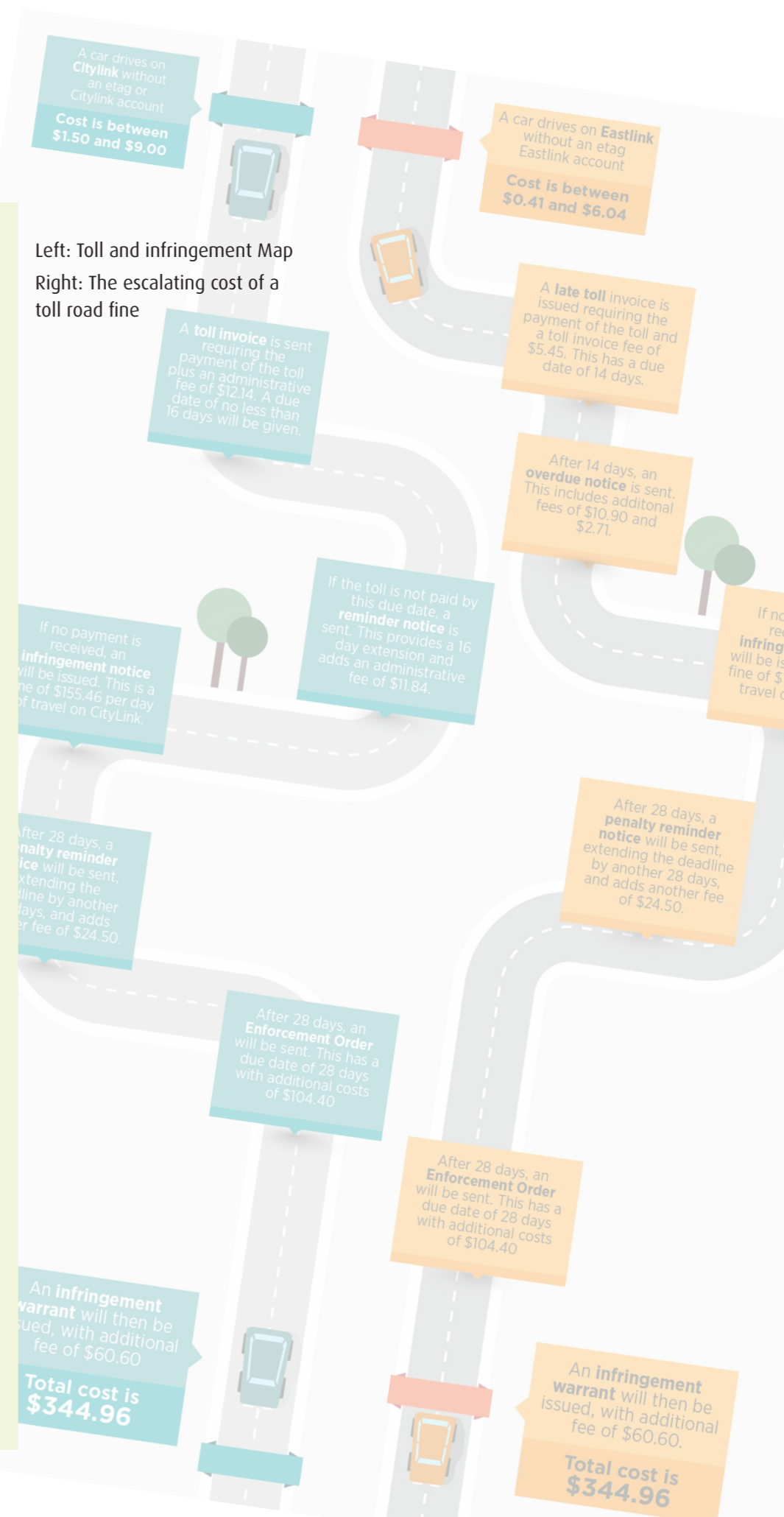


Road tolls reform (2016–19)

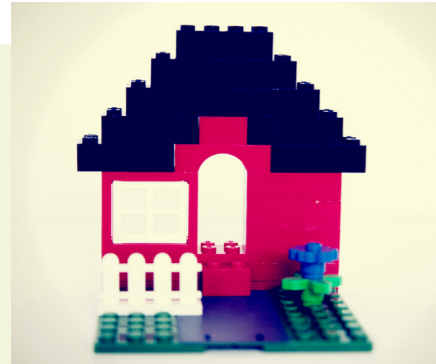
This project involves WEStjustice working closely with the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT and a group of legal assistance agencies to advocate for an overhaul of the tolling enforcement system.

As a result of this advocacy, Transurban has made changes to their hardship processes, including establishing a dedicated hardship telephone line, and have appointed staff whose role is to engage more effectively with the sector and community about hardship and diverting unpaid tolls from becoming infringements. The State Government has indicated it is committed to alleviating the pressure that toll fines cause on the courts and vulnerable individuals through major contractual and legislative reform in the next six months.

The work continues.



Influencing Policy and Reform (Cont.)



Calls for a ban on rent to buy and vendor term contracts (2015–16)

The 2016 findings of the Consumer Action Law Centre’s (CALC) project is titled *Fringe Dwellings*. It focuses on the vendor finance and rent-to-buy housing black market, that targets vulnerable people desperate to buy a house.

This report influenced Consumer Affairs Victoria options paper proposing a ban on rent-to-buy and vendor terms contracts.

“...it responds directly to the recommendations from our LSB-funded Fringe Dwellings report, and looks like best case scenario as far as consumer protection goes. If legislated, we expect that we will not see the consumer harm and disputes that have affected many vulnerable families across Victoria in the future.”

Gerard Brody, CEO, CALC

The reforms are pending.



First Police Complaints Clinic established in Victoria (2015–17)

The Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre’s Police Complaints Clinic funded in 2015 for 2 years has been instrumental in detailing the significant unmet legal need in this area across the state as well as providing a forensic analysis of the problems within current complaint handling system in Victoria.

In July 2017, Victorian Parliament’s IBAC Committee announced an Inquiry into the external oversight of police corruption and misconduct in Victoria. This is the first such parliamentary review in several decades.

This inquiry is in direct response to concerns raised by the community and in particular to a joint letter requesting a public inquiry sent by the centre’s Police Accountability Project and 13 other organisations in November 2016.

The Parliamentary IBAC Committee’s Inquiry into the External Oversight and Investigation of Police Corruption and Misconduct in Victoria will report by 30 June 2018.

Further information is available at www.policeaccountability.org.au

Promoting Health Justice Partnerships (2014–18)

The 2017 *Access to Justice* DOJR report commended the Health Justice Partnership model citing Board funded projects and has recommended continuation and replication to improve access to legal services. (recommendation 3.4);

Our video promoting Health Justice Partnerships features on the Health Justice Australia website, has been used in conference presentations, and was made available to the Access to Justice Review. Health Justice Partnerships are now a recognised and respected way of delivering legal services across Australia.

The first national conference, supported by the Board, took place in 2017.



Health Justice Partnership Video

The effect of our funding is often magnified significantly through the leveraging of pro bono assistance.

Justice Connect’s Not-for-profit Law

A Deloitte Access Economics’ Report has shown that Justice Connect’s Not-for-profit Law delivered an estimated \$8.9 million to the economy over the 3 years of our funding.

Justice Connect’s Seniors Law

This Health Justice Partnership has referred 68 matters to pro bono lawyers who have dedicated over 1,500 hours of work valued at over \$700,000 to address elder abuse.

Award-winning Projects

The Board funds many projects and people that deserve recognition for the excellent work done in improving the justice system. Here are examples where this has happened.

inTouch

InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence HJP project was awarded the 2017 Diversity and Law Category of the Migration and Settlement Awards for its HJP with Monash Health in South East Region.

Former CEO, Ms Maya Avdibegovic accepting the award



Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) President's Awards

2017 **Ms Linda Gyorki**, Manager (Health Justice Partnerships) and Senior LIV Community Lawyer, received the award for her work on Board funded project with Inner Melbourne Community Legal with Royal Women's Hospital for Acting on the Warning Signs.

2016 **Emma Smallwood** was named LIV Community Lawyer of the Year Award 2016 for her work on Stepping Stones project.

2012 **Helen Fatouros**, Government lawyer of the Year Award, Office of Public Prosecutions, received the award for leading the successful delivery of the Interactive Legal Education Program (ilep) aimed at raising the professional effectiveness of both prosecution and defence lawyers in advocacy and case preparation for sexual offence matters.

Justice Connect's NFP Law and Senior's Law

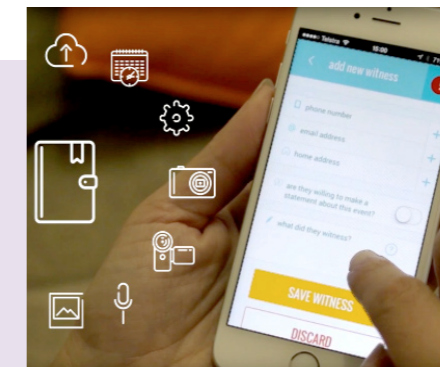
Over the 3 year project period, Justice Connect's Not-for-profit Law service has reached hundreds of thousands of community organisations to support the sector in a period of unprecedented change.

NFP Law was nominated as a finalist in the 2016 Hesta Awards for the social impact category.

Senior's Law HJP jointly won the 2017 VicHealth Improving Health Equity Award with partner CoHealth - www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/about/awards



Joint winners of the Vic Health – Improving Health Equity Award



Family Violence App wins Victorian Premier's iAward for Innovation

The SmartSafe+ App, by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, won the inaugural Victorian Premier's iAward for Innovation 2016 at the Australian Information Industry Association Awards.

Premier Daniel Andrews said: *"SmartSafe+ is a fantastic app helping to tackle family violence. It will save lives – and it's a fitting first winner of the Victorian Premier's iAward for Public Sector Innovation."* Pro Bono Australia

Victorian Early Years Awards 2016 recognises MABELS Project success

Eastern Community Legal Centre and partners were announced winners at the Victorian Early Years Awards 2016 in the Creating



Collaborative Community partnerships category. The Award was presented at the National Gallery of Victoria on 18 October 2016.

Funded via the 2014 Grants Funding Round under the priority theme of Health and Justice Partnerships.

JobVoice wins National Rural Law and Justice Award

JobVoice won the National Rural Law and Justice Award 2015 for Transformative Use of Technology in the Law which was announced in July at the annual National Rural Law and Justice Conference.

Social Security Online project from Social Security Right Victoria (SSRV) was funded via the 2011 Grants funding Round.

Educating Community

Legal issues affect all aspects of our lives.

An important part of the grants program has been supporting the development of legal education about the rights and responsibilities for specific groups and issues.

Over 50 education programs have been delivered in print, online and in person.



Changing Lives

Projects operating in the community can make a huge difference to people's lives.



Youth Community and Law Program Youth Junction (2012–16)

This program has demonstrated a measurable impact on crime prevention for young adults in the Western Region.

Since the introduction of the program, it has enjoyed remarkable success with the non-reoffending rate of 76%. The Courts have also recognised the success rate and its benefits, and are referring greater numbers of young people to the program.

“The support of VLSB over the years has been critical in getting us to the positive position we are in today and for helping The Youth Junction Inc. to build a credible program that can demonstrate beneficial outcomes that reduce offending and young adult’s involvement in the Criminal Justice System...”

Illustration by Margaret Krajnc, *Voices against violence*

First Step Legal Service HJP St Kilda (2014–16)

This project helped 133 clients break the cycle of drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, relapse and re-offending, and support their sustained recovery towards the achievement of a healthier, safer community. The First Step Program and the First Step Legal Service aims to affect this vision through the provision of enhanced multidimensional services within a unique advocacy health alliance that better supports the health, legal and social needs of clients and assists them to make positive life choices and live more meaningful lives.

Grandparent of client:

“We feel we have our granddaughter back for the first time in over ten years. It’s been such a heartbreaking time. There are no words to express the depth of our gratitude.”



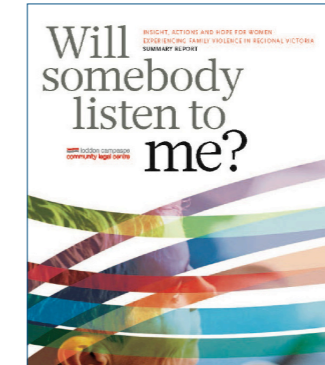
Read along Dads Castlemaine (2016–18)

The program aims to keep fathers who are serving prison terms in touch with their children. The fathers record themselves reading a book to their child, with both the recording and the book later being sent to their child.

It seeks to improve chances of prisoner rehabilitation through connection with their family.

“It’s a way to be involved in their lives. I do it every chance I get. Just because you’re in jail, it doesn’t mean you stop being a dad. I’m still a dad.”

Interview with Prisoner, Castlemaine’s Middleton Prison, *Herald Sun* 6 June 2017



Will Somebody listen to me? Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre (2012–15)

Applicants surveyed by the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre said they felt safer and better informed and were more able to participate and be heard in the court process when represented by a good lawyer.

A survey respondent noted:
“[M]y lawyer has been absolutely brilliant, she has bent over backwards, any question she didn’t know she has found out, she has kept me informed, ringing me straight away, she has made everything easy, communicating by email... I probably ask stupid questions all the time, but... [s]he’s very patient and understanding and takes the time to help me understand. You sort of feel empowered, you’re understood and not in the dark anymore.”



Justice Connect Senior’s Law HJP (2014–18)

“You helped me resolve a year’s worth of intimidation and dispute. You used the law to uphold the truth. You helped me, a 60 year old senior widow with high blood pressure and lots of sickness, finally access justice.”

From another HJP, THE FINAL WORD:

“You saved my life because I didn’t know there was a way out of this.”

Further Information

To access the most up-to-date information about the Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program, please visit our website at www.lsbc.vic.gov.au

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

To subscribe/unsubscribe from the Board Grants Program E-Bulletin, please email grants@lsbc.vic.gov.au