
annual report
2011 2012

women's legal
service victoria



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mission

Women's Legal Service Victoria works to improve access to justice and outcomes for women who have experienced relationship breakdown or violence. WLSV does this by:

- Providing quality legal services that are responsive to women's needs and to the needs of their children
- Providing women, and people who work with women, with knowledge and skills to better navigate the legal system
- Advocating for law & policy reform.

vision

Justice, safety, empowerment for women and their children

values

Progressive
Respectful
Collaborative
Inclusive
Empowering

funding

Women's Legal Service Victoria is funded by the Indigenous Justice and Legal Assistance Division, Attorney General's Department – Canberra and by Victoria Legal Aid to provide the core client services described on page 4, as well as to undertake law reform and legal education work. The funding provided is approximately:

- \$1 million – Attorney General's Department
- \$250,000 – Victoria Legal Aid

In this financial year, WLSV has also received:

- \$53,000 funding from the Legal Services Board (through Women's Health in the North) to deliver legal services via Skype and provide professional development (see p12)
- \$10,000 donation from the AFL Staff Social Club towards the cost of a new telephone system (see p12)

WLSV services

Legal Advice Line

Phone 03 9642 0877
(1800 133 302 free call for country callers)

Monday 10:00am – 1:00pm
Tuesday 6:30pm – 8:30pm
Wednesday 2:00pm – 5:00pm
Thursday 6:30pm – 8:30pm

The Legal Advice Line is for women in Victoria who need legal advice, information or referral – irrespective of income or assets. Interpreter services are available. Women should telephone the Legal Advice Line before attending WLSV's Face to Face Legal Advice Clinic as WLSV lawyers may be able to provide the appropriate legal information, advice or referral over the telephone.

Face to Face Legal Advice Clinic

Level 3 43 Hardware Lane Melbourne Vic 3000
Phone 03 9642 0877
Every Thursday 9:30am – 12:00pm

Advice & Representation at Melbourne Magistrates' Court

Level 6 233 William Street Melbourne Vic 3000
(cnr Lonsdale Street)
Phone 03 9642 0877
Monday to Friday 9:30am – 1:00pm

Casework Services

WLSV also provides ongoing casework assistance, focusing on issues arising from relationship breakdown and violence against women, including family law, de facto relationships, family violence and personal safety intervention orders.

WLSV focuses on areas of law where women are, or could potentially be disadvantaged (in family law, for example, where separation often reduces women's financial circumstances) and where women's access to justice and legal support is limited.

board members

Anne Lyon	<i>Chair</i>
Libby Maynard	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
Tali Bernard	<i>Secretary</i>
Gesualda Li Rosi	<i>Treasurer</i>
Lorna Gelbert	<i>Public Officer</i>

Dorothy Gibbs	<i>Member</i>
Jennifer Dillon	<i>Member</i>
Cheri Le Cornu	<i>Member</i>
Leanne Miller	<i>Member</i>
Joanna Fletcher	<i>Ex-officio member</i>

WLSV staff

Joanna Fletcher	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
Leanne Sinclair	<i>Principal Lawyer (until November 2011)</i>
Helen Matthews	<i>Principal Lawyer (from January 2012)</i>
Abigail Sullivan	<i>Lawyer</i>
Brenna Powney	<i>Lawyer</i>
Carol Mellords	<i>Lawyer</i>
Chloe McGrath	<i>Lawyer</i>
Gwen Yeoh	<i>Lawyer</i>
Emma Smallwood	<i>Lawyer</i>
Henrietta Barclay	<i>Lawyer</i>

Jane Bentley	<i>Lawyer</i>
Danielle Wisniak	<i>Legal Advice Line Supervisor/Lawyer</i>
Elisa Whittaker	<i>Outreach Coordinator/Lawyer</i>
Pasanna Mutha-Merennege	<i>Policy & Campaigns Manager</i>
Allyson Foster	<i>Legal Education Manager</i>
Zione Walker-Nthenda	<i>Legal Educator/Lawyer</i>
Eila Poursagheri	<i>Legal Educator/Lawyer</i>
Weng Lan Chong	<i>Finance Officer</i>
Samantha Watson	<i>Office Administrator/Project Manager</i>
Angela Borg	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>

During the 2011-12 financial year the Board has had a strong focus on governance, reviewed and evaluated our performance and considered a structure that would support the work of the Board. Consequently we established two Board sub-committees, Audit & Risk and Marketing and Fundraising. The new Board structure will provide effective stewardship of Women's Legal Service Victoria and ensure the organisation is well positioned into the future. Our thanks is extended to Jan West for advice and initial support with the establishment of the Audit and Risk Sub-Committee.

Three Board working groups have also progressed significant matters for the organisation. The Constitution Working Group commenced a review of our Constitution and that work will be completed in the new financial year. The Governance and Board Succession Working Group has progressed matters related to succession planning and the implications for the governance of WLSV.

As the organisation has grown our existing premises have become less than ideal to accommodate our staff and deliver our services. The Property Working Group, established in 2010, has worked with management to identify strategic opportunities for future accommodation options and we anticipate a final proposal later this year.

Jennifer Dillon stood down from the role as Chair of WLSV after 6 years, having provided exceptional leadership during that period. We are fortunate that Jennifer continued on the Board providing her significant experience in family law and wisdom through her long association with

the organisation. In January 2012 the Board welcomed Cheri Le Cornu who brings substantial experience in fundraising and marketing.

The 2011-16 Strategic Plan was completed and endorsed by the Board. The development of the plan followed a strategic review in 2011 and entailed reviewing our vision and values, developing four major goals with a strong future focus and a set of performance indicators to measure our progress.

There have been significant developments in the external policy and regulatory environment

The development of the plan followed a strategic review in 2011 and entailed reviewing our vision and values, developing four major goals with a strong future focus and a set of performance indicators to measure our progress.

with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission expected to commence operation in December 2012 and the passage of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic), both of which will impact on our reporting and accountability requirements. A review of the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services is still underway, focussing on the effectiveness and efficiency of all Commonwealth funded legal services. The extensive consultation process, including an Advisory Committee with good Victorian representation, provides the community legal sector with ample opportunity for input to the review.

Women's Legal Service Victoria has maintained a strong financial position over the past year in a

challenging funding environment. We anticipate this climate will continue for the immediate future with no significant funding opportunities emerging from State or Commonwealth budgets.

The Board appointed Sean Denham & Associates as our new auditors in February 2012. We thank Jan Collyer of J.L Collyer & Partners for over 20 years of service to WLSV.

A sincere thank you to my Board colleagues who have not only supported me in my role but have worked collaboratively and given so generously of their time and experience in providing stewardship

of the organisation. On behalf of the Board I extend our thanks to our CEO, our committed staff and volunteers for providing high quality services for women and families who access WLSV.

The work of WLSV is not possible without the support of our funding entities, the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department, Victoria Legal Aid and the many partner agencies with whom we work to achieve our vision: Justice, safety, empowerment for women and their children.

Anne Lyon

chief executive officer's report

We embarked on the 2011-12 financial year, having committed ourselves to an ambitious Strategic Plan, informed by extensive consultations with all of our major stakeholders. The plan builds on the strong identity and presence WLSV has established around its specialist focus on “issues arising from relationship breakdown and violence against women” and focuses on increasing our social impact in these areas.

Challenging ourselves

For some time WLSV has focussed heavily on direct client service provision, providing assistance to over 2500 women each year. We have always relied on that experience to undertake policy work and legal education with a strong grounding in practice. Through this approach we have enjoyed a reputation for excellence in all three of these parts of our service.

Our Strategic Plan demands that we now find creative ways of maintaining our strength in and reputation for direct client services, whilst consistently lifting our gaze to the bigger picture and asking “what else?” Not just for this client but for other women. We have challenged ourselves this year to find ways to:

- Be more strategic about the casework that we do and the way that we do it
- Ensure that the three parts of our service, our direct client services, our policy work and our legal education work are as integrated as possible so that the impact of each one is increased by being connected to the others

- Extend our capacity through partnerships and collaborations
- Develop a more comprehensive service within our established focus areas of ‘issues arising from relationship breakdown and violence against women’
- Intervene earlier to stop legal problems from occurring in the first place or, at least, from proceeding to litigation
- Measure the outcomes of our work, both for our clients and for the community.

Our Strategic Plan demands that we now find creative ways of maintaining our strength in and reputation for direct client services, whilst consistently lifting our gaze to the bigger picture and asking “what else?” Not just for this client but for other women.

A strong foundation

In many ways this year has been a foundational year, in which we have undertaken much of the groundwork that will underpin the delivery of the Strategic Plan over the next few years. Importantly we have:

- Established our new website www.womenslegal.org.au. As well as providing fantastic information about the organisation, the website also includes plain language legal information sections and downloadable fact sheets
- Developed a pro bono relationship with Herbert Smith Freehills, which has included

significant research and drafting assistance for important policy submissions as well as access to meeting spaces to progress the important development tasks we have set ourselves in the Strategic Plan

- Strengthened our relationships within the community legal sector, including by:
 - Providing training to support the sector’s work in responding to family violence
 - Hosting twenty rural regional and remote CLCs to meet WLSV staff and representatives of three other specialist CLCs

- Joining with our CLC colleagues in contributing to and promoting the Community Law Australia Campaign – a campaign for a proper safety net for legal help in Australia.

- Continued to work in partnership with our colleagues at Victoria Legal Aid, both to deliver services directly to the community, and to look for joint solutions to issues facing the social justice sector and our clients
- Established an innovative and collaborative approach to providing outreach services to women and secondary consultation to their support workers using Skype. This is a partnership project led by

Women's Health in the North (WHIN) and involving seven family violence agencies across the northern metropolitan region and the (regional) Hume region.

- Developed a framework for undertaking law reform and legal education work, clearly based on community development principles, as well as identifying the five policy areas across which we will build our policy platform.

Looking forward

Having built a strong foundation for delivering on the Strategic Plan, I am excited about what 2012/2013 will bring. In particular, I am looking forward to WLSV:

- Undertaking more strategic casework to highlight systemic issues
- Developing and facilitating training in the primary prevention and early intervention arenas
- Enhancing our 'virtual' outreach capacity through Skype and the legal advice line.

The pages that follow my report will give you more insight into the work we have done towards achieving our goals in 2011/2012 as well as what we are looking forward to in the year ahead. We'd love to know what you think.

Joanna Fletcher

Protecting women and children from violence

WLSV continues to play a key role in advocating for improved protection for women, and their children, who experience family violence. Our understanding of the complexities of the issues, gained from representing women at court in intervention order proceedings, continues to inform our law and policy reform work.

Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children

In particular this year, we drew on our expertise to make submissions to the State Government during its consultation to develop an Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children. We advocated in meetings, and by written submission, for strategies in the Action Plan that would promote a strong and effective justice system response to family violence. Through our advocacy and engagement with government we continue to highlight the important role that police, courts, specialist support services and community legal centres play in preventing family violence, and assisting the victims of family violence.

Failure to protect laws

In late 2011, WLSV, in collaboration with several other statewide and peak bodies, made a detailed submission to the State Government on its proposal to introduce 'failure to protect laws'. These laws expose parents to prosecution if they fail to prevent the death or serious injury of a child at home. Our joint submission was cited by the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry report ('the Vulnerable Children report') as

evidence of how such laws could unfairly target women who themselves were victims of family violence and risk driving the issue of child abuse underground. Pleasingly, the report recommended that the Government look first at the operation of existing laws and only then consider enacting new legislation. Even if new legislation were to be adopted the Vulnerable Children report recommended (in line with our submission):

"If a new 'failure to protect' law is enacted, it should provide that the prosecution is required to prove, as an element of the offence and beyond

Through our advocacy and engagement with government we continue to highlight the important role that police, courts, specialist support services and community legal centres play in preventing family violence, and assisting the victims of family violence.

reasonable doubt, that the accused was not the subject of, or exposed to, relevant family violence."

Our submission was made possible by the pro bono work of a team of lawyers at leading law firm Herbert Smith Freehills who researched and drafted the submission based on our instructions. Together with Freehills, our collaboration with sector partners DV Vic, No to Violence, Federation of Community Legal Centres and Domestic Violence Resource Centre ensured effective advocacy in relation to this issue.

Strengthening Australia's Human Rights Framework

Several recent developments have provided an opportunity for WLSV to shine a light on how violence against women is a violation of human

rights. The economic, social and health impacts of violence often contribute to women being unable to exercise their right to housing, economic security and equality.

National Human Rights Action Plan

A submission from WLSV informed the Federal Government's consultation on the development of a National Human Rights Action Plan. Our submission proposed a number of strategies to improve human rights outcomes for women and their children. These included strengthening

access to justice for women, creating vulnerable witness protections in family law, improving cross-sectoral approaches to family violence and sexual assault and implementing the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children.

UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women

In March 2012 WLSV was invited to participate in a roundtable discussion with UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Rashida Manjoo. Our comments during the discussion are captured in the Australian Human Rights Commission's report on Ms Manjoo's visit.

effecting change

Ensuring our advocacy is strategic, relevant and impactful

WLSV is determined to continue to play a leading role in identifying and addressing legal issues affecting women, and their children, who experience family violence and relationship breakdown. In recent months we have been working to create a policy platform, which defines our position in key focus areas. The five policy platforms of WLSV are access to justice, economic well-being, violence against women, housing security and equality & diversity.

Once finalised, the policy platforms will guide the ongoing advocacy and casework of our organisation, ensuring that WLSV continues to be a prominent and effective voice for the women of Victoria.

Looking forward:

In 2012 – 2013 we look forward to:

- Continuing to advocate for an integrated, responsive and well-resourced family violence justice system
- Improving access to justice for disadvantaged women through advocacy and research
- Raising awareness in the community and with Government of the broader social and economic impacts of violence against women and relationship breakdown
- Advocating to improve the experience of women victims of family violence who are seeking family violence intervention orders or victims of crime compensation
- Finalising the parameters for our strategic casework practice and beginning to undertake more strategic casework to highlight the systemic issues in law and practice.

improving access

Improving access to justice for women in regional and rural Victoria

Women experiencing family violence and relationship breakdown often need to link in with multiple services to access the support and assistance they require to stay safe from family violence. For women in regional and rural Victoria, accessing lawyers and other services can be extremely challenging.

Legal advice line

Until 2012, women living in regional and rural Victoria were only able to access WLSV services through our legal advice line. Our advice line operates as an essential early intervention service, enabling women to understand their legal rights and responsibilities, before making significant decisions for themselves and their families. Due to the technical limitations of our telephone system and the limited numbers of staff/volunteers available to respond to calls, the legal advice line operates within restricted hours and is always busy. We have therefore been exploring funding and partnership opportunities to address these limitations. We were very grateful to receive a generous contribution from the AFL Staff Social Club of \$10,000, which will go a considerable way to purchasing a new telephone system. We have also been very fortunate to benefit from the expertise of Caroline Gowan, Strategy Manager at ANZ, who is kindly assisting us pro bono to develop a business plan to address the issues around staffing the legal advice line.

Virtual outreach via Skype

In 2012 WLSV's outreach program was extended to the provision of legal advice services to family violence workers and their clients via Skype. The Skype program is a pilot developed by Women's Health in the North (WHIN) and Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) and involves seven partner agencies from both regions.

Women in rural areas face particular difficulties in accessing legal services due to their geographic isolation. In addition, statistics show that the incidence of family and domestic violence is higher in rural areas. Lawyers and courts are also more difficult to access.

Our advice line operates as an essential early intervention service, enabling women to understand their legal rights and responsibilities, before making significant decisions for themselves and their families.

This pilot project, funded by the Legal Services Board, aims to address these disadvantages and, at the same time, strengthen co-operation between the legal and family violence sectors. The project involves the provision of legal advice and assistance by WLSV lawyers to clients of the partner agencies using Skype. It also includes secondary consultations with family violence workers and the development and provision of education and resource materials.

Empowering women through legal advice and representation

Women who are empowered in the court process can not only protect themselves and their children against future violence but can also avert secondary effects of violence such as homelessness and poverty.

Duty lawyer service at Melbourne Magistrates' Court

We have provided legal advice and representation to more than 800 women at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court this year through our daily outreach duty lawyer service. Our assistance

can very often be the difference between a good outcome and a very bad one in family violence intervention order proceedings. Our ability to work effectively with Victoria Legal Aid, court staff, Magistrates and support workers is essential in helping women to navigate the legal system.

Ongoing casework

Through our casework service we continue to take on challenging cases, providing ongoing legal representation to women. Our clients are often from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, live with disabilities

improving access

or experience poverty and homelessness. Through our casework we assist women who are disadvantaged and marginalised to create a future where they can live free from violence.

Responding to emerging issues effectively

WLSV's work as a specialist community legal centre gives us a unique insight into the latest issues and trends in the areas of family violence and relationship breakdown. WLSV has identified a number of emerging issues that will inform the way we deliver services and advocate for women in 2012-2013.

In the last year our lawyers have assisted increasing numbers of newly arrived young women from Indian backgrounds. The challenges for our clients of Indian background not only include having to deal with the complexities of the Australian legal system but also legal proceedings in India. Matters are further complicated by cultural factors and expectations of family members. We are seeking to further strengthen our ability to support our clients from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We recognise the need to understand those issues that are important for our CALD clients and thus ensure that our service is targeted, relevant and culturally sensitive.

Another emerging issue from the past year is the growing number of requests for assistance from women with small family law property claims. These include applications for splitting superannuation where there is no other property, transfer of title to cars, removal of debt liability - matters which are not funded by legal aid and

for which payment of private legal fees even on a "pay later" basis is not an option. Our legal team has been able to assist women to remain financially stable and not slip into poverty by securing good outcomes in these cases.

Looking forward:

In 2012 – 2013 we look forward to:

- Continuing to strengthen our outreach to regional and rural women in Victoria by making the Skype program long term and sustainable
- Improving access to our telephone advice service to provide women with more opportunities to obtain legal advice and information at an early stage
- Supporting and empowering women from diverse backgrounds to intervene early through the justice system to prevent future violence (in particular using the family violence jurisdiction)
- Strengthening connections with Indian organisations to inform our casework and creating legal education opportunities for women of Indian backgrounds, who are experiencing family violence and relationship breakdown.

preventing violence

As a leading legal service in Victoria, WLSV continues to emphasise the importance of legal education, working to increase the capacity of other services that work with women. Through our legal education team, and informed by our lawyers' practice experience, we share our expertise with other organisations through the development and delivery of training programs and forums.

Building the capacity of other professionals

WLSV has long acknowledged the benefit of building the capacity of family violence support workers through specialist education. We have formed strategic partnerships with other educators and experts to develop and run training programs for support workers from a range of services including refuge, domestic violence, sexual assault, homelessness, mental health, counselling, child protection and men's behaviour change services. Our training programs in 2011/2012 included:

- Family Violence Protection Act training, in partnership with the Domestic Violence Resource Centre (DVRC)
- Supporting your client through the family law system with retired Family Court Judge, The Hon. Sally Brown,
- Case notes and evidence training with DVRC.

Developing innovative training programs

The WLSV legal education team continued to develop and deliver a range of training packages specifically tailored for different audiences.

The launch of the Skype project in May 2012, in collaboration with WHIN and WHGNE (see improving access, above), provided a perfect training opportunity for family violence support workers in rural, regional and remote communities. Our legal education team delivered a training program to workers to improve their knowledge and understanding of the law, and so enable them to provide optimum support to the women they assist. The training was available to all the women's services in the metropolitan and regional northern regions and the uptake was very high. This training program was very well received, and the evaluations extremely positive.

We also joined a reference group convened by Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (Sunshine and Preston) to oversee the development of a Healthy Relationships Program for leaders and members of four CALD communities, funded by the Commonwealth Government.

While the WLSV legal education team constantly looks to innovate, we also continue in our commitment to our existing partnerships with WIRE - Women's Information and the Men's Referral Service by providing family violence and family law training for their telephone counsellors. We continue to deliver our education and training program to social work and psychology students from a number of Victorian universities.

Undertaking a training and mentoring role with community legal centres and other lawyers

We continued to build capacity in the legal sector by:

- Taking a lead role in trauma training for other

community legal centre lawyers. We also provided trauma training for women lawyers in private practice in collaboration with Victorian Women Lawyers. All of the sessions were delivered in conjunction with our supervising psychologist and addressed, amongst other things, the personal/self-management skills that are so important when working with traumatised clients

- Developing and delivering a training program for community legal centre lawyers and volunteers to address common issues when advising women who are victims of family violence.

Looking forward:

In 2012 – 2013 we look forward to:

- Creating a web-based training calendar to enable participants to register for training in areas of interest
- Further developing our ability to create innovative training in response to identified need
- Developing and facilitating training in the primary prevention and early intervention arenas.

volunteers

Volunteers have been supporting Women's Legal Service Victoria since 1981. We are committed to supporting volunteer involvement, to extend and enhance our services, and to provide meaningful work for women within the legal sector and associated fields.

Legal Advice Line Volunteers

Volunteer lawyers holding a practising certificate or members of the Bar assist our service by providing legal information, advice and referrals to women who contact our Legal Advice Line. Thank you to the following people who have so generously assisted us in the past twelve months:

Agata Wierzbowski	Ella Thompson	Kelly Bui	Pamela Khoo
Akane Kanai	Emma O'Neill	Kelly Kandelaars	Pauline Brasher
Alison Trapski	Emmalaura Messer	Kelly Saunders	Priscilla Wong
Amanda Lee	Evie Reynolds	Leanne Sinclair	Regan Richards
Amelia Beech	Gabrielle Erbacher	Lidia Scafidi	Sarah Wainwright
Bani Mishra	Hannah Hodges	Liz Hall	Serina McDuff
Betty Trimcevski	Holly Renwick	Loredana Gibson	Sharnee Moore
Bianca Dukic	Isolde Lueckenhausen	Marguerite Darmody	Simone Driscoll
Bonnie Phillips	Jana Homatopoulos	Marita Wilson	Sophie Song
Brooke Keane	Jenny Sharp	Meagan Grose	Susan McClellan
Caroline Paterson	Jessica Kerr	Meaghan Jones	Stephanie Reid
Cassandra Castillo	Jessica May	Melissa Lambrianew	Susanna Kirpichnikov
Catherine Curtis	Jessica Willard	Meribah Rose	Susan Hamilton-Green
Celia Laragy	Jolien Quispel	Miranda Brookes	Tanya Bloom
Dao Bui Nguyen	Julie Andritsos	Natalie Goharpey	Tania Farha
Deborah Randa	Kathryn McMillan	Natasha Cecic	Tanya Lavan
Dilshari Corea	Katie-Elouise White-Spier	Nerida Mulvey	Yvette Zegenhagen
Elisa Carayannis	Keleigh Robinson	Niresha Mudalige	Zara Duman
Elisa Wai Leng Chew		Oendrila Roy	

Legal Volunteers

Thank you to the following students who have assisted our lawyers with casework, research and duty lawyer work at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court over the past twelve months:

Andrea Main	Melanie Molloy
Anisa Zahidee	Melissa Drentin
Dee Le	Michelle Davies
Greta Ivanova	Natalie Fifield
Jacqueline Muckersie	Natalie Vuong
Jade Werkmeister	Ruki Arawwawala
Julia Mansour	Shani Williams
Marquita Nolan	Sonia Sawant
Maryam Yousufzai	Teresa Zanca
Mei Ngo	Vanessa Delle-Vergini

Administrative Volunteers

A very special thank you to Kathy Fawcett, who has generously given administration support to WLSV for over twelve years.

volunteers

Legal Assistance

Thank you to the following barristers and solicitors who have advised or represented WLSV clients in the past twelve months:

Alice Carter	Georgina Coghlan	Neale James
Altavilla Vessali	Helen Dellidis	Neil Collins
Amanda Wynne	Irene Bolger	Paul Ehrlich
Andrea Lawrence	Jennifer Howe	Paul Glass
Angela Cranenburgh	Joan Callahan	Peter Tait
Anita Spitzer	Julien Lowy	Paul Hannan
Annemarie Farrell	Kate Langham	Renata Alexander
Ariadne Galanopoulos	Kath Devine	Robert Allen
Bruno Kiernan	Kathy Raccanello	Robyn Wheeler
Caroline Counsel	Robin Smith	Rohan Holt
Caroline Paterson	Kim Southey	Roona Nida
Cilla Brookes	Kylea Campana	Ruth Hamnett
Colin King	Louise Dorian	Sarah Keating
Daniela Hannan	Mario Cenacchi	Susan Ilias
David Faran	Marita Ham	Therese McCarthy
David Laidlaw	Mary Baczynski	Tom Hutching
Deborah Foy	Mary Sevdalis	Tony Vriends
Doug McLeod	Michael Stanton	Valentina Stoilkovska
Esther James	Minal Vohra	Vass Theohoropoulou
Evelyn Goldberg	Munya Andrews	Zoltan Friedman

Other Assistance

Thank you to the following organisations or people who have so generously assisted WLSV in the past twelve months with pro bono advice, referrals and in-kind contributions:

The Age, in particular David Hoath and Hailey Watson

Justitia Lawyers, in particular Mary-Jane Ierodionou, Sarah Rey, Magda Marciniak and Sue Mitra

Lander & Rogers, in particular Isabella Calabro and Qiao-Lin Cheong

Herbert Smith Freehills, in particular the Freehills Foundation team and Jacqui Wootton

Public Interest Law Clearing House, in particular Fiona McLeay, Anna Molan and the PilchConnect and VicBar Programs

The Hon. Sally Brown

Caroline Gowan

Student Placements

Thank you to the following students for choosing to complete their student placements with WLSV. The students are participating in either clinical programs as part of their university studies or completing the work experience components of their practical legal training.

Annie Mereos	Ellie Schmideg	Rathi Ramanathan
Annie McNamara	Ellen Smith	Rhiannon Saint
Barbara Schade	Katherine Wain	Sara Molenaar
Benita Miciulis	Laura Calabro	Sharni Bell
Cheryl Chua	Lili Nel	Sophie Lefebvre
Cora Hodges	Martha Sevastopoulos	Yagmur Cagrier

volunteer work experience at WLSV

My first day at Women's saw me not only see the inside of a court room, but also assist the duty lawyer at the Federal Magistrates' Court. This was more than any volunteer could hope to experience in their first year, let alone on day one. This level of exposure to real work was something that initially struck me at Women's. Not only were the lawyers willing to take the time to guide me through a matter, they also trusted me to get on with the work.

In my first week I was handed divorce applications to complete from scratch, assisted lawyers

It was great to have the opportunity to perform legal work myself, while under the careful supervision of experienced lawyers. That is something I believe is not offered readily elsewhere, and was of great value to me.

with draft affidavits and compiled briefs for counsel. This head-in first, hands-on approach was something which I found incredibly appealing. It was great to have the opportunity to perform legal work myself, while under the careful supervision of experienced lawyers. That is something I believe is not offered readily elsewhere, and was of great value to me.

During my time at Women's I have been exposed to an array of legal matters that have challenged me not only intellectually, but also emotionally. It was this intersection that first drew me to apply for

experience at Women's; I wanted to gain hands-on experience in a legal practice that really cares about their clients and believes in what they do. Women's is the epitome of just that and much more. At Women's they not only care about what they do, but about each other. I can only describe it as a warm, passionate community: everybody is always willing to assist one another, to share their knowledge and experience, to shoulder the stress but they also have fun.

Impromptu afternoon teas, lunchtime quizzes and meditation sessions are just a taste of the

warm and inviting culture at Women's. But more important still is the care the staff have for their clients, and the passion for the work that they do every day. They say first impressions last, Women's surely has left an amazing, lasting impression on me.

Jade Werkmeister
Law Student

case study one

Earlier this year, we were asked by the Melbourne Family Relationship Centre to provide urgent legal advice to a young woman who, that afternoon, was scheduled to participate in Family Dispute Resolution with the father, and paternal grandmother, of her child.

Amira is a 20 year old Malaysian woman. She has very limited English, and we used interpreters throughout the case. She had come to Australia, on a one-month tourist visa, seeking the return of her 18 month old son, Matthew, to her care. Amira had met Matthew's father, David, when he was on holiday in Malaysia. They commenced a relationship, and he travelled to Malaysia to see her. She fell pregnant, and they married in Malaysia. Matthew was born two months later. David and his mother, June, immediately applied for an Australian passport for Matthew, and David suggested that Amira move to Australia, with Matthew, so that they could live together as a family.

When Matthew was only four months old, June flew to Malaysia to pick up Matthew for a visit with David in Australia. Amira had agreed to Matthew travelling to Australia with his grandmother, to spend some time with his father, on the understanding that he would be returned to Malaysia a couple of months later to participate in an important religious ceremony. Amira had also been assured that David was applying for a spousal visa for her, and that she would soon be joining him in Australia.

Once Matthew left Malaysia, David cut off contact with Amira and stopped providing her with financial support. She also heard nothing further from him about a spousal visa. Coming from an extremely poor background, and working full-time to support her own family, Amira did not have enough money to travel to Australia. She did, however, maintain some limited contact with Matthew through Skype. Eventually, over a year later, she was able to fly to Melbourne thanks to the generosity of an Australian family, whom she had befriended in Malaysia five years previously.

When she arrived, Amira thought that she would be able to collect her son and return home. The father and paternal grandmother refused her request. So Amira, supported by her Australian friend Patricia, applied to the Melbourne Family Relationship Centre for family dispute resolution (mediation). No agreement was reached between them. Amira made an urgent application to the Department of Immigration, and was granted a six month bridging visa so that she could start court proceedings for the return of her young son.

WLSV took on Amira's case for the return of her child. We issued an urgent application in the Federal Magistrates Court for orders that Matthew live with her, and allowing him to leave Australia if Amira decided to return with him to Malaysia. The father played very little part in the proceedings, being a heavy user of illegal drugs. The paternal grandmother became a respondent, and sought to keep Matthew living with her in Victoria, in the same

household as David. An Independent Children's Lawyer (ICL) was appointed for Matthew. There were no concerns about Amira's ability to parent Matthew, except for the fact of their separation from when he was four months old.

Through PILCH we secured counsel for the interim hearing, who represented our client pro bono. Interim orders were made in July for Matthew to spend three days and two nights per week with Amira, who was staying with Patricia. It was thrilling to hear reports from Amira about how much she and Matthew enjoyed spending time together, how she was quickly learning to care for her young son and was teaching him some words in the Malaysian language.

The matter was listed urgently for final hearing, so that the question of who Matthew should live with could be resolved before Amira had to return to Malaysia on the expiry of her visa. Counsel again agreed to represent our client pro bono, for a two day final hearing. The case has now concluded, with the ICL ultimately supporting our client's application for the return of her son. We are awaiting judgment.

Without the assistance of WLSV, Amira would probably have returned to Malaysia after only one month in Australia, without having seen her son. Thanks to our legal team, and the generosity of counsel, Amira was able to apply to court and proceed through to final hearing within four months of arriving in Australia. We believe she has a good chance of having Matthew returned to her full-time care.

case study two

We first became involved with Candice when she attended the duty lawyer service run by our sibling organisation, Family Law Legal Service. It was apparent to the duty lawyer on that day that Candice's case required considerably more work than could be done in a duty lawyer context and she was referred to WLSV.

Candice described family violence, sexual assault and incest by her father since she was 10 years old. At age 18, Candice gave birth to a child, Eden, whom she said was the child of her own father. In 2002 Candice, her child, father and brother immigrated to Australia following the death of her mother.

Candice spoke very little English when she first came to our service. She had already contacted several other services, including the Department of Human Services and Victoria Police, and had been turned away. She had told the Department of Human Services of the abuse by her father, and also by her brother since late 2003. Her father denied the abuse, telling the services that Candice had mental health issues.

Candice escaped from her father's home in December 2010 but was unable to take Eden with her. She applied for an intervention order which named the child as an affected family member. Her father consented to the order but fled to Queensland soon after.

Once WLSV became involved, we were able to work with Victoria Police, who assisted us by allowing us to view Candice's videotaped interview. Our investigations on Candice's behalf lead us to learn that she was the subject of a

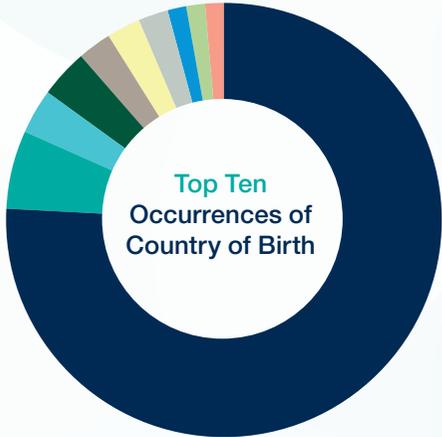
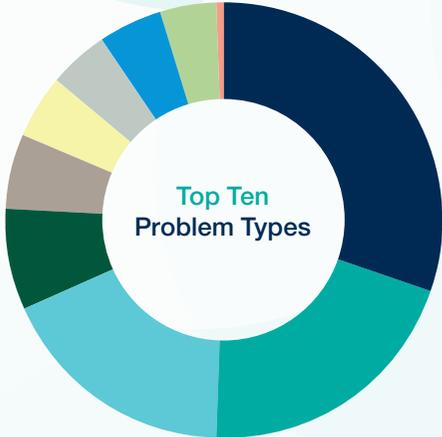
guardianship order initiated by her father. With the assistance of the Mental Health Legal Service this order was removed and we were able to issue proceedings in the Family Court of Australia for Eden to be returned to Candice.

In the Family Court proceedings Candice's father denied the allegations made by her. The Court made orders for paternity testing. Given the complexities involved in paternity testing in incest cases, the results were not released for some time. The results confirmed that Candice's father was also the father of Eden. Her father's lawyer withdrew from the proceedings and her father failed to appear at the court hearing following the release of the test results.

At that hearing, final orders were made providing for Candice to have sole parental responsibility for Eden, for the child to live with her and for there to be no time with or communication between Eden and the father. We linked Candice and Eden with appropriate local support, particularly for Eden who, until the final orders were made, thought that Candice was an older sister. The WLSV legal team was delighted with the result that we had ultimately been able to achieve for our client.

WLSV is now assisting Candice with a Victims of Crime Assistance Act application. We have obtained interim orders providing Candice and Eden with further counselling and an extensive security system for their home. This has already made both mother and child feel more secure as they wait for criminal proceedings against the father to be finalised.

numbers



financials

income and expenditure statement

for the year ended
30 June 2012

This is an extract of WLSV's audited financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2012.

The full version can be found at www.womenslegal.org.au

	2012 \$	2011 \$
INCOME		
CLC Recurrent Grants	1,090,141	942,755
CLC Non-Recurrent Grants	45,455	132,500
Other Grants	53,000	135,016
Other Income	184,787	228,060
Interest Income	34,518	25,187
	1,407,901	1,463,518
EXPENDITURE		
Employee benefits expense	855,757	912,450
Depreciation expense	16,688	10,555
FLLS Costs	293,205	288,917
Rental expense	68,169	69,126
Other expenditure	90,056	96,888
	1,323,875	1,377,936
Surplus (Loss) before income tax	84,026	85,582
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus (Loss) after income tax	84,026	85,582
Retained Surplus (Losses) at the beginning of the financial year	251,011	165,429
Retained Surplus (Losses) at the end of the financial year	335,037	251,011

financials

assets and liabilities statement

as at 30 June 2012

This is an extract of WLSV's audited financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2012.

The full version can be found at www.womenslegal.org.au

	2012 \$	2011 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	774,886	587,730
Trade and other receivables	10,842	4,622
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	785,728	592,352
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	77,532	73,842
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	77,532	73,842
TOTAL ASSETS	863,260	666,194
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	81,799	65,457
Provisions	27,644	43,352
Grants in advance	237,460	125,298
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	346,903	234,107
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	66,320	66,076
Future Contingency Fund	25,000	25,000
	91,320	91,076
TOTAL LIABILITIES	438,223	325,183
NET ASSETS	425,037	341,011
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Capital Replacement Reserve	90,000	90,000
Retained Surplus	335,037	251,011
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS	425,037	341,011



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