



**WOMEN'S
LEGAL
SERVICE
VICTORIA**

Annual Report
2011

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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 children in their care.
- 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 Victoria Legal Aid

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 to 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 takes on approximately 400 cases a year, 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.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Creating the service

In 1981 a public meeting was held in Melbourne to discuss how to make the law and legal system recognise women and their needs.

Six months later Women's Legal Resource Group (WLRG) was formed. It was located in Women's Liberation House and was staffed by volunteers. The service was funded by donations and provided free telephone legal advice and referrals.

In 1984 WLRG received a grant from the Legal Aid Commission to expand the telephone legal advice and referral service. A dedicated team of volunteers participated in law reform campaigns and produced publications. Throughout the 1980s up to the mid-90s WLRG operated under a collective model and was located in West Melbourne and Fitzroy.

Growing support

In 1996, as a result of the Access to Justice Inquiry and Equality Before the Law Report, additional funding was made available under the Justice Statement. It was part of an initiative to establish women's legal services in each state. Funding was also made available to auspice Indigenous women's legal programs across Australia. This was a time of significant change for WLRG.

In an attempt to establish a statewide focus, WLRG relocated into the CBD. As a result of additional funding WLRG

expanded, developing an outreach service in the western suburbs and in rural areas. Additional staff were employed to expand the telephone advice line, offer face-to-face legal advice, manage casework and conduct community education programs.

On 1 August 2000, at a special general meeting, Women's Legal Resource Group changed its name to Women's Legal Service Victoria (WLSV) and moved from a collective to a governance structure. A new constitution was adopted and Board members were elected.

Developing a more specialised service

In 2001 and 2002 the WLSV Board worked with stakeholders to develop a clearer direction for the organisation. A decision was made to restructure WLSV, enabling the organisation to become a more specialised service, developing expertise in the areas of law relating to relationship breakdown and violence against women. As a result of the restructure, a more casework-focused service emerged, where casework directly informs which law reform and legal education issues are prioritised.

Creating Family Law Legal Service

On 9 August 2005 WLSV opened a separately incorporated 'sibling' organisation, Family Law Legal Service (FLLS). FLLS provides Duty Lawyer services to both men and women at

the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Magistrates' Court. During 2009/2010 FLLS also commenced providing legally assisted family dispute resolution to parties attending the Melbourne Family Relationship Centre. In 2011 FLLS partnered with Victoria Legal Aid Round Table Dispute Management to provide assistance to unrepresented parties participating in family dispute resolution.

Enhancing our specialised service

In 2011, WLSV undertook a comprehensive strategic review, informed, once again, by all of our major stakeholders. The review confirmed the importance of WLSV's specialist focus, on issues arising from relationship breakdown and violence against women, whilst identifying a number of new or enhanced activities aimed at increasing the impact of the service. The outcomes of this strategic review are reflected in our Strategic Plan 2011-2016.

WLSV continues to provide a first rate specialist service focusing on relationship breakdown and violence against women issues, responding effectively to women in need. The organisation continues to be committed to the rights of all women, acknowledging that women are entitled to have equal access to a legal system which incorporates their needs and those of their children.

BOARD MEMBERS

Jennifer Dillon	Chair
Anne Lyon	Deputy Chair
Tali Bernard	Secretary
Gesualda Li Rosi	Treasurer
Lorna Gelbert	Public Officer
Dorothy Gibbs	Member
Leanne Miller	Member
Libby Maynard	Member
Joanna Fletcher	Ex-officio member

WLSV STAFF

Joanna Fletcher	Chief Executive Officer
Leanne Sinclair	Principal Lawyer
Gwen Yeoh	Lawyer
Carol Mellords	Lawyer
Abigail Sullivan	Lawyer
Kate Langham	Lawyer (until March 2011)
Chloe McGrath	Lawyer (from February 2011)
Jane Bentley	Lawyer
Brenna Powney	Lawyer (until December 2010)
Henrietta Dewar	Lawyer
Danielle Wisniak	Legal Advice Line Supervisor/Lawyer
Zione Walker-Nthenda	Law Reform and Policy Lawyer
Eila Pourasgheri	Lawyer – Law Reform, Education and Practice
Mary Louise Hatch	Legal Educator/Lawyer (until July 2010)
Allyson Foster	Legal Educator
Lisa Welburn-Brown	Finance Officer (from July 2010 –November 2010)
Nicole Burnett	Finance Officer (from January – May 2011)
Weng Lan Chong	Finance Officer (from June 2011)
Samantha Watson	Office Administrator/Project Manager
Angela Borg	Administrative Assistant

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

The value of service

Albert Schweitzer reflected that “the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve”. Those words “to serve” are so often misunderstood or used in a pejorative or judgemental sense. We run away from the term as though it diminishes us; from a feminist perspective it is loaded with baggage. That’s a sad thing – when I contemplate the Board or the staff at Women’s Legal Service Victoria I draw strength from being surrounded by women who know the value of service to community and the inherent merit of that commitment.

“I draw strength from being surrounded by women who know the value of service to community and the inherent merit of that commitment.”

2011 was again a year of service from all at Women’s. There were so many concrete achievements, but first amongst them was that the organisation continued to grow in stature and strength, highly regarded and with good reason. The women of Victoria continued to benefit from all facets of the tripartite - case work, education and policy reform.

The Funding Environment

It is the nature of our environment that funding dollars, in real terms, shrink and the work they need to do, again in real terms, expands. One is always puzzled by government priorities, but there it

is... We had anticipated that VLA may therefore review eligibility guidelines and so it proved. VLA will for the time being increase funding for Independent Children’s Lawyers (long needed in Victoria to match other States), divert more money into Roundtable Dispute Management and restrict direct grants of aid in favour of litigation where safety and wellbeing of the disputants are at risk. That’s a bit of a double-edged sword. Women’s and our sibling organization Family Law Legal Service will not be particularly disadvantaged by the restructure – it will unfortunately leave more people unrepresented in the Courts, but our bailiwick is regrettably one in which risk to safety is a constant and this funding change may provide us with more opportunities. Moreover, Family Law Legal Service proved so successful in offering legal assistance that recurrent three year funding for that joint project commenced in January 2011.

State Elections also saw a new government installed in Victoria. Whilst it is early days, and we have not yet entirely tapped the Attorney General’s thinking on access to justice issues, we were heartened to see that the budget continued to allocate aid for community legal centres and particularly those offering services in family violence, albeit with an intensified focus on assisting and maintaining services in regional and rural Victoria. Hopefully, we will in time form as productive a working relationship with Robert Clark as with our previous Attorney-General.

Early in the year, we looked around a fairly cramped work environment and hoped that we could find a little more room for our staff and our clients. Alas, the funding just isn’t there yet, but our CEO Joanna Fletcher did manage one way or another to free up a bit more space, reconfiguring offices and common areas, storing the unremitting files off-site and voila Level 3, 43 Hardware Lane became just a bit more tolerable. Fear not however, the property sub-committee is constantly on the search for more suitable premises.

Our staff

The staff, of course, continue to be the backbone of Women’s - although I’m always mindful that it can’t be the money that gets our people in the door!! We started the year under new leadership of CEO Joanna Fletcher with all her expertise in the sector and her enthusiasm, strength and vitality. The organisation benefited accordingly. Principal Lawyer Leanne Sinclair headed up and mentored the team of good women lawyers and they all make the job look far, far easier than it is. If you’ve worked in family law, never mind family law constantly tinged with hardship and violence, you will have an idea of the inestimable benefit in coming to work amongst a group of women who are happily supportive of each other. Sam and Angela, thank you also for stepping into your enhanced administrative support roles to such good effect and Allyson, the educator’s educator, thank heavens you’re back.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

We'll come to the end of the year however with the mixed emotions of having gained some and lost some. Very sadly, VLA's gain will be our loss as Leanne Sinclair moves on to a new workplace and new challenges. I suppose I should be pleased that Women's provides such great experience and training that our senior lawyers very often find themselves in the spotlight of opportunity, but it's tough finding replacements and I know everyone will miss Leanne greatly.

Pasanna Mutha has just started as Manager of Policy and Campaigns taking over from the very talented Zion Walker-Nthenda (yes, Zion LEGAL AID DOES MATTER!) It will be a new role for Pasanna who comes out of Department of Justice working in criminal law, but we hope that it is a very satisfying one.

After a couple of false starts, we also gained a new Finance Officer this year in Weng Lan Chong. We are very lucky to be tapping into the experience of a chartered accountant in this role – she has already proved a valuable acquisition for our organisation and again, we hope it leads to a long-term and happy relationship.

Our Board – planning ahead

As to the Board's personnel, we were pleased to learn during the year that one of our number Libby Maynard was granted a Fulbright Scholarship. Libby has now travelled to the US with husband, barrister Dr Tim McEvoy

(extraordinarily also the recipient of a Fulbright) and her two beautiful girls, to commence research and study in an area dear to all our hearts - the social impact of community legal services and whether co-location enhances social outcomes. Well done Libby and bring your research back home!!

In the second half of the year the Board revisited our strategic plan. The need to plan doesn't ever seem to lie dormant: situations change, funding bodies test us, partnerships beckon – one way or another we must keep at the top of our game because we know there may be a better way to make use of our stretched resources.

Board members (and thank you to each of you for giving up a precious Saturday and so many evenings during the year) participated in a day-long strategic planning meeting at the offices of Madgwicks Lawyers on 18 June. That coming together of diverse minds, approaches and expertise made it a challenging, but rewarding day – one of our best, in fact. I must thank Madgwicks for providing such spacious facilities for us at the drop of a hat. They are a generous group and we appreciate it time after time. I also thank Joanna Fletcher for the enormous amount of prior planning and research that allowed us to commence at a high level and make so much of the day.

The Board has also undergone a searching self-assessment and profiling exercise, conducted to identify any of

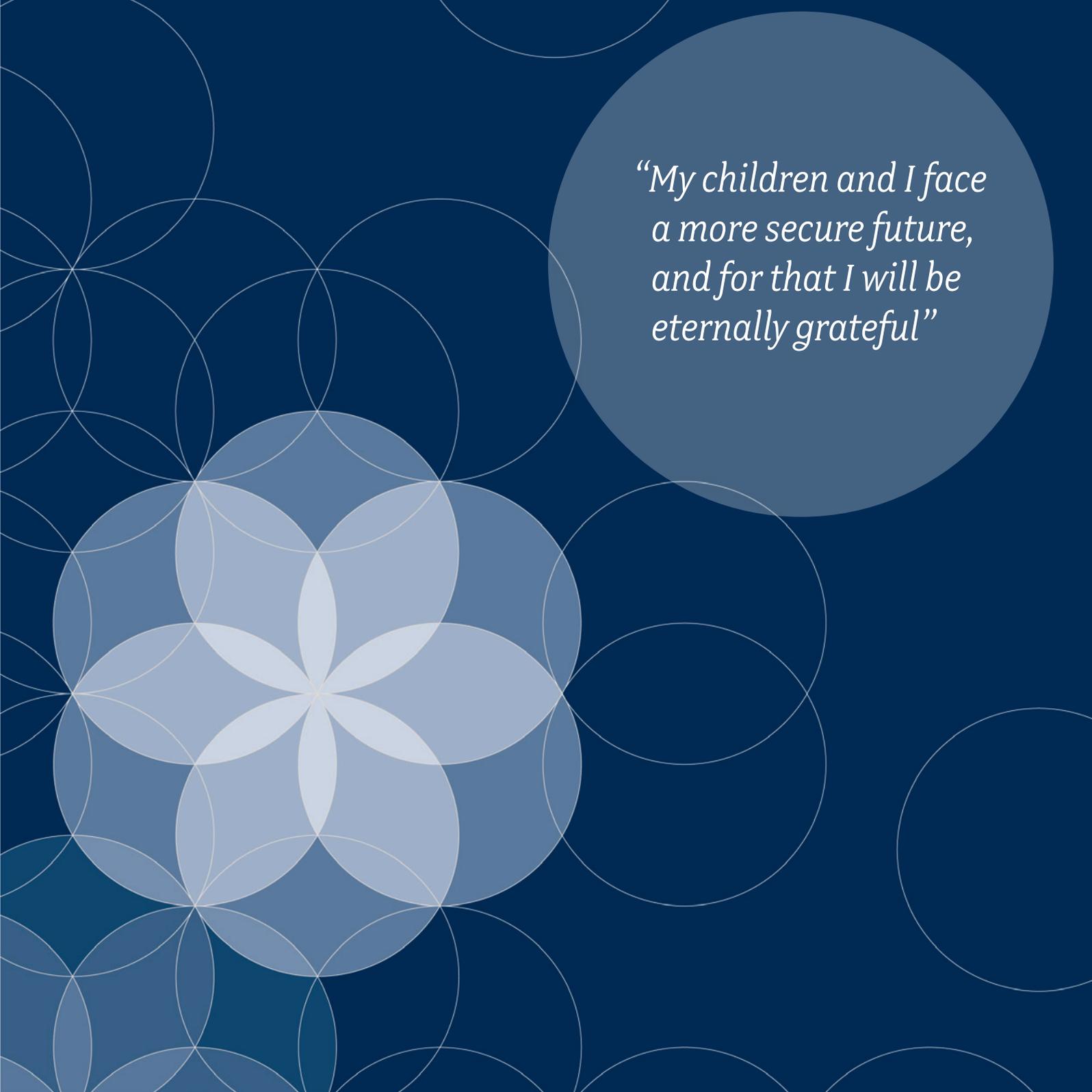
the Board's processes which may need tweaking and to assist us in succession planning and board composition. The process is not yet complete, but it's a worthwhile experience and one I would recommend to any Board with long term members (as ours is).

Thank you and farewell

This is my last "Report from the Chair". Apart from the fact that life never seems to slow down (particularly professionally) I am mindful that I have served this organisation both as a volunteer practitioner and Board member for more than 12 years. The relationship has, at least for me (and I hope for Women's), been a greatly satisfying and enlivening one, but it's time for a new Chair and the stimulation of a new approach. The organisation continues to be blessed by the women who grace our Board – they are quite honestly outstanding in their personal and professional capacities and I leave the Board in the best of hands. I have made lifelong strong friendships through that Board and I thank, in particular, Lorna Gelbert who has provided stalwart support and counsel in all the ups and downs of those 12 years. I will always be there for Women's, its Board and its staff and my fervent hope is that Women's will always be there to serve the women of Victoria.

Jennifer Dillon

Chair, Board WLSV



*“My children and I face
a more secure future,
and for that I will be
eternally grateful”*

PRINCIPAL LAWYER'S REPORT

It has been yet another busy and exciting year for the WLSV legal team. All members of staff no doubt have their own highlights from 2010/2011. For legal staff this would include the satisfaction of knowing they have done their best for our clients at court, clinic, in casework and in providing phone advice. The legal education team have continued to deliver extensive education at seminars and workshops, as well as running legal information sessions at the Melbourne Family Relationship Centre. In relation to law reform, we have been involved in writing or contributing to numerous submissions, and have continued to maintain high-level involvement on committees looking at policy development. Noticeable highlights for the service from my perspective were the successful visit from the Federal Attorney-General, Robert McLelland in July, co-ordinating our very successful network day for Women's Legal Services Australia and completing the extensive renovation of our office to provide more offices for lawyers and a central hub for volunteers.

“As our casework practice expands and we focus on more complex, strategic and testing matters, our lawyers are committed to using the knowledge gained from women’s experiences of the legal system to develop our case study bank.”

As our casework practice expands and we focus on more complex, strategic and testing matters, our lawyers are committed to using the knowledge gained from women’s experiences of the legal system to develop our case study bank. The collected case studies have been used to strengthen and substantiate our law reform submissions by giving policy and law-makers real examples of what women face in the family law and family violence systems. It has been exciting for the legal team to see that their role at WLSV includes not only legal service delivery but also a direct contribution to law reform activities.

We have been working hard on our website development. A number of staff members have been working hard on legal content and format of the website which should be launched later in 2011.

Outreach at Melbourne Magistrates’ Court

With the “new” Family Violence Protection Act close to having its third birthday, the legal team continues to be presented with interesting and diverse challenges when assisting women in the Melbourne Magistrates’ Court with family violence and personal safety intervention orders. WLSV maintains a close relationship with Victoria Legal Aid lawyers and court staff. This cohesive teamwork ensures the smooth functioning of Court 27 and the delivery of a first class service for our clients.

Supporting the development of new lawyers

For many years, WLSV has mentored, trained and contributed positively to the development of new lawyers through our volunteer program and practical legal training partnerships with Leo Cussen Centre for Law and the College of Law. WLSV now works with Deakin University to host law students as part of their Law Clinic subject. The students become part of the WLSV team to learn the practical side of being a lawyer whilst working directly with WLSV clients under close supervision.

In addition, WLSV was fortunate to host Parvathi Suriyakumaran as a part of the Community Legal Service Law Graduate Scheme. This Scheme provides for a qualified lawyer to spend 12 months seconded to four individual Community Legal Centres. Parvathi worked with us on casework, law reform and legal education activities. She was able to integrate the knowledge and skills she learnt at other centres with us and was a valuable member of our team.

Once again a big thank you to all of the WLSV volunteers for all of your time, energy and support. Without the assistance that your work provides, we would not be able to achieve the successes that we have.

Leanne Sinclair
Principal Lawyer

National Association of Community Legal Centres 2010 Conference

In October WLSV hosted the Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA) Network Day as a part of the National Association of Community Legal Centres' Annual Conference. We were most grateful to have the pro bono contribution of Walkley award winning journalist Jill Singer who gave a fascinating presentation on family violence and the media. We would like to especially thank The Age, HUB catering and Flower Flower for their generous support of the day.

In addition to hosting the WLSA Network Day, WLSV also presented a number of papers at the conference show casing the organisation's work in the areas of legal assisted family dispute resolution partnerships, utilising client case studies and the impact of vicarious trauma on community lawyers.

Building better partnerships project

WLSV's legal education team continued to deliver inter-professional training to Community Legal Centres, Victoria Legal Aid and Family Relationship Centre staff participating in the Attorney-General's Department's Building Better Partnerships program. The aim of the Building Better Partnerships program is to increase the legal support vulnerable clients can access when participating in family dispute resolution. In 2009/10 WLSV designed a training program to improve all participating lawyers'

“The aim of the Building Better Partnerships program is to increase the legal support vulnerable clients can access when participating in family dispute resolution.”

knowledge and skills and increase inter-professional understanding between family dispute resolution practitioners (FDRPs) working in FRCs and CLC/ Victoria Legal Aid lawyers. This training was delivered again this year to new staff or staff previously unable to attend. What was most notable about the training the second year round was the changing attitudes of FDRPs and lawyers who had been working in an environment of increased cooperation and coordination between the two types of services. Both lawyers and FDRPs were markedly more optimistic about working together to provide quality services to FDR clients.

Assisting traumatised clients – knowledge and skills

WLSV continues to grow its partnership with psychologist Ursula Benstead to raise awareness of the specialist skills and knowledge needed when assisting clients who suffer from post traumatic stress and the effects of vicarious traumatisation on lawyers. Ursula was hired by WLSV some years back to provide psychological supervision to the legal team to assist them in managing the cumulative effects of working with

traumatised clients. This support and supervision has had a profound impact on the organisation and enables us to do the work we do without ‘burning out’ or becoming hardened to our clients’ experiences of violence. We are now working with Ursula to promote the message more broadly throughout the legal community. To this end, WLSV delivered education sessions in partnership with Ursula to lawyers in private practice settings. We would like to thank Freehills for providing us with catering and the use of their training rooms for our session for VOCAT lawyers. We would also like to thank Victorian Women Lawyers (VWL) for partnering with us to provide training to VWL members and Lander & Rogers for providing the catering and training rooms for that event.

“WLSV uses the experiences of clients to support improved service delivery across the whole sector”

Common mistakes training

WLSV was invited by the Federation of Community Legal Centres to deliver training as part of its lunchtime professional development program. This

invitation came at a time when a number of WLSV clients were experiencing considerable legal disadvantage and increased safety risk because they had followed legal advice that failed to reflect an understanding of the client’s family violence experience. The session aimed to raise lawyers’ awareness of the complexity of advising clients in legal proceedings where there has been a history of family violence as consideration needs to be given to deciding when and how a client should engage with the legal system. This is an important example of how WLSV uses the experiences of clients to support improved service delivery across the whole sector.

This overview provides a snap shot of some of the interesting work the legal education team has been doing. I would like to thank my colleagues Eila Pourasgheri and Ilana Faivel, Zione Walker-Nthenda and Leanne Sinclair who have made designing and delivering legal education a creative and intellectually stimulating process.

Allyson Foster

Legal Education Manager

LAW REFORM AND POLICY REPORT

Advisory and stakeholder roles

WLSV has continued to advocate through our various advisory and stakeholder roles in the many government committees we regularly attend. This year the meetings have been shared between Joanna and I. Joanna attended most of the government stakeholder meetings, while I continued to attend the community sector meetings and some government meetings. I also continued to be invited to give presentations using case studies to further highlight the way legislation plays out on the ground for clients. I continued as co-convenor of the Violence against Women and Children Working Group. I also continued as co-convenor and meeting chairperson of Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA) until February 2011 and thereafter continued to attend regular meetings.

Partnerships

We have formed very strong campaign partnerships in the sector to lobby government in a range of legal areas pertinent to our client demographic and their needs. We have also continued to provide a solid evidentiary base to demonstrate the way the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 is working in practice.

This year we focused on strengthening our partnerships with organisations in the sector in Victoria. We have mobilised around several family violence campaigns and participated in joint submissions. The flexibility of the group has meant that we can act quickly around a campaign or submission on an 'as needed' basis and work with our strategic partners to further our joint aims.

The further development of our Case Study Bank (CSB) this year has focused on embedding it within WLSV practice. All of the legal team is involved in writing and reviewing case studies to be used in our law reform and advocacy work. We have continued to monitor and further develop CSB and share our CSB system with the sector. We intend to further share the internal workings of our CSB with its high ethical standards so that other organisations can also benefit from this invaluable tool in their advocacy work.

Media

I was interviewed for ABC regional radio on proposed changes to family law aimed at ensuring better protection from family violence. These changes were ultimately introduced into parliament as the Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill 2011 (Cth) ('the Family Law/Family

Violence Bill'). I was also interviewed on community radio in relation to the state government's evaluation of police safety notices.

We hope to build on our profile by developing a newsletter to form part of a suite of communication tools for WLSV.

Submissions

Our submissions this year have been numerous and varied. We contributed to the Victoria Legal Aid family law eligibility guidelines and to a Family Law Council consultation on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse clients in the family law system. We were also involved in a joint submission with Victorian Women Lawyers, Domestic Violence Victoria and InTouch Multicultural Centre against Family Violence in relation to family violence and immigration laws. We worked with WLSA to prepare submissions in relation to the Family Law Amendment Bill 2010 and the Family Law/Family Violence Bill,. A website was set up successfully as part of the WLSA campaign which also included partnering with children's organisations.

Zione Walker-Nthenda

Law Reform & Policy Lawyer

VOLUNTEERS

Legal Advice Line Volunteers

Volunteers work on the Legal Advice Line service from 6.30pm to 8.30pm every Tuesday & Thursday

Agata Wierzbowski
Akane Kanai
Amanda Lee
Amelia Beech
Annette Esposito
Annmarie Farrall
Betty Trimcevski
Carly Wilson
Caroline Paterson
Celia Laragy
Christine Lai
Dao Bui Nguyen
Dilshari Corea
Deborah Polites
Deborah Randa
Dianne Donati
Diana Hogan
Eve Bodsworth
Elizabeth Hall
Emma Gerber
Emma O'Neill
Emmalaura Messer
Hannah Sycamore
Hannah Hodges
Isolde Lueckenhausen
Jana Homatopoulos
Jane Bentley
Jessica Campbell
Jessica May
Jillian Williams

Jolien Quispel
Julie Andritsos
Katherine Lockey
Kathryn McMillan
Kelly Bui
Kelly Lucas
Keleigh Robinson
Lidia Scafidi
Lily Hardman
Lisa Pryles
Loredana Gibson
Marguerite Darmody
Maria Chouridis
Marita Wilson
Melanie Wong
Meribah Rose
Natasha Cecic
Nerida Mulvey
Niresha Mudalige
Oendriila Roy
Pamela Khoo
Priscilla Wong
Jasreen Pandher
Regan Richards
Rachel Jones
Serina McDuff
Simone Driscoll
Susan McClellan
Stephanie Reid
Susanna Kirpichnikov
Sarah Wainwright
Simone Driscoll
Tania Farha
Tanya Lavan

Tazmyn Jewell
Yvette Zegenhagen
Zara Durnan

Student Placements

Alana Bayliss
Alexandra Davis
Ashantha Naidu
Catherine Curtis
Dilrukshi Fernando
Ebru Kalistu
Felicity Payne
Grace Jennings-Edquist
Hannah Smith
Hannah Stevens
Hayley Hunter
Jessica Cubias
Julie Asher
Laura Healy
Mallory Healey
Marisa Money
Melarie Sue Li Ong
Moiria McKenzie
Mona Banger
Mona Pedram
Nancy Mansour
Neha Bowry
Robin Robinson
Sergul Aslan
Shani Williams
Shu Min Ho
Stephanie Keah
Wei Mei Ngo

VOLUNTEERS

Legal Volunteers

Day volunteers assist WLSV legal staff between 9am & 5pm weekdays

Anisa Zahidee
Caitlin Trumble
Dee Le
Grace Jennings-Edquist
Greta Ivanova
Li-Xia Tan
Maya Menabde
Natalie Vuong
Shani Williams
Sonia Sawant
Vanessa Delle-Vergini

Administrative Volunteers

Kathy Fawcett
Myfanwy Evans

Thank You/Legal Assistance & Other Assistance

Thank you to the following organisations or people who have so generously assisted WLSV's clients, and WLSV, in the past twelve months.

Legal Assistance

Alice Carter
Altavilla Vessali
Amanda Wynne
Andrea Lawrence
Angela Cranenburgh
Anita Spitzer
Ariadne Galanopoulos

Bruno Kiernan
Caroline Counsel
Cilla Brookes
Colin King
Daniela Hannan
David Faran
David Laidlaw
Deborah Foy
Doug McLeod
Esther James
Evelyn Goldberg
Georgina Coghlan
Helen Dellidis
Irene Bolger
Jennifer Howe
Julien Lowy
Kate Langham
Kate Moore
Kath Devine
Kathy Raccanello
Kaye McNaught
Kim Southey
Kylea Campana
Louise Dorian
Mario Cenacchi
Mary Baczynski
Mary Sevdalis
Michael Stanton
Minal Vohra
Munya Andrews
Neale James
Neil Collins
Paul Ehrlich
Parvathi Suriyakumaran

Paul Hannan
Renata Alexander
Robert Allen
Robin Smith
Robyn Wheeler
Rohan Holt
Roona Nida
Ruth Hamnett
Sarah Keating
Susan Ilias
Therese McCarthy
Tom Hutching
Tony Vriends
Valentina Stoilkovska
Vass Theohoropoulou
Zoltan Friedman

Other Assistance

The Age
Espresso Hub
Flower Flower
Public Interest Law Clearing House
Yongcheng Liuw
Freehills
Victorian Women Lawyers
Lander & Rogers
Ursula Benstead

VOLUNTEERING AT WLSV

I started work experience with Women's Legal Service Victoria as part of the requirements of my College of Law course. I needed to complete 75 days of work experience in order to gain a qualification which allowed me to be admitted to the legal profession as an Australian Lawyer.

Having completed this requirement I have gained so much more than a College of Law qualification! I not only gained insight into the way a variety of matters are dealt with in a very busy and thriving legal environment, but also witnessed first-hand the personal and professional skills used by lawyers to handle these matters in the most effective and efficient way. I also learnt important self care principles and how to implement these in a real-life context when dealing with traumatised clients.

I had the opportunity to have hands on experience, under expert supervision, in matters including divorce, intervention orders, victims of crime compensation applications, family law orders for property division and parenting orders as well as other unique and unusual legal issues faced by the women which the service assists. I would not have had the opportunity to complete some of the work I did in any other 'run of

“My experience would be the envy of any student seeking meaningful work experience”

the mill' law firm and I really felt like I was making a difference to the lives of women who otherwise may not receive legal assistance.

I also had the opportunity to observe the duty lawyer service at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court which allowed me to observe the intervention order process. At the other end of the spectrum I was also involved in the preparation for contested family law hearings in the Federal Magistrates' Court which allowed me to liaise and work closely with barristers and clients in a more formal court environment.

My experience would be the envy of any student seeking meaningful work experience. Being exposed to so many different facets of family law gave me the opportunity to decide the direction I want my career to head in – and the motivation to make it happen!

Catherine Curtis

Volunteer

December 2010 to August 2011

CASE STUDY

Farah is a young Iraqi woman who made contact with WLSV through a worker at International Social Service (ISS). Farah speaks very limited English so we worked with a Farsi interpreter throughout the case.

Farah had moved to Australia from Iran (where she grew up) with her Iraqi husband Hussan in 2004. They had one child together, Reza, who was born in 2005. It was not a happy marriage, characterised by extensive family violence.

In 2008 Farah and her son Reza travelled to Iran for a holiday to visit her parents and extended family. Hussan followed some time later, but did not stay with Farah and Reza. When Hussan asked to spend some time with Reza while they were still in Iran, Farah agreed and this occurred twice without incident. On the third occasion Hussan failed to return Reza to Farah's care causing her extreme distress and concern. When Farah finally managed to speak to Hussan, he informed her that he had returned to Australia with Reza. Farah immediately flew back to Australia to be reunited with her son, only to find that Hussan had lied. He had returned to Australia but had left Reza in Iran in the care of friends. Reza was three years old at this time.

Farah was determined to have Reza returned to her care. She gave the child's Australian passport to Hussan to give to his own father, as the paternal grandfather had promised to fly the child back. He failed to do so and now the child's passport had disappeared. In May 2009 Farah obtained an intervention order against Hussan as he was continuing his abusive behaviour towards her. She also obtained interim orders through the Federal Magistrates Court that Reza live with her, and should be returned to her care. However, she no longer held a passport for him. Farah applied to the Court for the issue of a replacement passport for Reza, but Hussan failed to sign the necessary paperwork. Farah was not able to obtain an Iranian passport for Reza as he was born in Australia, and both his parents are Iraqi nationals.

In mid 2009, Reza was delivered to the doorstep of his maternal grandparents in Iran by persons unknown. Farah's parents have been caring for him since then.

In 2011 Farah came to WLSV for help. Her 5 year old son was seemingly stuck in Iran with no means of returning to Australia, and having been separated from his mother for three years. She

had lost contact with Hussan since the intervention order was made, and did not have contact details for him.

With considerable help from one worker at ISS, and from WLSV, we succeeded in obtaining an Australian passport for Reza, on which he can travel back to Australia from Iran. The Court orders provide for the issue of a passport by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and that the father pays the costs of the passport, the child's airfares and all associated travel costs.

“With considerable help from one worker at International Social Service we succeeded in obtaining an Australian passport for Reza so he can travel back to Australia from Iran.”

Reza's arrival in Australia is now keenly anticipated by his mother. ISS will continue to work with Farah to help her reintegrate Reza back into life in Australia with the mother he has not seen for almost four years.

CASE STUDY

Marie's relationship with Darren began in October 1996. During the relationship Darren was physically and emotionally abusive to Marie, resulting in her being hospitalised on at least 2 occasions. In November 2002, Grant was born. Marie and Darren separated on a final basis in April 2005. In August 2005, Mitchell was born.

Marie was reluctant to facilitate the children spending time with Darren. She alleged that Darren subjected Grant to emotional abuse, and occasional neglect such as locking him in the car on a very hot day. Darren often taunted Grant, calling him a "sook" or "pathetic" and was seen to push and shove him at change-over.

In 2007 Final Orders were made in relation to the children spending time with Darren. Marie made every effort to adhere to the orders and facilitate time. As part of those orders, Grant started attending therapeutic counselling. After around six months the counsellor

informed Marie that it might be better for Grant not to spend time with Darren. Marie sent Darren a message to this effect.

Darren immediately issued a Contravention Application in the Federal Magistrates Court. Marie did not qualify for legal aid, nor did she have sufficient income to pay a private lawyer, having a total of five children to support. She came to WLSV for assistance in relation to the contravention application, and seeking advice in relation to relocation.

"Marie did not qualify for legal aid, nor did she have sufficient income to pay a private lawyer, having a total of five children to support."

Marie had been able to buy a property near family members in country Victoria and sought to relocate there with the children. She desperately needed the emotional and physical support of her family in caring for her children. However, the father was supported by the

Independent Children's Lawyer in arguing that Marie's application to relocate was intended to alienate the children from Darren. The Federal Magistrate also indicated that this was his view too.

With the assistance of WLSV, Marie was successfully able to argue that her application to relocate was prompted by a genuine need to be closer to her family support and to get away from the continuing abusive behaviour of Darren. The family report writer supported Marie, stating that the history of family violence by the father had caused the children to be fearful of him.

We assisted Marie in negotiating orders which allowed her to relocate with the children to the country. Marie had been a victim of family violence for a number of years, and had limited ability to articulate her needs and those of her children before a Court. It is unlikely that Marie would have been able to achieve this result if she had been forced to represent herself.



“WLSV went far beyond my expectations. My lawyer was thorough, understanding and reassuring”

NUMBERS

Total Number Of Clients Assisted	2723
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Top Five Types of Legal Work Undertaken

Advice activities	3466
Information activities	2275
Cases closed	1090
Cases with court representation	450
Non-casework projects (law reform & legal education)	260

Top Ten Problem Types

Family or domestic violence orders	676
Child contact or contact orders	402
Property in marriage	433
Family or domestic violence	226
Divorce	144
Separation	133
Child residency	128
Property de facto	121
Intervention orders - stalking	100
Injuries compensation	61

Top Ten Occurrences of Country of Birth

Australia	1068
China	80
India	74
England	40
New Zealand	38
Philippines	30
Vietnam	29
Russia	20
Sri Lanka	19
Thailand	19
Turkey	19



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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the members of WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE VICTORIA Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE VICTORIA comprising the balance sheet as at 30th June 2011, and the income statement, statement of changes in equity and cash flow statement for the year then ended, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The management of WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE VICTORIA is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report and has determined that the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, which form part of the financial report are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The management's responsibility also includes designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used, as described in Note 1, are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. These Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report on order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the directors, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

The financial report has been prepared for distribution to members for the purpose of fulfilling the Management's financial reporting requirement. We disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members, or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the relevant independence requirements.

Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion the financial report of WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE VICTORIA

- (a) gives a true and fair view of WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE VICTORIA's financial position as at 30th June 2011 and of its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1.


Janet Collyer
J L COLLYER & PARTNERS

5th October 2011



Chartered Accountants

DIRECTORS
JANET L. COLLYER FCPA
LIONEL R. ARNOLD CA B.BUS
RAELENE LAI CPA B.COM

LIABILITY LIMITED BY A SCHEME APPROVED
UNDER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS LEGISLATION

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 30 JUNE 2011

	2011 \$	2010 \$
Equity		
Capital Replacement Reserve	90,000	90,000
Retained Earnings	251,011	165,429
Total Equity	341,011	255,429
Represented by:		
Current Assets		
Petty Cash	350	313
Cash at Bank- Cheque A/C	50,204	102,429
Cash at Bank - Cash Management	298,776	193,197
Cash at Bank - Term Deposits	213,399	202,711
Cash at Bank - Payroll Security A/C	25,000	25,000
Receivables	3,843	-
Prepayments	780	-
	592,352	523,650
Non-Current Assets		
Computer Equipment	47,130	1,600
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(42,851)	-
	4,279	1,600
Office Furniture & Equipment	132,690	153,183
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(66,487)	(113,468)
	66,203	39,715
	70,482	41,315
Intangible Assets		
Intangible Asset	3,360	-
Total Assets	666,194	564,965
Current Liabilities		
Payables	8,670	-
Other Creditors	37,308	28,590
Provision for Staff Entitlements	43,352	39,136
GST Payable	19,479	17,488
Income in Advance	-	132,428
Grants in Advance – Allowable Surplus	125,298	-
	234,107	217,642
Non-Current Liabilities		
Future Contingency Fund	25,000	25,000
Provision for 'to make good' premises	12,000	2,000
Provision for Staff Entitlements	54,076	54,894
	91,076	91,894
Total Liabilities	325,183	309,536
Net Assets	341,011	255,429

INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2011

	2011	2010
	\$	\$
Income		
Interest Received	25,187	20,753
Costs Recovered and Retained	3,262	2,173
Recoupment – Wages	89,727	90,328
Recoupment – Overheads	24,600	24,000
Community Legal Education	48,420	26,064
Donations/Fundraising	60,011	1,231
CLC Recurrent Grants	1,068,053	1,003,385
CLC Non-Recurrent Grants	132,500	-
Other Grants	135,016	77,765
Less Grants in Advance	(125,298)	-
Sundry Income	1,700	-
Gain on Sale of Non-current Assets	340	-
	1,463,518	1,245,699
Expenditure		
Annual report	6,739	-
Audit Fees	3,088	3,130
Bank Charges	248	219
BDM expenses	3,000	42,954
Cleaning	5,910	4,860
Computer Support	6,805	5,064
Depreciation	10,555	5,621
Disbursements	113	87
FLLS Costs	288,917	250,000
Filing Fees	42	41
Holiday Pay	12,183	12,330
Insurance	3,111	1,751
Leasing Charges	2,459	2,136
Long Service Leave	22,163	11,838
Memberships	7,329	10,720
Minor Assets Expensed	2,592	-
Payroll Costs	4,229	3,368
Planning & Programming	13,252	48,646
Postage & Courier	3,019	2,556
Printing & Stationery	7,931	9,129
Practising Certificates	2,311	2,722
Publications & Information Resources	982	4,766
Publicity	2,890	5,101

INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2011 (CONTINUED)

	2011	2010
	\$	\$
Rent	69,126	64,426
Repairs & Maintenance	1,182	1,270
Salaries	778,534	744,534
Security Costs	470	891
Staff Recruitment	420	11,753
Staff Amenities	9,601	10,306
Superannuation Contributions	65,687	63,688
Telephone & Internet	15,828	14,445
Training & Development	16,932	16,425
Travel & Accommodation	3,309	8,825
Utilities	4,278	3,294
Workcover	2,701	2,720
	1,377,936	1,369,616
Net Surplus (Deficit)	85,582	(123,917)

STATEMENT OF CHANGE IN EQUITY

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2011

		2011	2010
		\$	\$
Retained Earnings at the beginning of the financial year	165,429	288,300	
Prior Year Adjustment	-	1,046	
Net Surplus (Deficit) Attributable to Members	85,582	(123,917)	
RETAINED EARNINGS AT 30 JUNE 2011	251,011	165,429	

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

NOTE 1 – STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

This financial report is a special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act 1981 (Vic). The Committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity.

The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuations of non-current assets.

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2011

	2011 \$	2010 \$
Cash flows from Operating Activities		
Receipts from Government Grants - recurrent	1,068,053	1,003,385
Receipts from Government Grants - non-recurrent	135,088	6,161
Receipts from Other Sources	228,060	253,889
Interest received	25,187	20,753
Payments to suppliers and employees	(1,349,225)	(1,352,215)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	107,163	(68,027)
Cash flows from Investment Activities		
Proceeds from sale of plant and equipment	-	-
Payments for purchase of plant and equipment	(43,084)	(7,890)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investment activities	(43,084)	(7,890)
Cash flows from Financing Activities		
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash Held	64,079	(75,917)
Cash at the Beginning of the Reporting Period	523,650	599,567
Cash at the End of the Reporting Period	587,729	523,650

Notes to the Statement of Cash Flows

1. Reconciliation of Cash

Cash on Hand	350	313
Cash at Bank	348,980	295,626
Term Deposits	238,399	227,711
	587,729	523,650

Reconciliation of Net Cash Used in Operating Activities to Operating Result

2. Activities to Operating Result	85,582	(123,917)
Depreciation	10,555	5,622
Increase/(Decrease) in Provisions/Reserves	3,398	8,552
(Increase)/Decrease in Current Receivables	(4,622)	-
Increase/(Decrease) in Creditors	19,380	2,181
Prior Year Adjustment	-	1,046
Increase/(Decrease) in Grants in Advance	25,298	
Increase/(Decrease) in Income in Advance	(132,428)	38,489
Net Cash provided by/(used in) Operating Activities	107,163	(68,027)



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