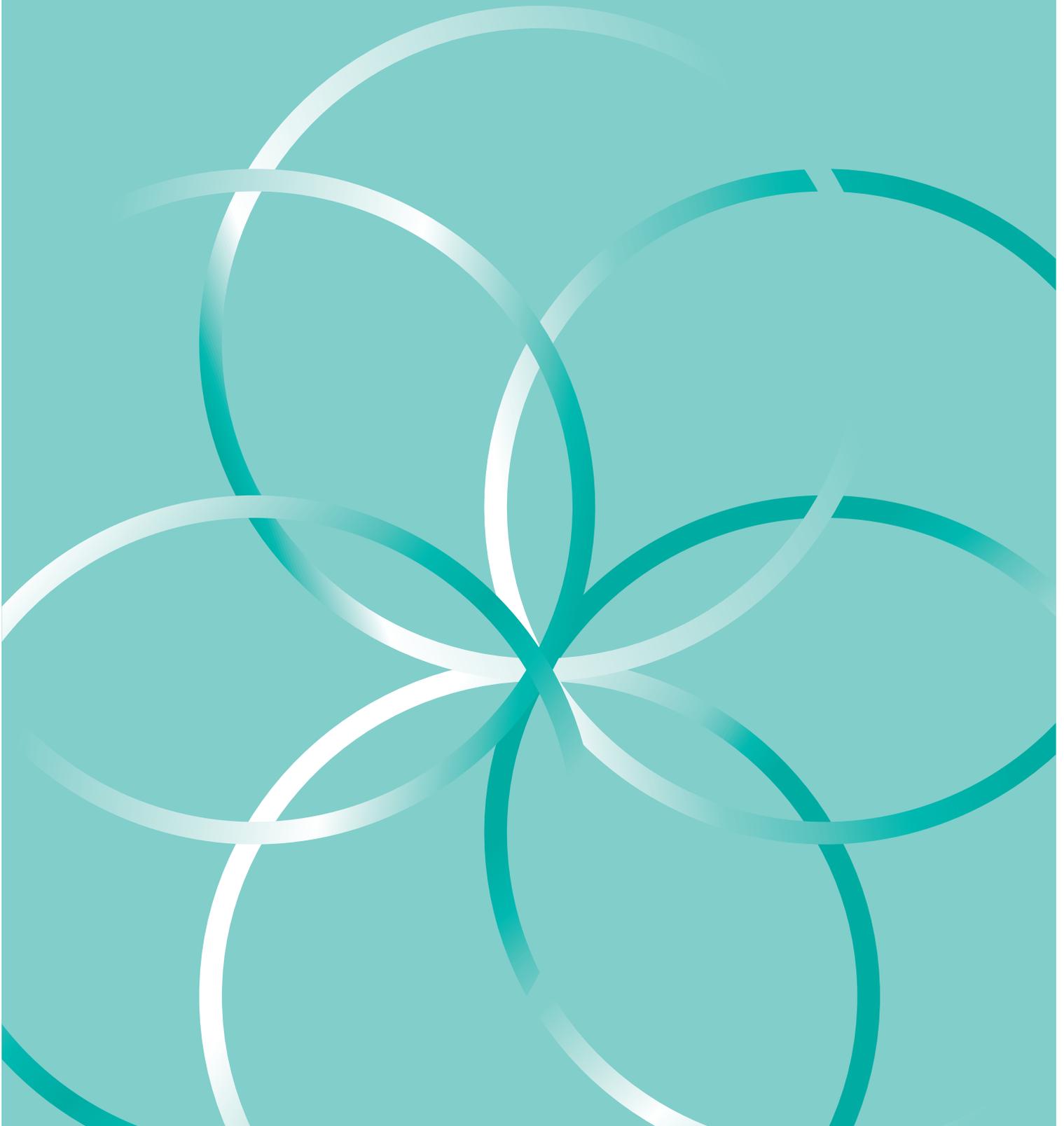


women's legal
service victoria

ANNUAL REPORT 2012.2013



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mission

Women's Legal Service Victoria (WLSV) 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 and policy reform.

vision

Justice, safety, empowerment
for women and their children

values

- Progressive
- Respectful
- Collaborative
- Inclusive
- Empowering

funding

WLSV is funded by the Indigenous Justice and Legal Assistance Division, Attorney General's Department – Canberra and by Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) to provide the core client services described on page 4.

In this financial year, WLSV has also received funding from the Legal Services Board (through Women's Health in the North) to deliver legal services using Skype and to provide professional development.

“

Thank you so much
for all your work,
advice and kindness
in handling my case

WLSV client

”

our 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
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Advice and Representation at Melbourne Magistrates' Court (duty lawyer service)

Level 6, 233 William Street, Melbourne, Vic, 3000 (cnr Lonsdale Street)

Phone 03 9642 0877

Monday to Friday	9.30am - 1.00pm
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Skype Outreach

By appointment only through partner agencies.

Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

Legal advice for clients of family violence agencies and secondary consultation for family violence workers.

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 and where women's access to justice and legal support is limited.

Legal education

WLSV's team of educators is highly skilled at developing and delivering education, training and professional development, tailored to the needs of particular audiences. Our educators understand the law and its practical application, and use their experience as qualified lawyers and educators to inform all our training.

We provide training to a diverse range of audiences, including survivors of domestic violence, police, psychologists, lawyers, family violence and sexual assault workers and members of the magistracy and judiciary. This broad range of training participants reflects the valuable position WLSV occupies across the legal and community sectors.

Policy & Campaigns

As experts in the areas of family law and family violence law, WLSV is well positioned to provide advice to government and external stakeholders on the systemic issues in law and practice that adversely impact on women experiencing family violence and relationship breakdown.

WLSV influences change by working closely with government and other stakeholders to improve the legal system, so that it is more responsive and provides better outcomes for women.

WLSV's policy and campaigns work is underpinned by the direct experience of our clients and the 'on the ground' perspective of legal practice.

our people

Board members

Anne Lyon	Chair
Libby Maynard	Deputy Chair
Tali Bernard	Secretary (until February 2013)
Leanne Miller	Secretary (from February 2013)
Caroline Gowan	Treasurer
Cheri Le Cornu	Member
Dorothy Gibbs	Member
Lisa McMeeken	Member
Samantha Horsfield	Member
Joanna Fletcher	Ex-officio member

WLSV staff

Joanna Fletcher	Chief Executive Officer
Helen Matthews	Principal Lawyer
Abigail Sullivan	Lawyer
Brenna Powney	Lawyer
Carol Mellords	Lawyer
Chloe McGrath	Lawyer (until January 2013)
Gwen Yeoh	Lawyer (from January 2013)
Emma Smallwood	Lawyer
Henrietta Barclay	Lawyer
Jane Bentley	Lawyer
Danielle Wisniak	Legal Advice Line Supervisor/Lawyer
Elisa Whittaker	Outreach Coordinator/Lawyer
Pasanna Mutha-Merrennege	Policy & Campaigns Manager
Zione Walker-Nthenda	Legal Education Manager (job share)
Eila Poursagheri	Legal Education Manager (job share)
Weng Lan Chong	Finance Officer
Samantha Watson	Operations Manager
Angela Borg	Office Administrator
Caitlin Watson	Administrative Assistant

chairperson and chief executive officer's report

Our vision

Justice, safety, empowerment
for women and their children

Strategic direction 2013-2016

In reviewing our achievements this year and looking to the future, we reaffirmed our commitment to achieving our vision and re-articulated the strategies we will implement in order to do so.

We are very pleased to present, on the page following our report, WLSV's Strategic Direction 2013-2016.

Achievements

This year we have taken several important steps towards achieving our vision, including:

- growing our Skype Outreach project to include nine partners, bringing this unique and flexible inter-disciplinary model to more women experiencing family violence (see page 9)
- broadening the range of agencies with whom we partner (see page 17) and for whom we provide training (see page 18)
- developing a legal needs assessment toolkit to enable workers from other disciplines to identify legal need and respond appropriately (see page 12)
- increasing our media presence, both in social media and traditional media (see page 15)
- developing a framework for measuring the outcomes of the work that we do, using "theory of change" methodology (see page 18).

We have also built on our already strong financial position, delivering a surplus of nearly \$27,000 and finishing the year with cash reserves in excess of \$900,000.

Opportunities and challenges

The 2012/13 year brought a number of challenges, in the form of changes and potential changes, to our internal and external environment. In what we see as a great strength of the organisation, we have been able to meet these significant challenges with a spirit of optimism and turn them into opportunities.

Internal changes

This year saw the end of an era on the WLSV Board as we farewelled three Board members, all senior legal practitioners, who served the organisation collectively for over forty years. Between them Lorna Gelbert and Jennifer Dillon chaired the Board for over 10 years and Gesualda Li Rosi had been Treasurer for the past four years. Their drive, intelligence and commitment to WLSV has been truly outstanding.

As one era ended another began with new Board members, Caroline Gowan, Samantha Horsfield and Lisa McMeeken joining the Board, bringing with them a range of knowledge, skills and industry experience, including management, business, finance, strategy, policing, law, community sector, government and violence against women.

WLSV's staff numbers have doubled over the last eight years, since the establishment of our sibling service, Family Law Legal Service, and the introduction of five new services within our overall service delivery model. We now have a pressing need to relocate into larger office to ensure the effective delivery of our full suite of services and to enable us to reach our strategic objectives. We anticipate that the move will be finalised early in 2014.

External changes

Two major changes implemented by Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) in December 2012 have already had, or will have, a significant impact on WLSV:

- changes to VLA's family law guidelines that restrict eligibility appear to have led to the significant increase in referrals for parenting matters that we have received from VLA. We are working with VLA to address the reasons for this (see page 17)
- new funding principles for the community legal sector require us to target our services to need, find efficiencies in our service delivery models, collaborate with other services and evaluate the outcomes of our work. Pleasingly, at WLSV we had already, independently, identified the importance of these approaches and had started implementing them in 2011, well prior to the funding principles being released.

Two significant reviews were completed this year but, at the time of going to print, reports had not been released. These are the:

- National Review of Legal Assistance Services which has enquired into the effectiveness and efficiency of all Commonwealth funded legal services
- Victorian Service Sector Reform Project which has enquired into how the whole community services sector in Victoria can improve outcomes in the context of increasing cost and demand.

Thank you

We acknowledge and thank our dedicated Board, staff and volunteers. We are truly privileged to work with such skilled and committed people. In our changing landscape, we are particularly grateful for the capacity of the Board and staff to work with uncertainty and be creative about opportunities for continuing to develop the organisation.

Thank you to all our partners; you add immense value to our work. We would particularly like to acknowledge our Skype Outreach project partners and the Legal Services Board (LSB), whose grant made this incredible project possible. The LSB is continuing to support innovation at WLSV into the future with its funding of our Stepping Stones project (see page 15).

We have also had the benefit of major pro bono contributions this year and, in particular, we thank Herbert Smith Freehills, Lander & Rogers, ANZ Bank and Justitia Lawyers & Consultants. We also acknowledge and thank Jil Toovey of Innovative Knowledge Development whose generous pro bono contribution to the Community Legal Centre (CLC) sector and to WLSV has led to an incredible growth in leadership skills.

Thank you to our private donors who have not only been generous with their financial contributions but have also given us insight into the aspects of our work that particularly interest and inspire people to donate.

Finally, and very importantly, we thank our major funders, the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department and VLA whose support makes possible both the range and quality of the services we provided.

Looking forward

We begin 2013/2014 with a clear vision and a commitment to a range of strategies, which have now been tested over two years and shown to be successful.

We look forward to:

- securing ongoing funding for the Skype Outreach project so we can expand its geographical reach and refine the model to include partnerships with other types of services, such as CLCs (see page 9)
- reviewing and refining our service delivery model to ensure that we are responding to legal need in the most effective way possible (see page 12)
- rolling out our Safer Families Program - a comprehensive professional development program for the community legal sector on family violence and family law (see page 13)
- implementing our innovative Stepping Stones project which aims to improve the opportunities for women and their children to recover financially from family violence and relationship breakdown (see page 15).

You will find more information about our work in 2012/2013 and about the year ahead in the pages that follow our report. Please let us know what you think.

Anne Lyon
Chair, Board WLSV

Joanna Fletcher
Chief Executive Officer

strategic direction 2013-2016

Justice, safety, empowerment
for women and their children

Effecting change

We actively contribute to the development of law and policy by

- challenging the law where it impacts unfairly on women
- informing and advancing policy initiatives that respect and promote the rights of women.

Preventing violence

We build the community's capacity to reduce and prevent violence against women by

- delivering training programs that increase community understanding of legal rights and responsibilities
- sharing our expertise with other professionals regarding effective responses to violence against women and their children.

Improving access

We provide a comprehensive legal service to women affected by relationship breakdown and violence. This includes

- providing legal information, advice and representation
- assisting women and the people who support them to better navigate the legal system
- building strong partnerships with other service providers, so that wherever women seek support, they can access our legal help.

Responding to legal need

We ensure our services respond to the legal needs of women and their children by

- evaluating our service delivery and targeting programs to address priority legal issues
- strengthening our networks and diversifying our support base to better meet legal demand.

skype outreach

Access to justice

Skype Outreach provides access to justice for women who have experienced family violence. Geographic isolation is a major barrier to women obtaining legal advice, particularly where it is accompanied by social and economic disadvantage. We are reaching these women through collaboration with family violence workers and the effective use of technology.

The outreach model

Through Skype Outreach, we:

- provide timely legal advice to women in a supported environment where they are assisted by their family violence worker, and
- build the capacity of the family violence workers from partner agencies to identify legal need and support women as they navigate the legal system.

The model is both cost effective and flexible and enables WLSV to provide consultations to women in multiple locations in any one session. Some workers have taken laptops to clients who are housebound and many have used on-site interpreters.

Partnership

The Skype Outreach project (Women Lawyers Workers – a pilot funded by the Legal Services Board) was developed in conjunction with Women's Health in the North (WHIN) and Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE). Our nine partner agencies from the family violence and community health sectors are located in these regions.

The future

All indications so far are that Skype Outreach is a great success. In the words of the Senior Manager of one of our partner agencies:

“I regularly hear how fantastic women feel after their appointments”

We are seeking further funds to continue and expand the Skype Outreach project beyond November 2013, when the current funding will expire. Additional funding will be used to extend the outreach model to further regions of Victoria and engage new partners including rural and regional CLCs.

lili's story

Lili's case provides an example of how WLSV has been able to assist a non-English speaking woman to access legal advice and representation through Skype Outreach, when she had previously been able to obtain little legal assistance because of fears of "authorities" and the courts.

Lili

Lili was married at 13. Her marriage was marked by violence and cruelty from the very beginning. Lili's husband locked her in the home while he went to work during the day and beat her on a regular basis. Lili's first child was born before her 14th birthday and her husband would not even allow her mother to visit following the birth.

In 2010, Lili's husband made arrangements for the family to flee their country of origin and travel to Indonesia, then to Australia by boat. Following their arrival, the family was kept in immigration detention for over 12 months. English and other classes were available, but Lili's husband refused to allow her to participate.

Persistent violence

Lili was encouraged on several occasions to report her husband's violent behaviour, but she did not do so in case it would adversely affect the family's application for asylum.

The family's application for permanent residence was granted the following year and they set up home in Melbourne. The violence continued. Another child was born.

One night, after beating Lili to the point that she was bleeding and bruised, Lili's husband locked her and the children out of their unit. It was raining and cold. Not knowing where else to turn, she took the children to the police station nearby. Arrangements were made by police for an intervention order application to be made and for Lili to go into emergency accommodation at a refuge.

The father removes the children

Once the intervention order was made Lili arranged for her husband to spend time with the children each week. She handed them over to him in the city on Saturday morning and he would return the children to her in the afternoon. This worked well for three weeks but on the fourth occasion the father and children didn't turn up in the afternoon. When the husband eventually answered his phone, he told Lili that he had left Melbourne and that she would not be seeing the children again. He refused to tell her where they were and would not let Lili speak to the children over the phone. Lili was distraught.

Providing legal advice

Lili, who is still only 19 years old, contacted us through Skype Outreach from the women's refuge where she was living. Her caseworker and an interpreter were there to assist her.

During that first discussion with WLSV it became clear that Lili was very fearful of engaging with the legal system at all. For years her husband had filled her with the fear that he would tell the authorities that she was a "bad mother", she would be imprisoned, and would never be allowed to see her children again. Lili's distress on the first occasion we met her through Skype Outreach was no doubt compounded by the fact that she had no family or other supports in Australia. However, Lili desperately wanted her children to be safely returned to her.

Building trust

Our initial challenge was to allay Lili's fear of "authorities" and the courts. We explained the legal principles about where children will live and with whom they will spend time, as well as the way the court works. We reassured Lili that her story would be heard and that the court would not send her to prison. We discussed the various ways in which we might be able to locate the father and have the children returned to her care.

Our goal from the start was to build Lili's trust in the law and in the notion that it could actually assist her. We then worked in partnership with her refuge worker to build her confidence in using the law to achieve her aim – reunification with her children.

Court proceedings and final orders

Shortly after that first Skype consultation we issued proceedings in the Federal Circuit Court. The husband was located in New South Wales and with the assistance of police was served with Lili's application.

Interim orders were made for the return of the children to Lili's care and an Independent Children's Lawyer was appointed.

After a number of court hearings and a report by one of the Family Court consultants, final orders were made for the children to live with Lili and for them to spend time with the husband in a supervised setting.

Access to Skype Outreach from the familiar environment of the refuge, and with her refuge worker and an interpreter beside her, enabled Lili to gain the confidence and understanding necessary to achieve the return of her children through the court.

“

I'm excited to move forward
with my life - I could not
have done it without your
legal support.

WLSV client

”

preventing violence

Building our training capacity

This year, with the assistance of Caroline Gowan (Board member), we have focussed on:

- scoping new potential training partners and participants
- working smarter by developing new innovative products and delivery modes
- promoting our services to a broader network.

Building the capacity of other professionals

Family violence workers

We have a long and successful history of training family violence workers. In 2012/13 we undertook a training needs analysis to inform the development (and re-development) of training packages for the family violence sector.

These packages, specifically tailored for family violence workers, are now part of our ongoing training calendar. They are, supporting your client through:

- family dispute resolution (in partnership with Melbourne Family Relationship Centre)
- the family law system
- the Victims of Crimes Assistance Tribunal

Collaborative training

Our partners continue to engage us as experts in the legal issues arising from relationship breakdown and violence against women. Together with our skills as educators, this expertise forms the basis of our contribution to a number of training partnerships through which we work collaboratively to develop and deliver tailored legal education.

In addition to our continuing and highly valued partnership with the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, other highlights this year include providing training in partnership with:

- WIRE - Women's Information, to enable WIRE's telephone counsellors to support clients experiencing family violence or navigating the family law system
- South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA), to support sexual assault workers across the sector with appearing as a witness. We were very grateful for the contribution of special guest retired Family Court Judge, The Hon. Sally Brown.
- Universities, including RMIT and Latrobe University to educate and inspire students about social justice, gender issues, law reform and the community sector.

Community legal sector training

We are specialists in delivering "vicarious trauma" training. This year we were invited to include our vicarious trauma training as part of the yearly continuing professional development training for all Victorian community lawyers.

We also developed and delivered "family law practice" training to regional, rural and remote (RRR) community lawyers. We will build on this training for the wider sector in the coming year.

Sharing our expertise

Our lawyers have shared their casework experience in a number of training seminars and conference presentations. This included a presentation about our Skype Outreach project at the Seventh Annual Women's Health Conference jointly with our Skype Outreach project partners, WHIN and WHGNE. The presentation generated interest from potential future partners and we will be presenting again in July 2013 at the National Association of Community Legal Centres Conference.

Our website is also a great medium for sharing our expertise. It includes useful information pages, addressing frequently asked questions about legal issues, which can be downloaded as fact sheets. We have received excellent feedback about this plain language information that has been accessed by over 21,000 visitors in the past year.

Early intervention and primary prevention training

This year, we were engaged to develop and facilitate innovative training for a range of different groups. We have focused on engaging more diverse clients by targeting RRR and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients.

Legal Needs Toolkit

Through the Skype Outreach project (see page 9) we identified the need for a toolkit to assist family violence workers identify legal need at an early stage. This early intervention tool is designed to assist clients before their legal needs escalate, and further exacerbate their disadvantage.

Our team has developed the training and the toolkit which will be piloted with family violence workers next month. The Legal Needs Toolkit is a further means of extending the reach of WLSV to the women of Victoria.

Healthy Relationships Ambassador's training

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre engaged us to facilitate training for Sudanese Australian community leaders. The aim of the project was to build the knowledge and capacity of community leaders across genders and generations to act as healthy relationship ambassadors in their community. The training included understanding family violence dynamics and the law, unpacking cultural contexts and the impact of the migration experience on family dynamics. Through the training, the ambassadors created key messages about family violence for their community members.

Looking forward:

We look forward to:

- Safer Families Program, which includes training, mentoring and psychological debriefing for CLC lawyers working with clients eg. family violence. The program aims to create safer families by building the capacity of CLC lawyers to provide high quality, effective advice and representation
- E-Learning for CLC volunteers and other professionals. This will help us broaden our reach, in particular to RRR professionals, so they can learn at a time and place that suits them irrespective of where they live or work
- Vicarious Trauma training for a broader range of justice sector professionals. This will involve scoping effective ways to bring this very popular training to a wider range of lawyers as well as to police and other professionals connected to the justice system
- Legal Needs Toolkit training to family violence workers around Victoria. The outcomes of the Toolkit pilot, together with information from our training needs analysis of family violence workers will be used to refine and then roll out this innovative training.

effecting change

Strengthening access to justice in family law

Impact of court fees on access to justice

This year we focused our attention on the challenges for women in accessing the family law courts. The Commonwealth Senate Inquiry into Federal Court fees (the Inquiry) provided an opportunity for us to highlight barriers to women accessing the court system. By providing our clients' stories to the Inquiry, we were able to illustrate the difficulties in meeting various costs, such as the filing fee for divorce which is often an important step for many women who have experienced family violence. Our submission and in person evidence to the Inquiry played an important role in increasing the understanding amongst law and policy makers of our clients' experiences in the family law system and helped shape the Inquiry's recommendations.

Vulnerable witnesses in family law trials

We have worked independently, and in collaboration with Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA), to raise awareness of the need to protect vulnerable witnesses in family law trials. A lack of protection in the Family Law Act has resulted in women, who have experienced family violence, being directly cross-examined by their abuser during court proceedings.

We collaborated with WLSA to raise this issue with the Family Court, Federal Circuit Court and the Attorney General, proposing a new model for protection similar to that found in state based criminal law. WLSV has also worked with the media to raise community understanding of the issue. A number of articles and reports have tackled the question of vulnerable witness protections, including an extensive report on ABC's Lateline in March of this year.

VLA guideline changes

2013 brought with it a range of significant changes in VLA's funding guidelines, which have had a direct impact on the ability of disadvantaged women to access the family law system. Our Case Study Bank has provided us with the capacity to capture the experiences of women impacted by these changes. It has enabled women to tell their stories through us. These stories have provided powerful examples of the impact of legal aid guideline changes, and have been used in the media to raise awareness of the issue amongst our broader community.

Highlighting systemic problems in the law

Family law

We continue to undertake significant casework in family law which allows us to identify the need for changes in the law and legal processes impacting on women and children. This year, one of our cases clarified the legal consequences for women using known donor sperm in assisted reproduction. The case highlighted the inconsistencies between the Victorian and federal jurisdictions, the inadequacies of the legal safeguards under state regulation and the gaps in the Family Law Act with regard to children born through assisted reproduction technologies. The insight gained from this case was used in our submission to the Family Law Council's review of parentage laws.

Family violence

In the last twelve months we have seen an overwhelming demand placed on the justice system as the number of reported incidences of family violence in Victoria continues to grow. By representing women who are victims of family violence, we see first-hand the important role of an integrated system in supporting victims and holding perpetrators to account.

WLSV maintains its engagement with government by contributing to several high level advisory groups and participating in government consultations. We continue to highlight the important role of perpetrator accountability in reducing the risk of future violence. We also emphasise the need to roll out specialist family violence services and family violence divisions across Victoria to ensure that all victims, regardless of postcode, are safe from violence.

Increasing our impact through the media and social media

This year, we have had a particular focus on increasing the impact of our advocacy, including by being more strategic about the work that we do and the way that we do it. As part of this approach, we have increased our engagement with the media to highlight the ways in which laws, policies and procedures impact on our clients and on their ability to obtain good outcomes.

The launch of our Twitter account has given us an effective tool to raise awareness of our service, the work that we do and our perspective on policy issues. We already have 550 followers!

Looking forward

We look forward to our Stepping Stones project: Creating pathways to economic well-being for women and their children through legal and financial counselling partnerships.

We have received funding from the Legal Services Board for this two year project. It aims to improve the opportunities for women and their children to recover financially from family violence and relationship breakdown by:

- developing an innovative, inter-disciplinary legal and financial counselling case-management model
- documenting women's lived experiences of financial hardship and poverty and identifying key legal and economic barriers
- raising the awareness of key stakeholders and influencing improvements to law, policy and practice.

“

Thanks a million
for all of your help
and support through
this difficult time.
Wouldn't have been
able to do it without you

WLSV client

”

improving access

Client services

We have maintained our reputation for providing quality advice and representation to women in need.

This year there has been a high demand for our casework services in family law and family violence matters. Familiar sources of referral from external stakeholders and our own intake through our Face to Face Legal Advice Clinic and our duty lawyer service at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court continued to identify women in need of ongoing legal representation.

We have also taken on casework through the Skype Outreach project, a partnership with WHIN and WHGNE (see page 9). Many of these women, all of whom have experienced family violence, would not have otherwise accessed legal services because of social or geographic isolation.

The delivery of legal advice through Skype has enhanced our outreach capacity, improving women's access to legal services. The collaborative model of the Skype Outreach project has led to greater effectiveness in representing women in complex family law matters (see our case studies in this report for examples of this work).

With the assistance of a generous donation in 2012 from the AFL Staff Social Club we were able to purchase a new telephone system. Our volunteer lawyers and staff have welcomed the new system, which is user friendly and gives us the capacity, through its sophisticated reporting technology, to properly evaluate the effectiveness of our Legal Advice Line.

Our evening Legal Advice Line service is still well supported by 60 volunteer lawyers. In addition, we have expanded our day Legal Advice Line service with the assistance of between four and six volunteer lawyers each week. We continue to focus on ways to meet the increasing demand for legal advice.

Our ongoing duty lawyer service at Melbourne Magistrates' Court has given us insight into the increase in reported family violence incidents. As part of our positive relationship with the court, we have worked with magistrates, court staff and other stakeholders in efforts to deal efficiently with an increasing number of intervention order applications.

Impact of VLA guidelines

Changes in VLA guidelines included the removal of funding for representation at final hearings, with limited exceptions. Women, who have already been identified under the VLA guidelines as being disadvantaged and eligible for legal assistance, are now left without representation at a time when they need it the most.

Following the guideline changes, we experienced an increase in women seeking assistance in family law matters at the later stages of their cases. We have not been able to meet the demand for representation, leaving these women to run their own case, even where there has been significant family violence.

VLA's guideline changes also coincided with a significant increase in referrals for parenting matters that we have received directly from VLA. We are working with them to address both the practical reasons and the high level policy reasons that may be contributing to this.

Looking forward:

We look forward to:

- building on our Skype Outreach project by expanding its geographical reach and broadening the range of participating partners
- building our capacity to undertake child protection matters
- continuing to monitor and respond to the impact of stakeholder policy changes on women engaged in the legal process
- better targeting our legal advice and casework, in alignment with our strategic goals.

responding to legal need

Measuring outcomes

Together with two other specialist CLCs, WLSV is leading the way in introducing outcomes based measurement into the CLC sector.

We have developed our “theory of change”, which articulates how each of our programs (client services, legal education and policy), and our organisation as a whole, contributes to creating positive outcomes for women and the children in their care. These are outcomes at the individual level, at the level of the legal system and at the societal level.

We have also begun work on developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks that will enable us to measure how well we have succeeded in creating those intended outcomes for women and their children. Instead of looking purely at how many services we have been able to provide (outputs), we will be able to clearly point to what the provision of those services has achieved.

The information we glean from monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of our work will be used to refine our services over time to make sure that we are responding to changing legal needs in the most effective way possible.

Strengthening networks and collaboration

We have had a particular focus this year on growing our networks and strengthening our partnerships in order to respond better to legal need. This included:

- strengthening and broadening our longest standing partnership with VLA
- working closely with the Federation of Community Legal Centres and with senior practitioners in other CLCs to develop a proposal for WLSV to provide capacity building for the sector around family violence and family law. This collaboration has culminated in the Safer Families Program which we will be rolling out in 2013/14 (see page 13)
- growing our Skype Outreach project (see page 9) to include nine partners, bringing this unique and flexible inter-disciplinary model to more women experiencing family violence
- participating in the Family Law Pathways Network to link with and contribute to a collaborative, multidisciplinary response to issues arising in family law
- establishing a new relationship with the Financial and Consumer Rights Council, the peak body for financial counsellors to explore opportunities for collaboration between lawyers and financial counsellors
- strengthening our relationship with Court Network, whose volunteers provide personal support, non-legal information and referral to people in contact with the justice system.

Looking forward

We look forward to:

- undertaking a legal needs assessment to estimate and analyse the legal needs of Victorian women experiencing relationship breakdown and violence. This work, together with our work on measuring outcomes using theory of change, will enable us to plan our services in a way that is more targeted to areas of need, both in terms of subject matter and geographical areas of need or disadvantage
- broadening the range of partners with whom we collaborate to achieve the best possible outcomes for clients, including working with:
 - financial counsellors, through our new Stepping Stones project (see page 15)
 - a wider range of family dispute resolution practitioners through additional partnerships with mediation services.

eva's story

Eva's story illustrates the value of WLSV being able to provide urgent advice through Skype Outreach, to achieve immediate and practical results for a client.

Family violence and separation

Eva had recently separated from her husband of 10 years after enduring many years of family violence. Eva has a physical disability which made it very difficult for her to seek legal advice and her self-esteem was rock bottom after years of abuse from her husband. This culminated in a serious incident which led neighbours to call the police. Eva was told by her husband many times that if she left, she would never get the kids because of her disability. As a result, she feared the legal system, believing that if she sought help, she would lose her children.

As a result of the neighbours' intervention, the police applied for an intervention order to protect Eva and the children. Eva's husband was excluded from the home as a condition of the court order. The police also referred Eva to a family violence agency, one of our Skype Outreach partners.

Sale of the family home

Jenny, who accompanied Eva during the Skype consultation, had been assisting Eva with financial problems resulting from substantial debts incurred by a business run by her former husband. During the consultation Eva revealed that the sale of the family home had been finalised the week before.

Eva was aware that most of the proceeds of sale were owed to the bank, but she did not know what had happened to the balance.

Skype Outreach gave Eva the opportunity to obtain legal advice and, as it turned out, we were able to assist just in time.

Urgent advice and practical assistance

We informed Eva that she had a right to know where the proceeds of sale were, and urged her to demand an explanation from the conveyancer who handled the sale. Straight after the interview, Eva, with Jenny's assistance, contacted the conveyancer and was told that the real estate agent had provided the final proceeds of sale to Eva's husband by way of a cheque in joint names.

With Eva's consent we immediately contacted the real estate agent and advised them that Eva did not consent to the money being distributed. We also let them know that Eva and her husband had been separated since March, and that Eva had an intervention order against him.

The real estate agent stopped the cheque.

Financial agreement

We went on to negotiate a division of the proceeds of sale between Eva and her husband giving Eva access to desperately needed funds. Without timely legal advice and intervention, it is unlikely that Eva would have received any share of the only remaining asset of the marriage.

Victim of crime assistance application

We are now working with Eva on a victim of crime compensation application and Jenny continues to assist Eva with her difficult financial situation.

Through the partnership of Eva's caseworker and WLSV through Skype Outreach, Eva became aware of her entitlements under the Family Law Act and as a victim of crime and has been able to obtain assistance to access those entitlements.

“

Your support came
at a really tough time
and I am grateful to
have met you

WLSV client

”

international guests

We met with a number of international guests this year who came to Australia to learn from experiences with service delivery, policy and education and to share their own experiences. Our guests included delegations from:

- Zimbabwe - judicial and government officers looking at strengthening access to justice in family courts for disadvantaged groups in Zimbabwe
- China (facilitated by the Australian Human Rights Commission). Two delegations:
 - Beijing Children's Legal Aid and Research Centre. We met with four lawyers working for the Centre, which was established in 1999 as the first Chinese NGO specialising in children's rights. The meeting was an opportunity to talk about the community legal service experience in Australia and mechanisms to protect the rights of disadvantaged groups through the law
 - China's Supreme People's Court (SPC). We hosted a 10-member delegation as part of a study visit on judicial responses to domestic violence. The objective of the study visit was to enhance the capacity of the SPC to develop legal responses to domestic violence
- The Middle East - Australian Arab Women's Dialogue, a roundtable discussion with women leaders from Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, Iraq, Libya the UAE and Saudi Arabia to explore women's participation in contemporary developments in the Arab world and in Australia
- Indonesia - a high-level delegation of judicial officers, legal aid staff and NGOs under the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice who were in Australia researching the provision of free legal advice models to inform their plans to implement a free telephone legal advice service in Indonesia.

acknowledging our volunteers

Volunteers have been supporting WLSV 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 12 months:

Agata Wierzbowski
Amanda Lee
Amelia Beech
Andrea Videion
Astrid Zecena
Bonnie Phillips
Candice Almeida
Caroline Paterson
Cassandra Castillo
Catherine Dow
Celia Laragy
Chi-Yung Lee
Claire Burchall
Constantina Demetriou
Dao Bui Nguyen
Deborah Randa
Elisa Carayannis
Elisa Wai Leng Chew
Eliza Ginnivan
Ella Thompson
Emma Heggie
Emmalaura Messer
Evie Reynolds
Felicity Francis

Fiona Halloran
Gabrielle Erbacher
Gwen Yeoh
Hannah Hodges
Holly Renwick
Jaclyn Tang
Jan Motherwell
Jana Homatopoulos
Jennifer Powell
Jenny Sharp
Jessica Black
Jessica Kerr
Jessica Willard
Jillian Williams
Julie Andritsos
Katerina Axiarlis
Katherine Francis
Kathryn McMillan
Katie-Elouise White-Spier
Katya Lakes
Keleigh Robinson
Kirsty Irving
Louisa Travers
Lidia Scafidi

Liz Hall
Meagan Grose
Meg O'Brien
Melissa Lambrianew
Meribah Rose
Miranda Brookes
Natalie Fifield
Natalie Goharpey
Natasha Cecic
Niresha Mudalige
Nonni Sdraulig
Pamela Khoo
Priscilla Wong
Regan Richards
Sandra Costanzo
Selina Nivelles
Shani Williams
Sharnee Moore
Simone Driscoll
Sophie Song
Susan McClellan
Susan Hamilton-Green
Tanya Lavan
Yvette Zegenhagen

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 12 months:

Alexandra Turnbull	Krista Green
Andrea Main	Laura Keenan
Anisa Zahidee	Marquita Nolan
Anusha Selvavatuam	Maryam Yousufzai
Beth Griffith-Clarke	Mei Ngo
Brooke Cunningham	Melanie Molloy
Cara Pinkus	Melanie Young
Christina Cutler	Nicki Farnell
Deborah Kliger	Penelope Antoniou-Librer
Elizabeth Davies	Romina Coluccio
Grace Duncan	Tamara Kotowicz
Jacqueline Muckersie	Sara Minamikawa
Jade Werkmeister	Sasha Earle
Julia Mansour	

Administrative Volunteers

A very special thank you to Kathy Fawcett, who has generously given administration support to WLSV for over 13 years.

Impact of our volunteers

Over the past year volunteers have

- Assisted over 1000 clients
- Contributed over 3500 hours
- Provided over \$530,000 worth of legal services

acknowledging other assistance

Legal Assistance

Thank you to the following barristers and solicitors who have advised or represented WLSV clients in the past 12 months:

Altavilla Vessali	Esther James	Renata Alexander
Amanda Pearson	Hilary Bonney	Robin Smith
Andrea Horvat	Huw Roberts	Robert Allen
Andrew Barbayannis	Jennifer Howe	Sam Andrianakis
Andrew Robinson	Joan Callahan	Sarah Fisken
Angela Cranenburgh	Joye Elleray	Sarah Hession
Annemarie Farrell	Julien Lowy	Sharney Jenkinson
Barbara Phelan	Kate Langham	Therese McCarthy
Caroline Jenkins	Kim Southey	Tom Hutching
Caroline Paterson	Marita Ham	Tony Vriends
Cath Devine	Mary Higgins	Vass Theohoropoulou
Christopher Dunlop	Mary McNamee	Victoria Campbell
Cilla Brookes	Michael Gregurek	Viola Nadj
Daniel Matta	Neil Collins	Wayne Henwood
Daniela Hannan	Paul Glass	Zoltan Friedman
David Laidlaw	Peter Tait	
Eleanor Mallett	Rebecca Dunlop	

Other Assistance

Thank you to the following organisations or people who have so generously assisted WLSV in the past 12 months with pro bono advice, referrals and in-kind contributions:

ANZ Bank
 The Age
 The Hon. Sally Brown
 Loren Days
 Lara Jurecek
 Justitia Lawyers
 Lander & Rogers
 Public Interest Law Clearing House
 Herbert Smith Freehills
 (in particular the Freehills Foundation team)

Student Placements

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

Brooke Cunningham
 Catalina Perez
 Claire Lindsay-Johns
 Jacinta Fox
 Jessica Bourke
 Josie Thomas
 Krisoula Mantzanidis
 Mary Maroud
 Mary (Shenika) Vairawanathan
 Nina Ulasowski
 Tanya D'Souza

a volunteer's experience

One year of experience as a volunteer at Women's Legal Service Victoria (WLSV) enabled me to enrich my knowledge of the law and strengthen my practical legal skills. On my first day of volunteering I had the privilege of observing proceedings in the Federal Circuit Court, shadowing the duty lawyer and interacting with clients. During my time at WLSV I have gained insight into the working life of a lawyer through close interaction with staff lawyers and continued assistance with a range of family law matters.

A unique mark of WLSV is that volunteers are assigned meaningful work which fosters active engagement with the law. During my experience at WLSV, I have undertaken legal research, prepared correspondence and compiled briefs to barristers. The team's confidence in my capabilities, continued guidance and support has made my time at WLSV memorable. The opportunity to instruct a barrister for a complex children's matter was a rewarding and educational experience which sparked my interest in advocacy.

My application for a volunteer role at WLSV was motivated by my passion for women's rights and desire to redress women's vulnerability in family law matters. I am continually inspired by the dedicated team of lawyers at WLSV who manage emotionally challenging matters with persistence, empathy and professionalism. As a volunteer at WLSV I am part of a network of women devoted to strengthening the position of women in the community. Further, during my time at WLSV my supervising lawyers have become mentors, sharing their pathways into the law and providing me with advice regarding career advancement.

I am motivated to continue volunteering at WLSV due to the valuable work WLSV does and the genuine appreciation for the efforts of volunteers. I recently attended an event dedicated to volunteers and our contribution to the organisation. I was impressed by the number of women working full-time who maintain their connection with WLSV by volunteering at night. Their continued loyalty to WLSV is a testament to the quality work of the team and supportive working environment.

Deborah Kliger
Law Student

volunteer thank you event



We held a thank you event on 19 June 2013 to acknowledge and thank all our hardworking, dedicated and committed volunteers.

In addition to lawyers and students who directly assist clients or support our lawyers to do so, our Board members also volunteer their time to provide strategic direction for the organisation.

Everyone who volunteers with WLSV contributes to our vision of justice, safety, empowerment for women and their children. Their commitment is fundamental to our work as can be seen from the statistics on their contribution on page 28.

At the event we were able to specifically acknowledge and thank four incredible women who have volunteered their time with WLSV for over 10 years. They are volunteers Julie Andritsos and Kathy Fawcett, and Board members, Leanne Miller and Tali Bernard.

Julie, a family lawyer who runs her own private practice has been volunteering on our legal advice line for an amazing 32 years. Kathy, who has been with us for 13 years volunteers in an administrative capacity, assisting at Melbourne Magistrates' Court every Monday morning and on reception every Wednesday morning.

Leanne, Executive Director of Koori Women Mean Business first came into contact with WLSV in 1996 when she was the Chair of the Indigenous Women's Legal Resource Group. She became a WLSV Board member in 2002. Tali, a family lawyer joined WLSV as a volunteer lawyer in 1997. She became a member of the board in 2000 and held the position of secretary for many years.

Thank you again to all our volunteers for your contribution and support over the years. We simply couldn't deliver the service we do without you.

leyla's story

Leyla's case provides an example of how WLSV has been able to assist a woman through Skype Outreach to protect her property rights. Through Skype Outreach WLSV has extended its reach to women isolated in both rural and suburban settings.

Leyla

Leyla lives on the outskirts of Melbourne with her three pre-school aged children, one of whom is severely disabled. She arrived in Australia shortly after her marriage in 2006. Since that time she has been a homemaker, with very little contact with the world beyond the small community comprising others from her home country.

Family violence and relationship breakdown

During 2012, Leyla's husband sustained a back injury that prevented him from working. From that time on the marriage deteriorated. Leyla's husband became depressed and was often angry at her and the children. His patience with the children was short. Incidents of uncontrolled anger became more frequent. Leyla became frightened to the point she reluctantly sought police assistance. When she last saw her husband he told her he would sell the house "from under her" and leave her "on the streets."

Legal advice and practical assistance

As a result of the police referral to one of our Skype Outreach project partners, a family violence worker identified Leyla's need for urgent legal advice. Transport and childcare were arranged by our partner agency, and an interpreter was booked so that Leyla could discuss her situation with one of our lawyers.

Leyla needed information about her rights, and access to the means of enforcing those rights.

During the Skype consultation we provided information about Centrelink payments and child support as well as information about the law in relation to dividing property after marriage breakdown. This included advice about doing a title search to establish in whose name the property was held. Subsequent enquiries confirmed that the property was held in the husband's name alone. A plan to address Leyla's legal needs both in relation to the property and her children was discussed.

Legal proceedings and property settlement

With the assistance of our project partner, arrangements were made for a caveat to be placed on the title of the property, securing Leyla's entitlement and preventing the husband from dealing with it without her knowledge. We have started court proceedings on Leyla's behalf and we are currently negotiating with the husband about dividing the property.

We will continue to represent Leyla until the property division is settled. Ongoing representation would not be available to Leyla through the private legal profession due to the limited size of the property pool.

Ongoing support for our client and her worker

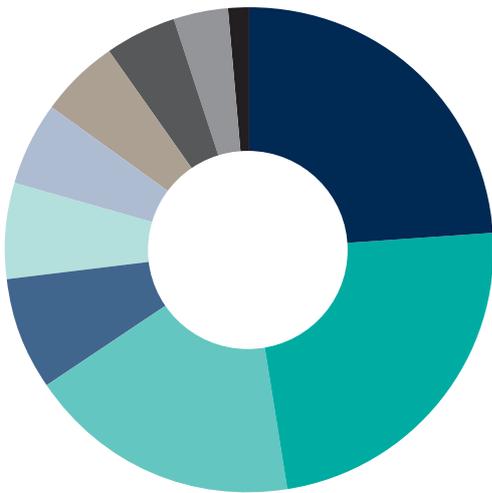
Since Leyla's first consultation with us through Skype Outreach other issues have arisen in relation to the children and the intervention order. Leyla and her family violence worker have been able to consult with us throughout this process. Leyla is gradually gaining an understanding of the legal system and has increased confidence to use it in ensuring a safe and secure future for her children.

Without the Skype Outreach project Leyla would not have been able to access legal advice due to childcare issues, lack of accessible transport and lack of awareness of the assistance available to her.

numbers

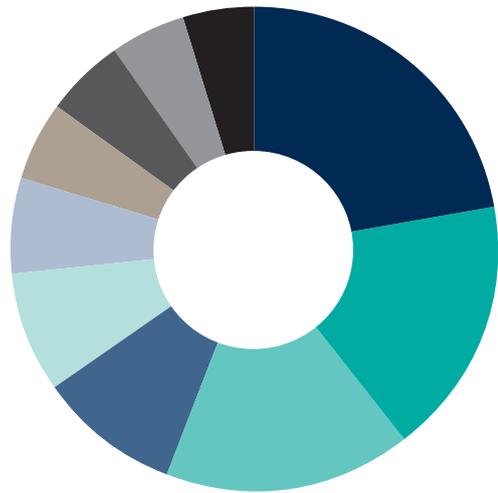


Top Ten Problem Types



- 1 Family or domestic violence order
- 2 Child contact or contact orders
- 3 Property in marriage
- 4 Other civil violence/restraining orders
- 5 Family or domestic violence
- 6 Divorce
- 7 Separation
- 8 Property de facto
- 9 Child residency
- 10 Injuries compensation

Top Ten Occurrences of Country of Birth



- 1 China
- 2 India
- 3 England
- 4 Philippines
- 5 Vietnam
- 6 New Zealand
- 7 Turkey
- 8 Malaysia
- 9 Thailand
- 10 Sudan

financials

This is an extract of WLSV's audited financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2013. The full version is attached separately.

Income and Expenditure Statement

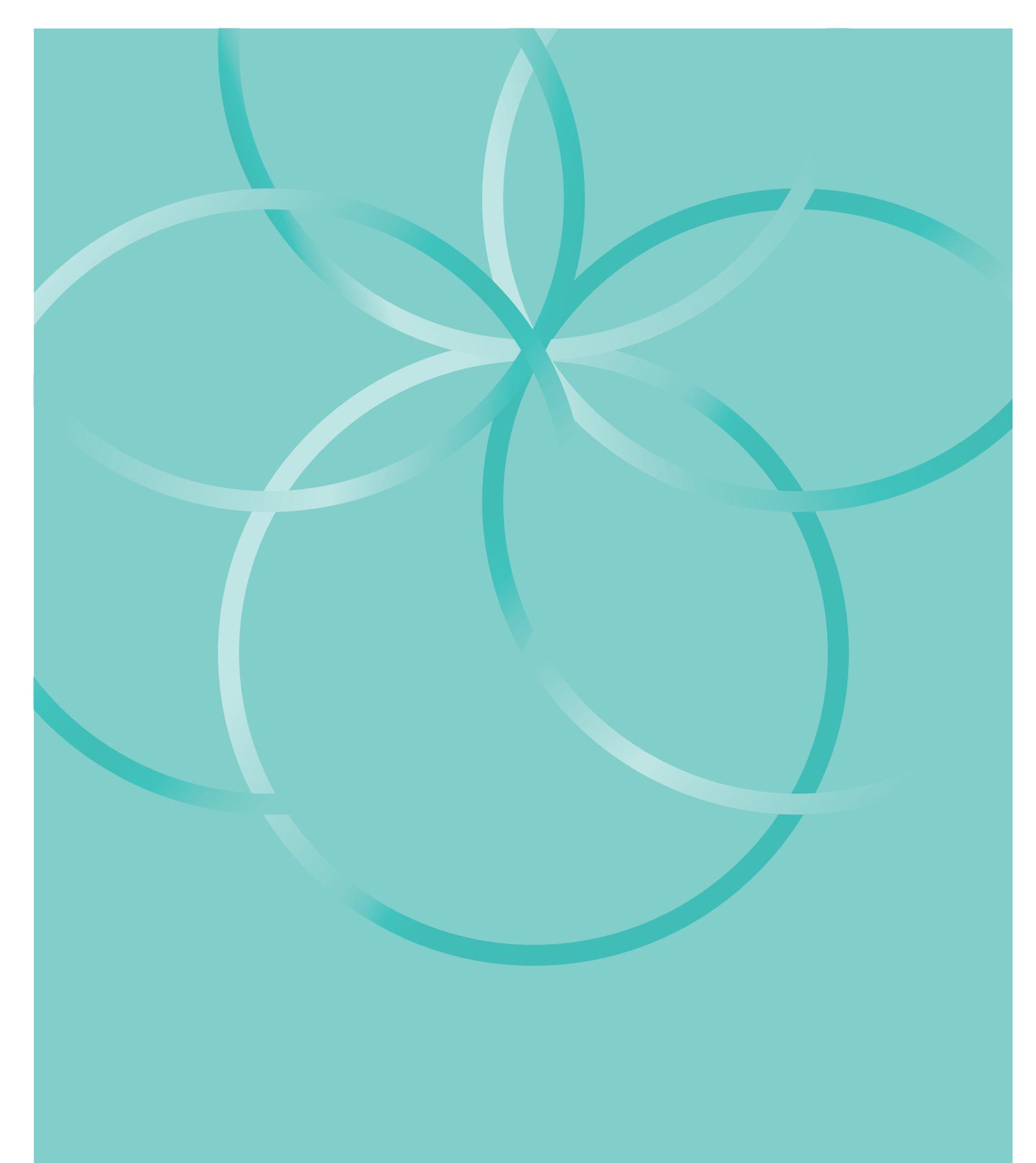
for the year ended 30 June 2013

	2013 \$	2012 \$
INCOME		
CLC Recurrent Grants	1,192,379	1,090,141
CLC Non-Recurrent Grants	90,000	45,455
Other Grants	50,000	53,000
Other Income	169,390	184,787
Interest Income	32,592	34,518
	1,534,361	1,407,901
EXPENDITURE		
Employee benefits expense	994,874	855,472
Depreciation expense	26,835	16,688
FLLS Costs	299,335	293,205
Rental expense	76,800	68,169
Other expenditure	109,621	90,341
	1,507,465	1,323,875
Surplus (Loss) before income tax	26,896	84,026
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus (Loss) after income tax	26,896	84,026
Retained Surplus (Losses) at the beginning of the financial year	335,037	251,011
Retained Surplus (Losses) at the end of the financial year	361,933	335,037

Assets and Liabilities Statement

as at 30 June 2013

	2013 \$	2012 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	927,274	774,886
Trade and other receivables	8,707	10,842
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	935,981	785,728
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	75,543	77,532
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	75,543	77,532
TOTAL ASSETS	1,011,524	863,260
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	103,308	81,799
Provisions	51,279	27,644
Grants in advance	288,540	237,460
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	443,127	346,903
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	91,464	66,320
Future Contingency Fund	25,000	25,000
	116,464	91,320
TOTAL LIABILITIES	559,591	438,223
NET ASSETS	451,933	425,037
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Capital Replacement Reserve	90,000	90,000
Retained Surplus	361,933	335,037
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS	451,933	425,037



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