



Our Principal Lawyer Highlights

We experienced a growth this year in services for people with multiple problems and complex matters. HRCLS is committed to meeting this challenge and I am confident we have the skills, expertise and dedication to keep adapting to the needs of our community. Highlights for the year include:

- **Working in partnership to provide free legal advice on-site for people.** Thanks to UMFC, Centre Against Violence, Gateway Health, Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service, Intereach, YES Unlimited, and Women's Centre, we ensure as best possible that people get the support and care to resolve their legal and non-legal issues.
- **Increasing our casework focus for the most vulnerable people.** This has included more work in consumer law and debt matters for our clients, and referrals between HRCLS and UMFC Financial Counsellors.
- **Advancing a comprehensive response to family violence.** This was achieved through:
 - assisting with a range of legal issues for those escaping family violence, including family violence protection orders, family law, property, debt, consumer issues, child support and victims of crime matters.
 - partnering with services on both sides of the border to ensure women can easily access free legal advice at CAV, Women's Centre and YES Unlimited.
- **Tendering successfully for the continuation of services into NSW.** The NSW Government has funded this for another three years. This ensures our outreach continues in places including Deniliquin, Finley and Corowa, and grows to meet the needs identified in various locations.
- **Continuing our Invisible Hurdles Project.** With exceptional support from partners Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre, NESAY and AWAHS, we are reaching young people and those with family violence issues who would not otherwise know about our service or even realise free legal help is available.
- **Reviewing our conflict of interest policy.** This creates an environment where people are not needlessly turned away while maintaining our high professional standards.

Funding drives our vital legal service

Victoria Legal Aid
\$348,185

Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department
\$773,629

NSW Public Purpose Fund
\$77,175

Legal Aid NSW
\$187,487

Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner
\$85,000

Department of Justice and Community Safety
\$251,501

Thanks to UMFC

We are auspiced by UMFC and appreciate their support and assistance to help us deliver the best possible service for our community.

Special thanks to our 2018-19 Operations team, Ashlie Barclay, Tracey Walker, Meaghan Frazer and Hannah Niethe for ensuring the office runs smoothly and efficiently. HRCLS functions at a very high level and this would not be possible without your assistance, expertise and willingness to help out every time lawyers ask for assistance.

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This service is auspiced by UMFC and in 2018-19 received funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, Victoria Legal Aid, Legal Aid NSW, Department of Justice (Victoria) and the Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program. ABN 99 081 624 768 Reg No: A5357 ARBN 081 624 768

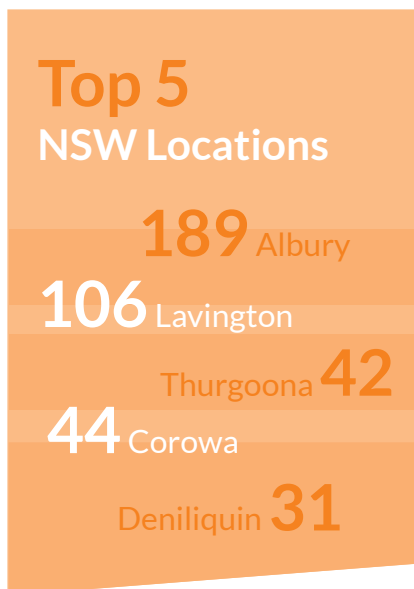
We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we work and pay our respects to their elders, past & present.



Our People Multiple Problems Many Solutions

SNAPSHOT

Our People Multiple Problems Many Solutions



Where we go 17012 km travelled



156 legal tasks **1914** advices
2040 clients **229*** cases opened **196*** cases closed **469** duty lawyer services

Who we help

66% female **33%** male
4% People from non-English speaking backgrounds
11% Homeless indicator
36% People with a disability or mental illness
96% financial disadvantage
9% Elderly 65 & over
13% Children & youth (0-25)
61% People experiencing family violence
11% Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples

Top 10 Problem Types

876 Children's Issues **730** Family Violence/ IVO/AVO
439 Property in marriage/de facto **192** Divorce/separation
189 Credit/Debt/Consumer issues **169** Personal safety
128 Child protection **108** Fines
94 Victims of Crime **82** Child Support

Programs/Projects & Lawyers

Manager & Principal Lawyer
 Sarah Rodgers
Senior Family Lawyer
 Alison Maher
Senior Generalist Lawyer
 Deborah Fisher
NSW Outreach
 Janet Osborne, Becky Smith, Karen Bowley
NSW Family Law/ Family Violence
 Diana Bruce
AWAHS partnership
 Karen Keegan
Invisible Hurdles Project
 Andrea Georgiou
Car Partner Program NSW
 Beth Simpson
Victorian Family Violence
 Jodie Wells
Victoria Legal Aid Seconded
 Sarah Caplice
HALO Health Justice Partnership
 Deborah Fisher, Tessa Mead

Without our help, a lonely young man ripe to be taken advantage of would have been forced to pay thousands for a phone that belonged to someone else. A serious accident as a 19-year-old left Tom* with a mild intellectual disability. Now 21, he is unable to work and relies on the Disability Support Pension to survive. Along with all his challenges, Tom finds it difficult to make friends and connect with people.

One day he met Steve at a local youth café and was thrilled that Steve wanted to be his mate. In conversation, Steve told Tom that he needed a new phone. Steve asked Tom to get him a phone, as Steve couldn't due to his bad credit report. Steve said he would pay Tom each month for the phone bill. Tom already had his own phone (with the same company) costing him \$59 a month but he wanted to be a good friend and went to the telecommunications store with Steve.

Steve picked out a new iPhone 10 on a \$99 a month plan over two years. Tom told the salesperson the phone was for Steve, and Steve did all the talking. Tom just signed the paperwork when it was put in front of him. The salesperson never asked Tom if he could afford \$99 a month. The transaction was done, and after he got the phone, Steve disappeared with it, leaving Tom to pick up the monthly bill.

Tom started getting phone calls from the phone company and then a debt collector because the phone bill had reached nearly \$3000. At this time, Tom was living on the streets and had no way to pay the debt. Fortunately, he sought our help and we contacted the company on his behalf alleging various breaches of the Telecommunications Code of Practice, including that the company did not check if Tom could afford to pay the contract.

Thankfully, the company agreed to waive the debt, removing considerable stress from Tom and one less challenge in his life.

Community
39 Legal Education sessions **678** participants