



IMPACT REPORT FY20

Justice Connect

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EVALUATION FOR IMPACT

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1. Context and approach for impact

Each year millions of Australians will have a legal problem and only half will access any form of assistance. Community organisations also grapple with the law and struggle to access legal support.

In the face of this rising unmet legal need, Justice Connect designs and delivers high-impact interventions that increase access to legal support and progress social justice. Justice Connect believes in a fair and just world where people and communities are supported to engage with and fully participate in the legal and social system and avoid the negative impacts on their wellbeing or organisational health that flow from unresolved legal problems.

Justice Connect is committed to taking an impact-focused approach, applying research and design principles to develop products and services to ensure they make a tangible difference for their clients and sector peers.

Justice Connect deliver services that assist both people and community organisations. Those assisted often struggle to navigate the law, are unable to use the law in their daily lives and experience the impacts of harsh and unjust laws. Justice Connect aim to prevent and to solve legal problems so that they can prevent the negative impacts on people's lives and organisations and empower the community to use the law as a force for good.

Given the scale of the challenges Justice Connect address, it uses digital innovation to extend their reach and impact, supporting them to be more efficient and accessible, while helping them capture and use data to better understand legal need and structural issues.

Justice Connect also harness the extraordinary pro bono contributions of over 50 member firms and the barristers they work with across the country. Justice Connect directs pro bono effort through innovative service models to ensure that pro bono hours deliver real impact for the community.

Beyond service delivery, Justice Connect works on strategic interventions to help address the system-level drivers of legal problems and barriers people face when engaging with the legal system. By addressing root causes of flawed or unfair laws and poorly designed systems, Justice Connect prevents the long-term challenges that people and organisations continue to face.

Creative staff drive Justice Connect forward with a commitment to evaluation and iteration that ensures impact increases year on year.

Justice Connect is committed to achieving these goals through the following three strategic directions:

- 1) Scaling up services with a focus on digital strategies
- 2) Amplifying and extending impact through strategic engagement
- 3) Achieving purpose in the most effective and financially sustainable way

1.1. Evolving measurement evaluation and learning framework

In the time since the 2018-2019 Annual Impact Report, Justice Connect have implemented a new strategy, developed a new theory of change, implemented new metrics for measuring impact and improved the processes for sharing their impact internally and externally.

This year's impact report reflects this evolving context, with a focus on measures which more accurately represent the value of Justice Connect's work and provide greater consistency between the various services. Justice Connect have also improved the accuracy of their measures through a rigorous process of data reconciliation and audit.

1.2. A year of compounding crisis, and rapid responses to rising legal need

Everyone had to face compounding crises in the past year. From the bushfires to the outbreak of COVID-19, legal need has increased and there are new cohorts of people struggling to get by. Justice Connect's investment in a new customer relationship management system, cloud computing and the success of their Gateway Project products meant they were able to keep all services running, as well as provide new and targeted support where it was needed the most.

By October 2019, Justice Connect had launched the three cornerstone products developed through the Gateway Project: an intelligent online intake and triage tool to help people quickly and easily understand their eligibility for Justice Connect's services and apply online, a referrer tool that supports sector colleagues refer clients directly into Justice Connect's system and reduces referral drop-out, and a Pro Bono Portal to efficiently match and refer clients with Justice Connect's network of 10,000 pro bono lawyers.

In September 2019, the organisation was unaware that a season of devastating bushfires, closely followed by a global pandemic, would put its services and infrastructure to the test.

When the bushfires hit, Justice Connect agreed to coordinate the pro bono response in both Victoria and NSW. The organisation developed a tailored inbound referral pathway enabling frontline responders to send people and organisations to Justice Connect for legal help, and they used the Pro Bono Portal to deliver efficient placement of cases with pro bono lawyers. 110 firms joined the Portal in response to the bushfire crisis, bringing the total number to 160 registered firms.

While many organisations were forced to reduce services offered when COVID-19 restrictions were introduced, Justice Connect was able to maintain all its services with its digital infrastructure, and quickly worked to launch new services designed to respond to emerging needs and to the increasing number of people seeking help online.

The Not-for-profit Law program provided training to thousands of not-for-profit representatives by webinar, new resources and interactive tools were published that received hundreds of thousands of views, and the organisation launched its new online legal clinic Justice Connect Answers, designed to connect pro bono lawyers working from home with people across Australia seeking advice for their legal issues.

By taking a human-centred design approach to its crisis response, Justice Connect were able to respond directly to the needs of the individual and community organisations in the context of the challenges exposed by each crisis. Justice Connect's service data for the financial year reflects how the organisation continued to meet new legal need in the community, both by sustaining and expanding services.

The nature of compounding crises such as the bushfires, COVID-19 and impending recession mean that the demand for legal help will likely remain high for years to come. Justice Connect is working to ensure that they continue to have the right infrastructure in place, collect the right data, as well as monitor, evaluate and iterate their services. Justice Connect will continue to analyse and respond to the dynamic emerging issues and service preferences of the communities they are seeking to assist.

1.3. Consumer outreach and engagement

This year Justice Connect invested heavily in increased consumer outreach including paid and organic digital marketing, as well as improving website assets and search engine optimisation. This investment is reflected in significant growth across a range of measures, and stability in longer term digital assets:

- ✧ Overall web traffic on the Justice Connect site increased by 43% from 244,614 unique page views in FY19 to 350,771 in FY20.

- 67% of traffic was from users finding Justice Connect through organic search (152,495 sessions) compared to 62% (81,296 sessions) in FY19.
- ✧ Not-for-profit Law received 425,089 unique page views, a 1.4% decrease on 429,611 views in FY19 (however engagement with self-help resources in this period increased, see analysis in section 4.2.2)
 - 58% (129,065 sessions) of traffic was from users finding Justice Connect's Not-for-profit Law website through organic search compared to 62% (144,432 sessions) in FY19.

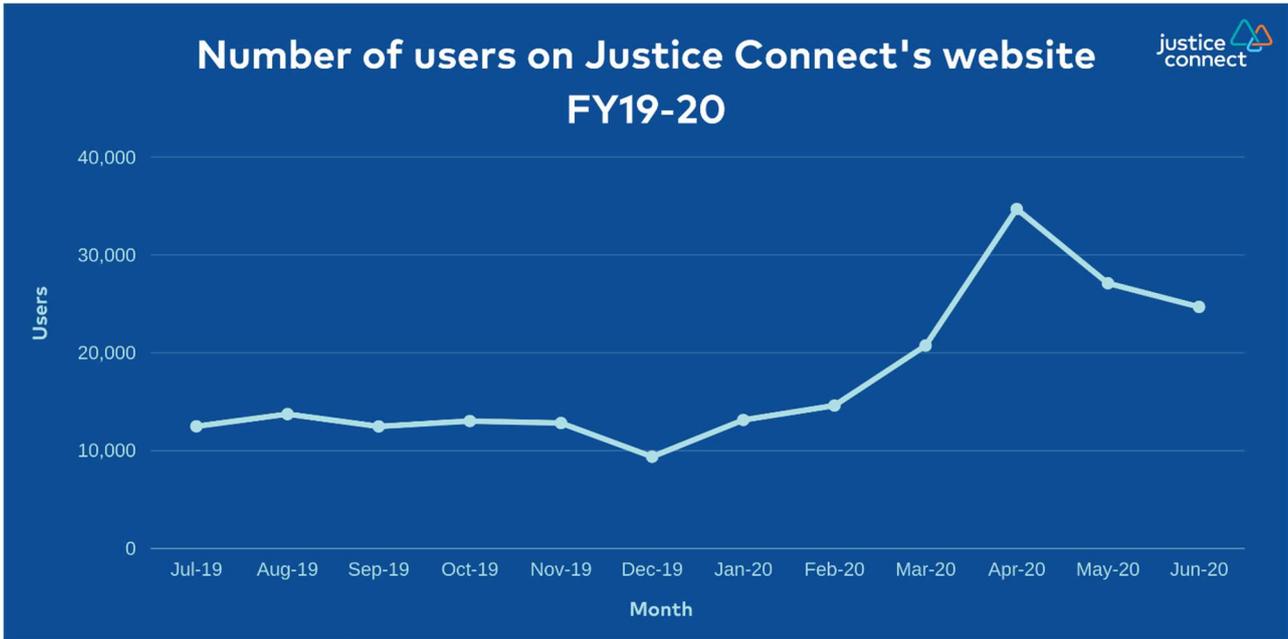


Figure 1: Number of users on Justice Connect's website during FY20 (July 2019 – June 2020)

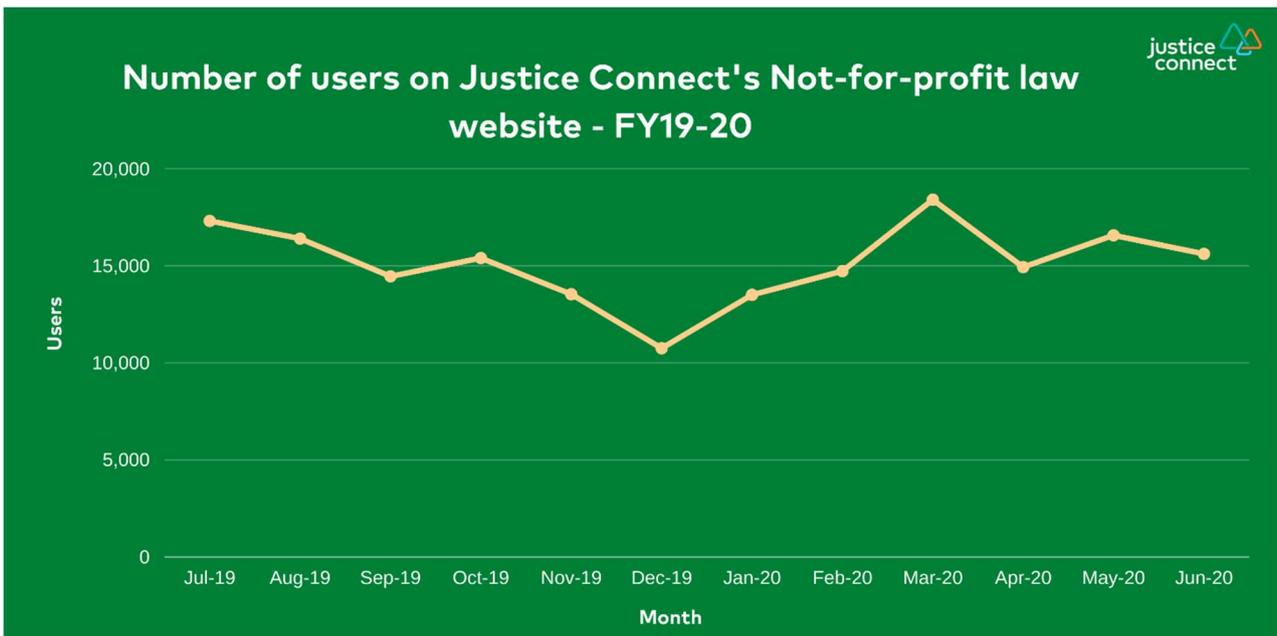


Figure 2: Number of users on Justice Connect's Not-for-profit Law website during FY20 (July 2019 – June 2020)

- ✧ On social media:
 - Overall Justice Connect saw an 8.4% increase in impressions¹ between FY19 and FY20 (1,598,235 to 1,731,602) and an 84.9% increase in engagement² between FY19 and FY20 (39,229 to 72,513). This included paid and organic posts across Facebook, Instagram, Facebook’s audience networks, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google.
 - The engagement rate by impressions saw an overall growth from 2.5% to 4.2%.³
 - Justice Connect’s Google search term campaigns using a mix of the Google Ad grant and paid adwords returned 28,600 impressions and 1,337 engagements. This was the first time the organisation ran full Google Ad campaigns.

2. Pro bono network

Justice Connect supports a strong and unique referral network of member law firms and barristers.

Justice Connect supports Australian law firms and barristers to help people and community organisations with their legal needs. Members of the profession assist by accepting pro bono referrals from Justice Connect programs and/or providing pro bono legal services in specialist legal clinics run by Justice Connect.

In FY20:

- ✧ 1000 pro bono referrals were accepted; a 13% increase on FY19.
 - 673 by member firms, 290 by barristers and 37 by non-member firms⁴
 - 68% of referrals accepted (681), were matched and referred through the Pro Bono Portal
- ✧ A total of 45,249 hours of pro bono legal help was provided; an 8% increase on FY19.
- ✧ Approximately \$18,099,200 worth of pro bono legal help was provided; an 8% increase on FY19.
- ✧ 1058 pro bono lawyers were available for Justice Connect clinic/appointment services

Justice Connect programs deliver training to pro bono lawyers to support their capacity to provide high quality legal advice and representation to the clients that Justice Connect links them with for assistance.

- ✧ 1,316 training attendances by lawyers in FY20⁵

¹ Social media impressions are the number of times social media content is shown to users.

² Social media engagement is the measure of user interactions with social media content (e.g. through likes, shares and comments).

³ This is calculated by dividing Justice Connect’s engagement rate by the number of impressions and multiplying it by 100.

⁴ The Pro Bono Portal was opened to non-member firms to assist in the pro bono response to the bushfires.

⁵ The individual number of lawyers who attended a training session with Justice Connect cannot be calculated from the data available but is less than the total attendances; depending on the program, lawyers may attend one training session or a series of training (e.g. pro bono graduates and new lawyers attend at least five Homeless Law sessions).

3. Enquiries and intake

3.1. Online enquiries

Justice Connect offers help-seekers the opportunity to check their eligibility using a Program Sorter tool. This interaction is the equivalent to making an initial enquiry by phone, before proceeding to intake. The Program Sorter is designed to provide quick and easy feedback on eligibility and help prevent clearly ineligible help-seekers from over-investing in the application and intake process.

Justice Connect also provides options for help-seekers to make more detailed applications for assistance online via guided intake pathways. These pathways provide further screening and feedback to help-seekers and, depending on the help-seeker's answers to the screening questions, may result in help-seekers lodging an application for assistance which is then reviewed by Justice Connect staff.

Justice Connect received 42,118 engagements with its Program Sorter and online intake pathways during FY20; more than twice the 18,867 received in FY19 (i.e., 123% increase).

- 25,926 eligibility enquiries were made via the program sorter
- 15,485 people engaged with the more detailed online intake pathways
- A small number (707) were received via the new referrer tool which enables frontline workers and sector peers to provide facilitated referrals of help-seekers to Justice Connect.

2,338 people who engaged with the online intake pathways were screened by the tool as possibly eligible, submitted full applications and proceeded to Justice Connect's full intake process which involves one-to-one contact with Justice Connect staff. These 2,338 enquiries are included in the figures in section 4 below.

Most online enquiries received in FY20 (94%; 39,645) were screened ineligible via the online enquiry and intake process. This is comparable to FY19 when 93% were screened out. Common reasons for screening out included: area of law not an area where Justice Connect provides services, dispute resolution options available have not been explored yet, and income too high. These results are consistent with the design intention of the online tools, which is to help people understand their eligibility quickly and easily online without needing to have a longer engagement with Justice Connect.

Help-seekers who were screened out online received suggestions for other services that may be able to assist them based on the information inputted.

3.2. Intake

In FY20 Justice Connect received 9,194 enquiries that proceeded to intake; a 30.7% increase on FY19's 7,033. The intake process involves Justice Connect staff engaging with help-seekers one-to-one to gather detailed information and review this information to determine eligibility for assistance. The different ways in which help may be provided are described in sections 4 and 5.

4. Legal assistance services provided

In the face of rising unmet legal need, Justice Connect designs and delivers high-impact interventions that increase access to legal support and progress social justice.

4.1. Summary of main legal assistance services

Justice Connect aims to get the right help to the right people at the right time. Different types of support are provided as needed, such that some people or organisations may receive more than one type of help.⁶

Figure 3 shows the number of times each of Justice Connect’s legal assistance services was delivered in FY20. Further details about each service type follow.

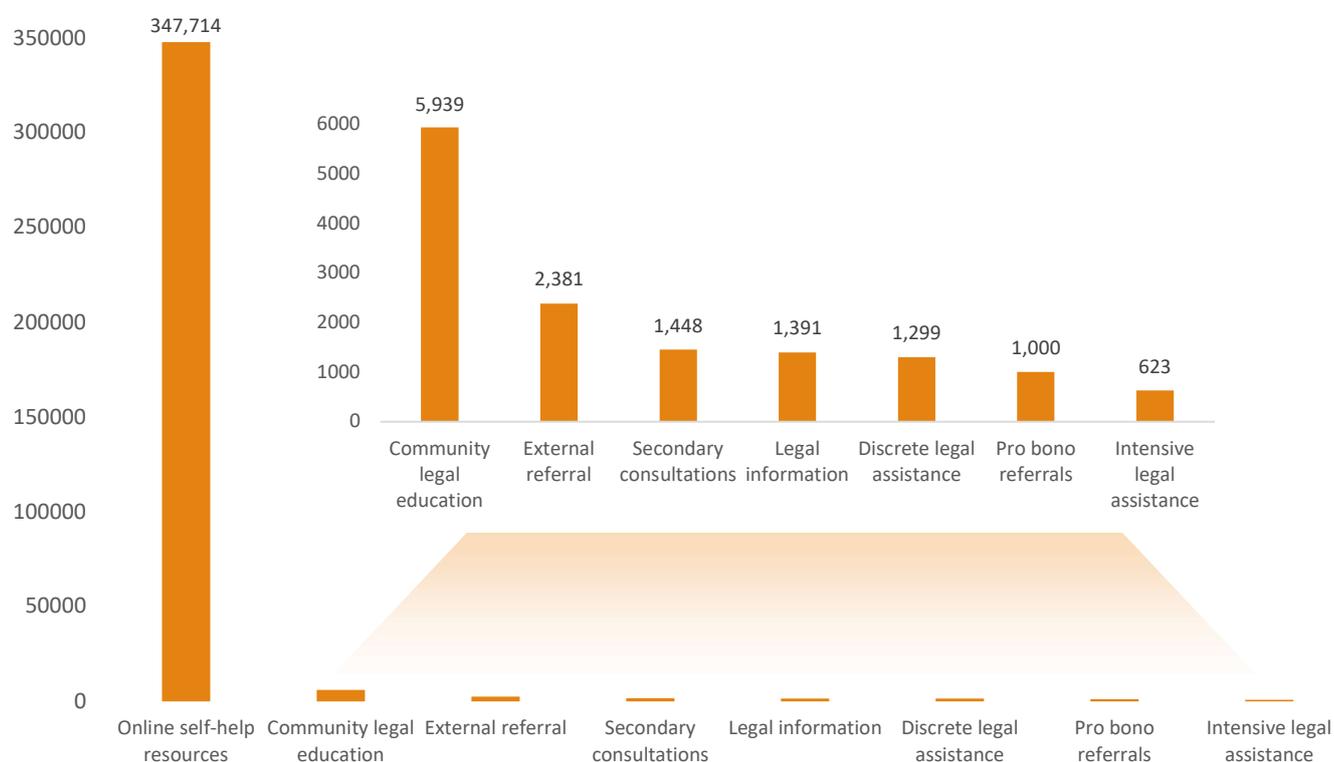


Figure 3: Number of instances of main legal assistance services delivered by Justice Connect in FY20

In FY20:

- ✧ Justice Connect’s online self-help resources were accessed by 347,714 unique users
- ✧ One-to-one legal help (i.e. one-to-one information, advice, casework, representation, pro bono referrals and external referrals) was provided to 4,560 individuals and 1,554 community organisations
 - 257 individuals assisted identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; 6% of all individuals assisted

⁶ E.g. a client might be given legal information, legal advice, social work support, and be referred to a non-legal support service. Prior to becoming a client, a person may have accessed Justice Connect’s online resources.

- 128 organisations identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled; 8% of community organisations assisted
- 57% of individuals helped identified as female and 43% identified as male; one client identified as non-binary and one client identified as other gender⁷

4.2. Legal information

Legal information is “a direct communication and/or a provision of material”⁸ (e.g. fact sheets, links to websites, videos) to help people understand the law, their legal issues, rights and responsibilities. Information is of general application; it is not advice. For some people, legal information alone will meet their legal needs.

Justice Connect provides legal information in a range of ways.

4.2.1. One-to-one

Legal information is provided one-to-one when an individual or representative of a community organisation has a consultation with Justice Connect or a Health Justice Partner, enquiring about the law, legal systems or legal processes. Information provided is of general application and is given (in person, by phone or email) by a lawyer or caseworker.

- ✧ In FY20, one-to-one legal information (no advice) was provided on 1,391 occasions.
 - Two thirds of recipients of one-to-one legal information were representatives of community organisations (905; 65%)
 - One third of those receiving one-to-one legal information were individuals (486; 35%)

One-to-one legal information (no advice) was provided on 28% fewer occasions this year than in FY19. This reflects Justice Connect’s strategy to scale up its online self-help services and directly promote its information resources to consumers through online outreach strategies, rather than provide information over the phone which is a less efficient experience for both Justice Connect and the consumer. More help-seekers are applying for assistance online and are told that they are ineligible for one-to-one services without ever needing to speak to Justice Connect on the phone. Details entered in the application process are used by the intelligent online intake tools to direct these help-seekers to relevant online legal information and self-help resources.

4.2.2. Online self-help resources (one-to-many)

Self-help resources are tools and services to help people understand their legal problems and act. They can include online guided tool, fact sheets, document generators, and self-help kits which raise awareness and understanding about the law and how to identify, prevent and deal with legal problems. These self-help resources can be accessed by anyone without making a legal enquiry.

Justice Connect provides self-help resources via two websites targeting different audiences – the Justice Connect website has resources for a range of people (including those representing themselves in court, tenants, LGBTIQ+ people, those with domestic building disputes, seniors, young people, employees and others) while the Not-for-profit Law website has an extensive suite of resources for community groups and not-for-profit organisations.

⁷ NB – gender was unknown for 13% of people assisted.

⁸ National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual – Version 2 – July 2020; p.4.

In FY20:

- ✧ 347,714 unique users accessed online self-help resources
 - 69% (238,290) accessed resources on the Not-for-profit Law website
 - 31% (109,424) accessed resources on the Justice Connect website; a 289% increase from 28,140 unique users in FY19.
- ✧ Most users accessing self-help resources were in Victoria or NSW (see Figure 4)
- ✧ Women accessed online self-help resources more than men; 60% cf. 40% (see Figure 5)⁹
- ✧ Approximately half of the users of online self-help resources were aged 25 – 44 years (see Figure 6).
 - 25 – 34-year olds made up approximately one third of users
 - 35- 44-year olds made up approximately one fifth of users

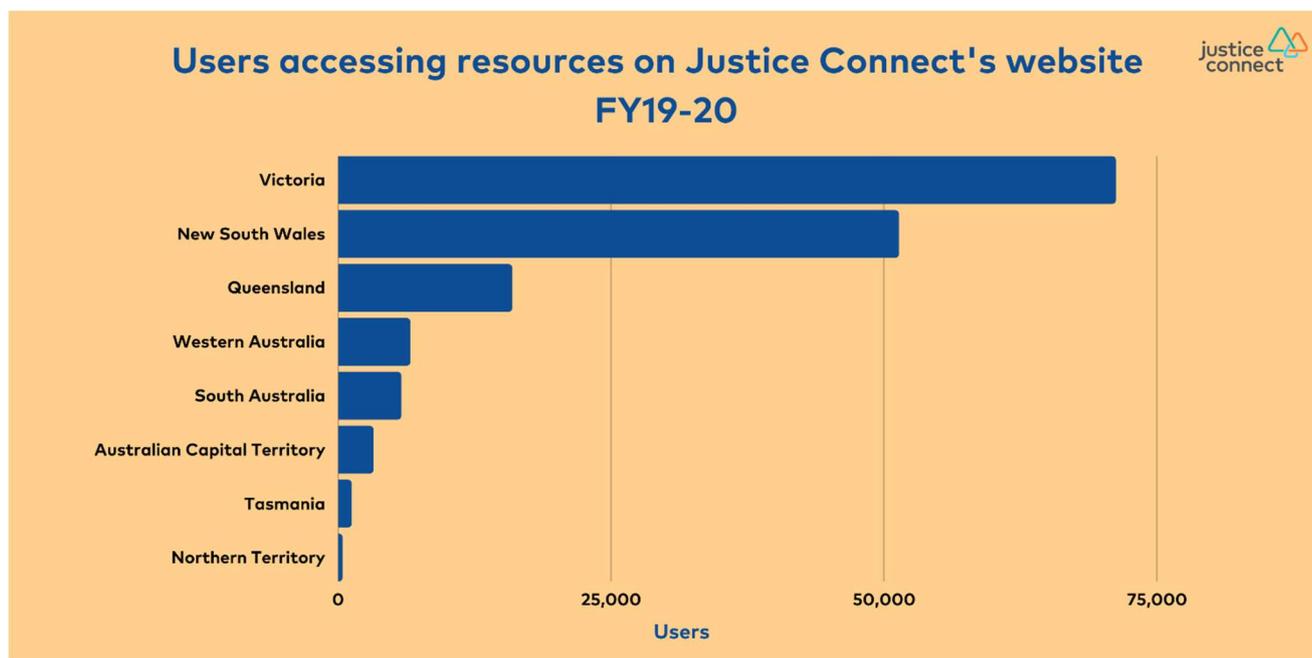


Figure 4: Number of users per state accessing Justice Connect's self-help resources FY20 (July 2019 – June 2020)

⁹ NB – gender information was available for fewer than half of resource users (22 – 41%) and only binary options were provided by Google Analytics.

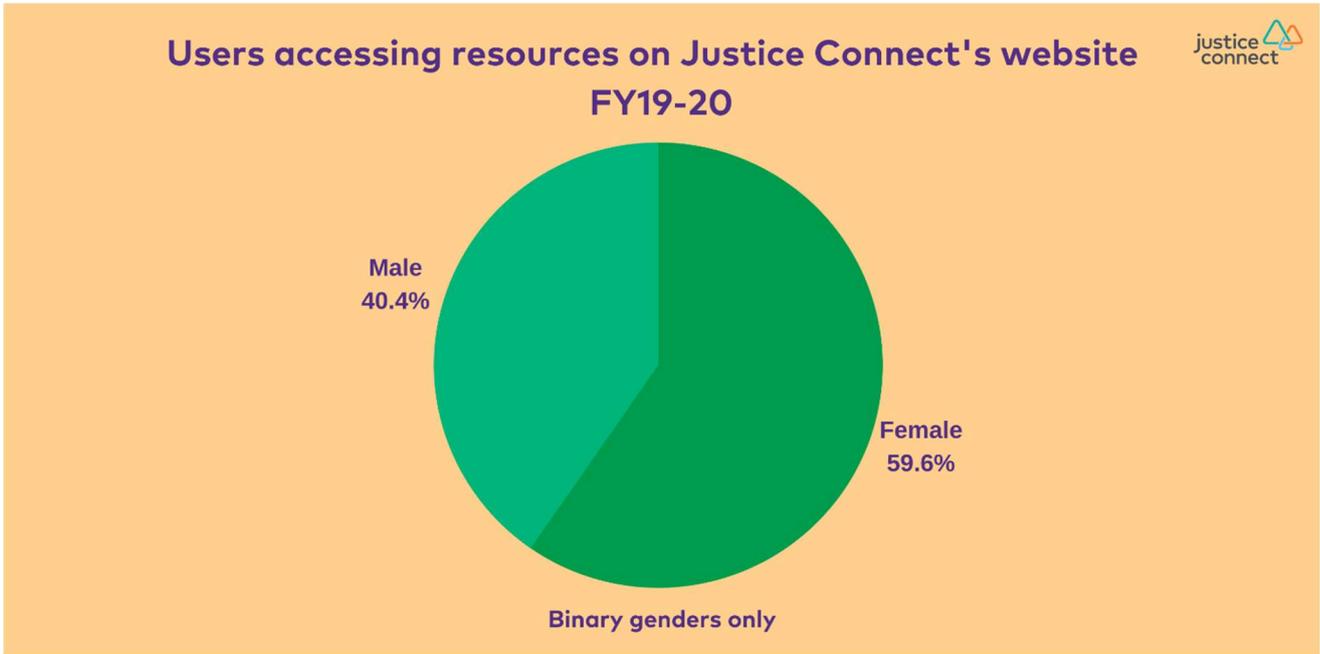


Figure 5: Binary gender split of users accessing Justice Connect self-help resources FY20 (July 2019 – June 2020)

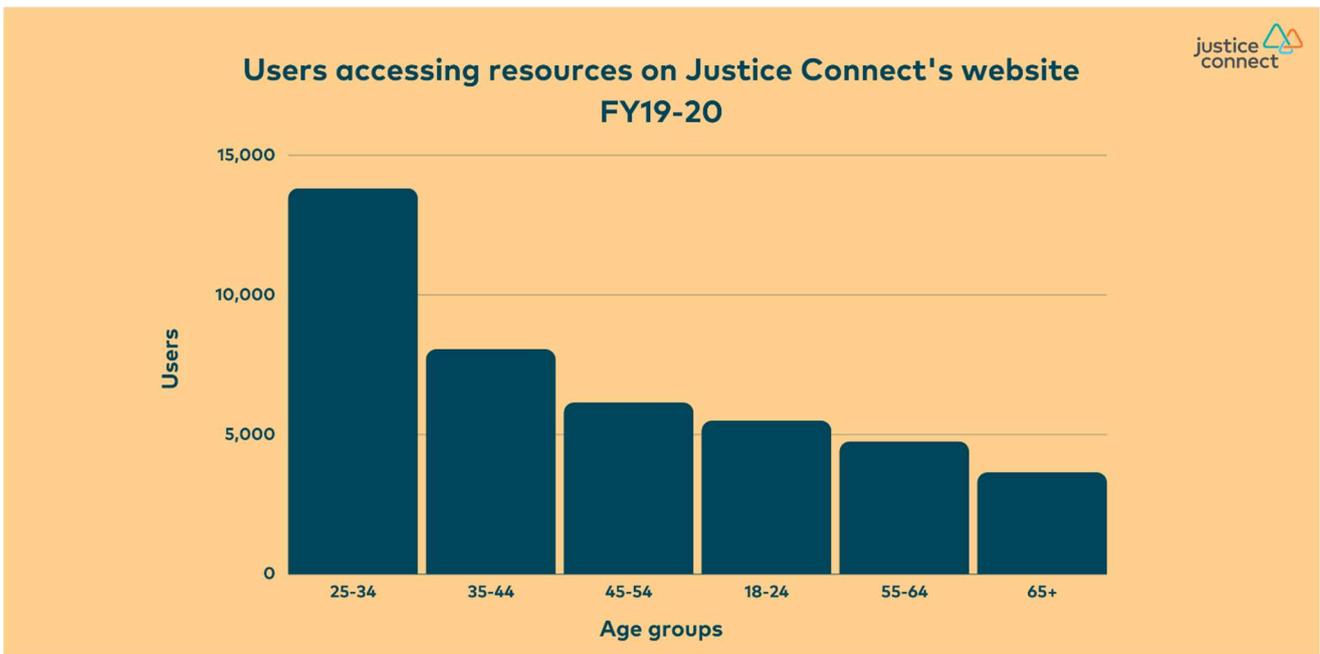


Figure 6: Age groups of users accessing Justice Connect self-help resources FY20 (July 2019 – June 2020)

As much of Australia went into lockdown in the first half of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people started looking for legal help online. This led to a significant increase in the usage of Justice Connect’s online tools, resources and services. (See Figure 7.) Justice Connect used data collected through web traffic, social media, case work, search term and trend analysis to identify rising legal need and responded by publishing additional self-help resources for common topics, including information on federal and state emergency powers work rights, and holding remote annual general meetings. Figures 8 and 9 show the top six self-help resources accessed by individuals and community organisations, respectively. Justice Connect also updated their Dear Landlord tool to help renters negotiate with their landlords during the moratorium on evictions.

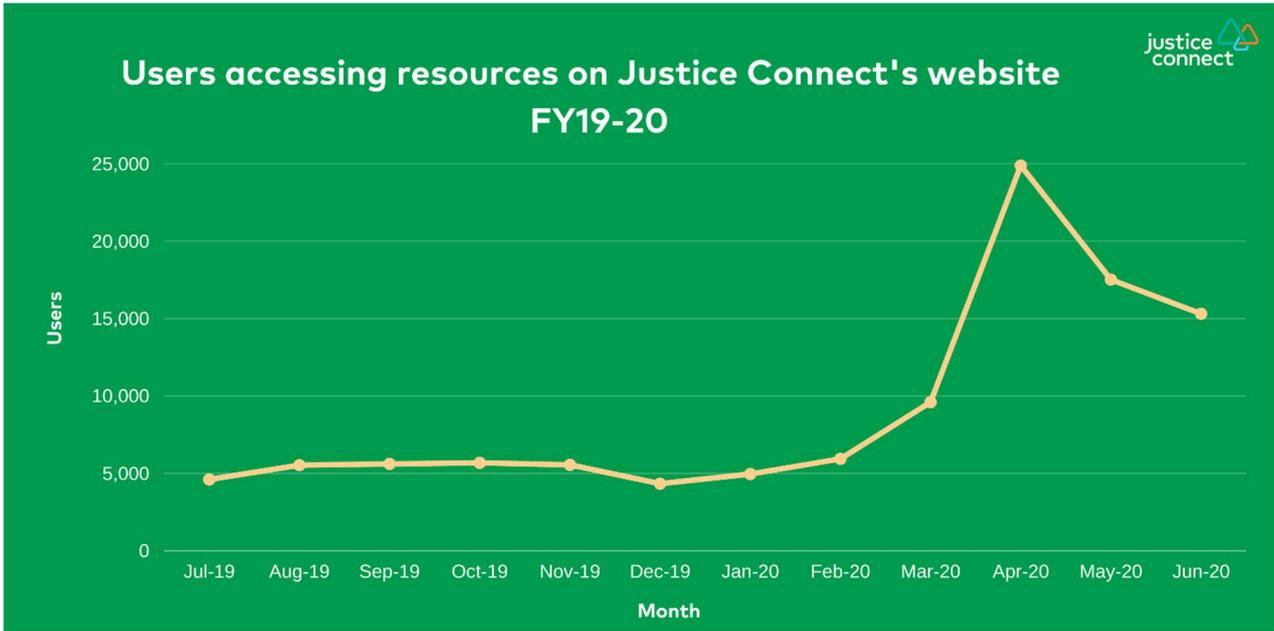


Figure 7: Number of users accessing resources on Justice Connect's website during FY20 (July 2019 – June 2020)

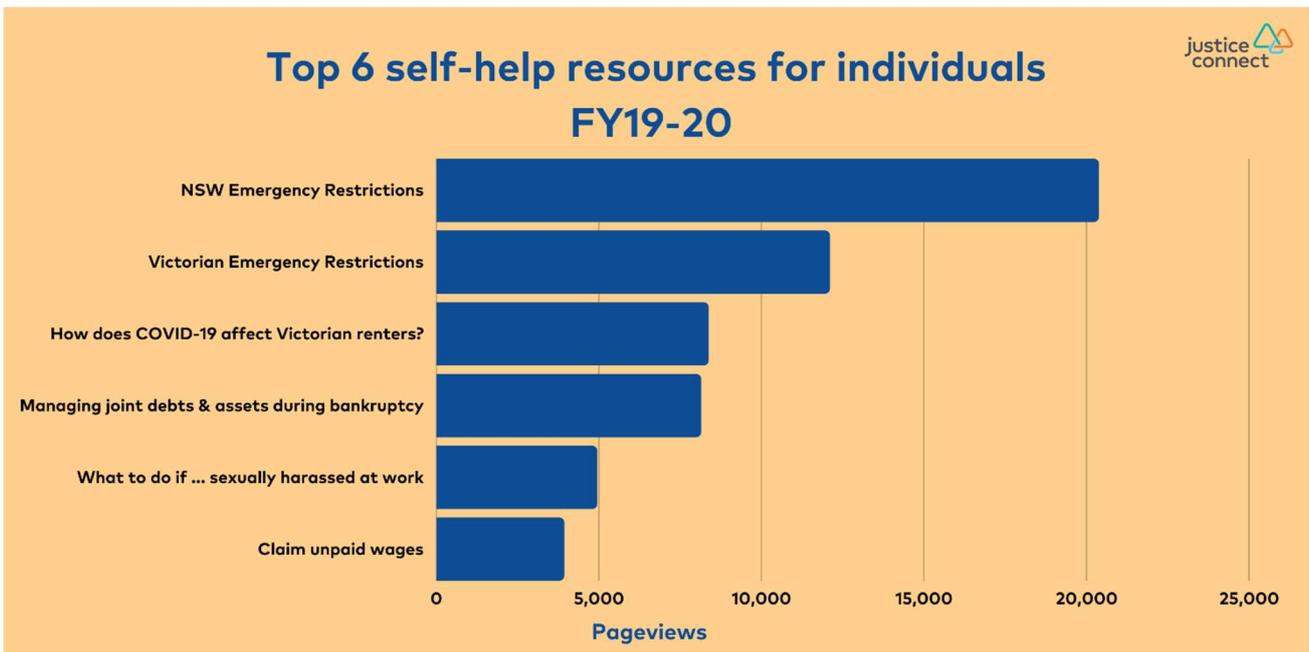


Figure 8: Top 6 self-help resources accessed by individuals FY20

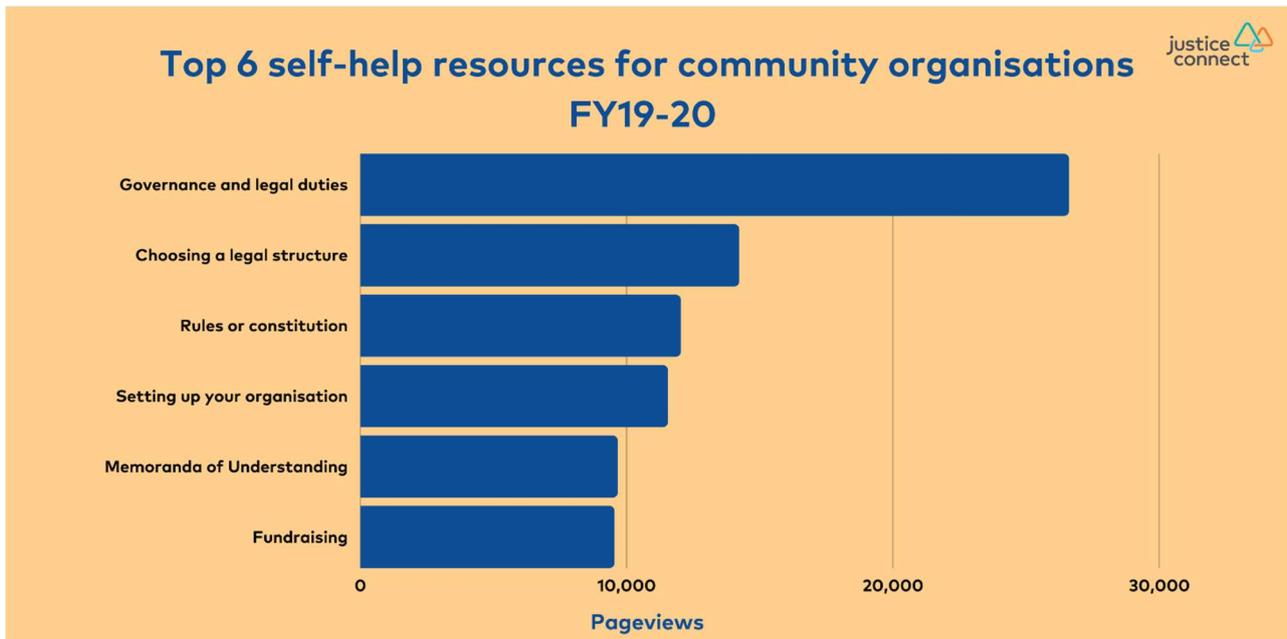


Figure 9: Top 6 self-help resources accessed by community organisations FY20

Justice Connect also launched a pilot of their online legal clinic Justice Connect Answers (JCA). JCA filled a gap created by the closure of many drop-in legal services due to COVID-19 restrictions. In its first three months, JCA had 146 questions submitted covering issues like financial troubles, tenancy, discrimination, work rights and social welfare.

4.3. Community legal education

Justice Connect provides legal education to individuals and representatives of community organisations to help them better understand the law and their legal rights and obligations. Armed with greater understanding, people can then better identify, prevent, and deal with legal problems.

Education is provided in a range of ways, including training in person and by webinar, and on a range of legal issues commonly faced by those who access Justice Connect’s services.

In FY20:

- ✧ Justice Connect trained 5,939 consumers, across 145 sessions
- ✧ Training delivered by Not-for-profit Law accounts for most of the legal education – 85% of sessions and 92% of overall attendees
 - Not-for-profit Law ran 123 sessions, attended by 5,441 people
 - Seniors Law ran 14 sessions, attended by 375 people
 - Homeless Law ran 8 training sessions, attended by 123 people
- ✧ Legal education for consumers was more efficient, reaching approximately the same number of people as in FY19, but with 45% fewer training sessions.

4.4. External legal and non-legal referral

As needed and appropriate, Justice Connect programs provide referrals to legal services outside of Justice Connect (e.g. LIV, CLCs, etc.) and to non-legal community support services (e.g. financial counselling,

mediation, etc.). As part of a holistic response, external referrals can be made in addition to the different types of assistance described above, or if a Justice Connect program cannot provide the legal assistance needed, referral to another service may be the main way of helping.

- ✧ 2,381 intakes were referred elsewhere, a 16% increase on FY19
- ✧ One in four (26%) intakes in FY20 were referred to an external legal service or a non-legal community support service (this is comparable to FY19 when 29% were referred externally)

4.5. Secondary consultations

Under the Health Justice Partnership model, a health professional who recognises that a patient has a legal issue can consult a lawyer and then relay the relevant legal information (but not legal advice) to the patient.

- ✧ This year Seniors Law ran six Health Justice Partnerships.
- ✧ 1,392 legal secondary consultations were provided to health professionals in FY20; more than two and a half times as many as FY19 (252% increase). This is attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting remote working arrangements which saw monthly demand for secondary consultations treble.

Homeless Law lawyers provide secondary consultations to external legal and non-legal workers to help them understand clients' legal issues, timeframes, risks and options. They also provide legal information to external legal and non-legal workers to pass on to clients.

- ✧ 56 secondary consultations were provided by Homeless Law lawyers; a 17% increase on the 48 provided in FY19.

4.6. Discrete legal assistance (unbundled)

Justice Connect services provide discrete legal assistance in the form of unbundled, one-off advices¹⁰ and legal tasks¹¹. One-off advice is delivered by phone, appointment, clinic appointment or face to face at court and is provided directly by or under the banner and oversight of Justice Connect programs. Legal tasks that programs assist with include helping a client to draft and file applications to VCAT, to draft court documents, or to draft an enduring power of attorney. Court Programs and Not-for-profit Law deliver the most instances of discrete assistance.

In FY20, Justice Connect provided 1,299 instances of discrete assistance (unbundled). Of these:

- 389 (30%) were to community organisations
- 910 (70%) were to individuals

4.7. Pro bono referral

Pro bono referral involves a member firm or individual practitioner, including barristers, taking on a matter and providing advice and representation to the client. Referred matters are run by the pro bono lawyer external to Justice Connect.

- ✧ Justice Connect made 1,000 pro bono referrals in FY20, a 13% increase on FY19.

¹⁰ Legal advice is "fact-specific legal advice to a Service User in response to a request for assistance to resolve specific legal problems". (National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual – Version 2 – July 2020; p.4)

¹¹ Legal tasks are where "a Service Provider completes a discrete piece of legal work to assist a Service User to resolve a problem or a particular stage of a problem". (National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual – Version 2 – July 2020; p.6)

- Just over half of referrals (55%) were matters of public interest law
- Approximately one third of referrals (36%) were for not-for-profit organisations

4.8. Intensive legal assistance

Intensive legal assistance, or casework, is ongoing legal representation provided by Justice Connect in-house lawyers and clinics, to an individual or not-for-profit organisation. Intensive legal assistance is provided by the Homeless Law and Seniors Law programs and typically involves advice, negotiation and representation at courts and tribunals. It is a higher intensity service than discrete assistance and there is a lawyer-client relationship between Justice Connect and the client for this assistance.

- ✧ Intensive legal assistance was provided to 623 clients in FY20, a 19% increase on FY19.
- ✧ Of those provided intensive legal assistance, 78% were Homeless Law clients and 22% were Seniors Law clients.

5. Other services provided

5.1. Non-legal assistance – Social worker support

As part of a client-centred, holistic approach, Justice Connect’s Homeless Law program complements legal support with non-legal services. The Homeless Persons’ Liaison Officers are key members of Justice Connect’s Homeless Law program who provide social work support to clients experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. As part of Homeless Law’s holistic, integrated model for preventing homelessness, these social workers help clients address their non-legal issues including housing, mental and physical health, family violence, drug and alcohol issues and employment.

- ✧ 217 clients were provided social work support in FY20, a 52% increase on FY19.

5.2. Training for professionals

Justice Connect provides training to professionals including community workers, health professionals, and legal sector peers to increase their capability to identify and appropriately respond to legal problems experienced by their clients.

Education is provided in a range of ways, including training in person and by webinar, and on a range of legal issues commonly faced by those who access Justice Connect’s services.

In FY20:

- ✧ Justice Connect trained 1,703 professionals, across 84 sessions.
- ✧ Training delivered by Seniors Law accounts for most of this training – 62% of sessions and 54% of overall attendees.
 - Seniors Law ran 52 sessions, attended by 915 professionals
 - Homeless Law ran 30 sessions, attended by 727 professionals
 - Public Interest Law ran two sessions, attended by 61 professionals

6. Improved outcomes for people and community organisations

Each year Justice Connect programs document a range of client stories that illustrate the effects that legal and associated social problems have on individuals and community organisations, and the positive impacts achieved through Justice Connect’s interventions.

In FY20, 20 case stories were documented. This section presents the main changes and impacts experienced by clients – individuals and community organisations – as found through analysis of the case stories.

6.1. More people understand the law, and legal system

As a result of legal help, many clients gained a better understanding of their legal rights, as well as the options available to them to pursue those rights. Several clients were advised of their rights in relation to tenancies, while others were advised about contractual rights, their rights regarding safety and independent decision making, and financial entitlements upon divorce. The case stories provided examples of Justice Connect lawyers advising clients of the options available to them to address their legal issues and then supporting them to follow the chosen course.

The case stories also demonstrated instances of clients being advised and assisted to understand processes so they could effectively pursue legal remedies themselves. For example, clients were helped to understand court processes, the VCAT process and how to apply for IVOs. Some clients were referred to pro bono lawyers for advice on the merits of their claims.

6.2. Increased capacity to self-help

The case stories provided examples of how Justice Connect supports the capacity of both individuals and community organisations to better address their legal issues themselves.

The Self Representation Service helped individuals prepare for hearings by reviewing or drafting court/VCAT applications, drafting points of claim documents, and assisting with the filing of such documents. This support meant individuals were better prepared to self-help, and in turn gave them greater confidence that they could effectively do so. They had greater capacity both practically and emotionally.

“... volunteer lawyers who completed Ron’s VCAT application, Points of Claim, application for fee relief and assisted Ron file these documents with VCAT... This relieved a lot of stress for Ron, who was now felt more comfortable representing himself at VCAT.”

A case story from Not-for-profit Law showed that the program’s ‘Governance Spring Clean’ project helped a community organisation better understand the adequacy of its governance procedures and how to address areas in need of strengthening. The program reviewed a survey completed by the community organisation along with its rules, then conducted a phone call to discuss specific issues and advice, followed up by a detailed email with resources and information to assist the organisation to implement the recommendations provided during the assessment.

6.3. Legal problems prevented and resolved

6.3.1. Eviction prevented

Among this year's case stories, eviction was the most common legal problem Justice Connect helped resolve. Homeless Law lawyers successfully negotiated on behalf of a range of clients who otherwise faced homelessness (or high risk of) should they have been evicted as per proceedings underway. Clients assisted were particularly vulnerable due to experiences of family violence, and/or physical and mental health challenges.

6.3.2. Settlement

Justice Connect referred several clients to pro bono lawyers who helped them achieve settlement of their legal matter, including financial payment which they considered fair and satisfactory. These included an unfair dismissal claim and property division upon divorce.

As well as resolving the matter for the client without the risk of adverse cost orders, settling matters outside of court or tribunal processes benefits the broader judicial system by reducing the time spent on trials for judicial officers and decision makers.

6.3.3. Fines and charges cleared

Justice Connect programs helped clear fines and charges that clients had incurred because of actions they had taken to avoid family violence. The case stories showed how Justice Connect programs sometimes advocate for clients directly (e.g. representing the client in court, or advocating with Fines Victoria, Victoria Police or the Sheriff's office) and other times assist by preparing detailed briefs and organising pro bono representation by a barrister in court. Representation in these instances helped ensure that clients' personal circumstances and the events leading to the infringements were properly raised and considered in court.

6.3.4. Enduring Powers of Attorney

Justice Connect assisted clients to prepare an Enduring Power of Attorney appointing a trusted family member to make decisions for them about personal or financial matters. These arrangements were put in place to ensure future decisions were made in their best interests and to prevent elder abuse and other legal issues that might otherwise arise from limitations on the client's ability to make fully informed and independent decisions.

6.3.5. Intervention orders

Justice Connect programs helped some vulnerable clients obtain intervention orders to protect them from further family violence. The case stories also described an instance where a Justice Connect lawyer, after helping arrange an IVO, then liaised with police to arrange proactive visits to the client's partner to explain the intervention order and check in with the couple.

6.3.6. Other

Other positive legal outcomes achieved by clients through legal assistance from Justice Connect included: dismissal of County Court proceedings seeking judgment of \$212,000 against an elderly client, reinstatement of NDIS entitlements, and successful judicial review of a decision of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal regarding an application for a protection visa (with remittal back to the AAT). One case study described how a Justice connect lawyer helped a client revoke Enduring Power of Attorney, and Medical Treatment Decision Making documents he had unknowingly signed in favour of an abusive child, and to avoid future legal issues, she then assisted the client to advise relevant parties of the revocation.

6.4. Improved individual wellbeing

Research in Australia has consistently shown that legal problems and unmet legal need contribute to ill health. As such, by assisting with the resolution and prevention of legal problems, Justice Connect contributes to the improved wellbeing of individuals.¹²

6.4.1. Health – physical, mental, emotional

Most of the case stories reported this year demonstrated that assistance addressing legal problems lead to significant reductions in stress for individuals. Clients reportedly expressed relief that their matters had concluded, and they no longer had uncertainty and fear about possible outcomes looming over them. Similarly, clients assisted to put measures in place to prevent future legal issues were described as gaining peace of mind to move forward in their lives with a greater sense of safety and certainty. This was particularly important for clients with existing mental health issues for whom stress was an exacerbating factor.

Clients assisted with their preparations to self-represent were also described as less worried and more confident about their proceedings.

Case stories demonstrated that clients were better able to focus on and address their physical health when their legal issues have been resolved. For example, a client fighting cancer was able to continue her treatment and isolate as needed during the COVID-19 pandemic through Homeless Law's legal and non-legal support to achieve stable housing.

There were also examples of vulnerable clients achieving a greater sense of safety as a result of preventative measures such as IVOs being put in place with the help of pro bono legal assistance.

6.4.2. Safe, secure housing

Case stories this year showed numerous instances where legal assistance, especially from Homeless Law, helped clients achieve more safe and secure housing. Legal representation helped some clients avoid eviction, while others were helped to find and move into another property. Pro bono representation for one client led to the dismissal of a statement of claim which could have seen the elderly client forced to sell her only asset, her residential home, and become homeless.

6.4.3. Financial wellbeing

Case stories showed that client's financial wellbeing improved with the prevention or resolution of their legal problems, either because they consequently received a payment or entitlement of some kind, or because a fine or debt they were otherwise liable to pay, was dismissed.

Several clients obtained fair settlement payments from former employers when assisted to settle claims filed in the Fair Work Commission, putting them in a better financial position while looking for another job. Others regained entitlements, such as access to Centrelink payments and NDIS funding for at-home care.

With pro bono representation, some clients had fines and charges dismissed, removing what constituted a significant financial burden for clients already experiencing financial challenges.

For some clients, Homeless Law's social worker was able to obtain brokerage to cover such things as removalist costs, rent arrears and essential schooling expenses for children. These clients could not have otherwise afforded to pay for these things.

¹² Reshaping legal assistance services: building on the evidence base; Pleasence, Courmarelos, Forell & McDonald; Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales (2014), p 121.

6.5. Strong and effective community groups and not-for-profit organisations

Not-for-profit Law provides practical legal help to community groups, charities and social enterprises to help them improve their efficiency and effectiveness in delivering positive outcomes for the community.

6.5.1. Understand and fulfil legal obligations

Case stories demonstrated how Not-for-profit Law helped community groups better understand their responsibilities under the laws relevant to their operations (e.g. employment law) and under government directives related to physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. With this information, organisations were able to design and implement programs and operating procedures that fulfilled those obligations.

“Without [advice on how the program interacted with employment law responsibilities], we would have been stuck not knowing which way to go. It would have been a block for that program.” (Not-for-profit client)

6.5.2. Good governance

Not-for-profit Law’s ‘Governance Spring Clean’ project was highlighted by case story this year. Through this project, not-for-profit organisations received a comprehensive review of their governance and constitution, followed by advice and recommendations for improvement. The project also directed organisations to resources and information to help them implement any recommendations arising from the assessment.

“[T]he governance check-up provided by Justice Connect was so helpful. [It] gave my organisation the confidence that our governance procedures were sound and also helped to identify areas for development. Justice Connect understood the nature of our organisation and delivered a targeted, relevant and invaluable assessment for us and also organised a pro bono referral that will help us update and improve our Constitution.” (Not-for-profit Law client)

6.5.3. Focus on mission

Case stories highlighted the importance of free and low-cost legal help for community groups and not-for-profit organisations. It reduces expenditure on legal support and allows them to focus more of their time, energy and financial resources on fulfilling their missions (e.g. breaking the poverty cycle for people living in public housing, delivering school lunch programs, providing access to health and cultural services for the Aboriginal community).

“This advice was so helpful. We struggle raising funds to continue our much-needed services. To obtain professional advice like this is greatly appreciated.” (Not-for-profit Law client)

6.6. Case stories – examples of impact

One case story has been selected from each program to illustrate in more detail the types of impact experienced by Justice Connect clients. Each chosen story has been included to give the reader a sense of the breadth and importance of outcomes achieved for clients. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy of clients.

David

Court Programs

David was 50 years old and worked as a cleaner in the outer suburbs of Sydney for five months when he reported bullying on-site. David's employer fired him for alleged underperformance, and David filed a General Protections claim in the Fair Work Commission with help from a community legal centre. As the dispute could not be resolved, David was referred to Justice Connect for advice and applied for assistance online.

David was very distressed when he contacted the Self Representation Service. He was relying on Centrelink benefits, his credit card debts were building up, and he could not afford litigation costs. David was also concerned about the prospects of getting a new job at his age after being fired, and how the entire process would be so stressful and impact on his mental health.

The Service advised David about the court process and reviewed his draft Application to the Federal Court to help him articulate his legal case. After the Court issued directions, we helped David to prepare for his first hearing, when the Judge referred the parties to mediation. The Service was able to secure a pro bono barrister to represent David at mediation. This was a relief to David, who was very worried he would be bullied into settling his case without fully understanding his rights or each party's position.

With legal representation, David was able to secure a payment of \$25,000 from his former employer to settle the dispute and a Statement of Service to help him find a new job. David was incredibly grateful for the outcome, which put in a better financial position and helped him apply for a new job without the stigma of having been fired.

Emily

Homeless Law

Emily* is a single mother of two children, who has experienced family violence perpetrated by her ex-husband. Due to this violence, Emily and her kids fled from their public housing property to a caravan and placed most of their belongings into storage.

After accessing supports, Emily secured a new private rental property and found a housemate to help share the expenses. When she first met with Homeless Law, Emily's housemate had moved out of the property after not paying his share of the rent and bills for several weeks. This led to Emily receiving a Notice to Vacate for falling behind in rent, and she was concerned about being pushed into homelessness.

After advising Emily about her rights and options, Homeless Law's lawyers entered into extensive negotiations with the landlord and represented her at VCAT, where they successfully prevented her eviction. Throughout that time, Homeless Law's social worker offered Emily specialised housing and financial supports, including securing brokerage to cover the costs of recovering her belongings, contributing to essential expenses related to her son starting school, and providing a lump sum towards the rent arrears.

Homeless Law's intensive legal representation and social work supports ensured that Emily and her kids could safely stay in their home with all of their belongings. This vital housing security also helped Emily to find a new housemate, reducing her financial stress and allowing her to focus on her young family's wellbeing.

Jill

Public Interest Law

Jill is the single mother of three children. All her three kids have a disability, and Jill has a disability herself.

All of Jill's children are on the NDIS, but she began having problems in 2019 when her kids were due for a standard review of their NDIS plans. The person reviewing their plans didn't spend enough time with her children and wasn't able to properly assess their needs. As a result, all three kids had the funding in their NDIS plans significantly reduced. The children no longer had the support they needed and Jill was struggling to manage.

Jill began the process of having the decision of the NDIA reviewed internally, with help from her support worker. She had the funding reinstated for her eldest child, but her two youngest kids were still left with inadequate funding after the review process.

Jill's support worker continued to help her appeal the decision to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). As the AAT process continued, the proceedings became more complex and Jill needed legal help to guide her through the process.

The Justice Connect was able to refer Jill to one of our member law firms and a pro bono barrister for representation at the AAT. After many months and several delays caused by the other party, the matter is listed for a weeklong hearing and Jill is hoping for a positive outcome. She is glad to have pro bono representation at the hearing, as she could not have navigated the process alone.

Mr S is a 95 year old man who migrated from India 15 years ago on the death of his wife. He is physically fit for his age and has been practising yoga for all of his life. He has severe industrial hearing loss and a few other issues related to ageing, but has an active social life and many interests.

Mr S lived with his family – his son and daughter-in-law and their adult children. He supported his two children and their families when they came to Australia for postgraduate study. He has been a client of cohealth for two years, where one of Justice Connect’s Seniors Law health justice partnership (HJP) lawyers is based.

Mr S spoke to his cohealth social workers about his concerns that his son and daughter-in-law were trying to have him moved to a nursing home against his wishes, and that they had control of his finances. The social workers arranged an appointment for him with the HJP lawyer and an interpreter so he could receive advice about his rights. He was initially reluctant to take action against his family, hoping he could trust them. In December Mr S managed to get a message to his cohealth social worker that he had been placed in a nursing home and wasn’t allowed to leave. He had been cut off from his support services and friends, and his money and ID had been confiscated. His family had told him it was a temporary stay while they were on holiday but they hadn’t come back.

The cohealth social worker linked him in with the HJP lawyer again for urgent assistance to regain his independence. The HJP lawyer found that Mr S’s family had got him to sign documents in English he didn’t understand: an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA) and Medical Treatment Decision Making (MTDM) document, nominating his children. His family argued that he had lost capacity to make his own decisions, based on a provisional diagnosis of dementia seemingly based on evidence his family gave a GP, even though Mr S had never been properly assessed for dementia, and based on an Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS) assessment that was done without an independent interpreter present.

The HJP lawyer found that Mr S clearly still had legal capacity so she assisted him to revoke these documents that his family were using to control his life. Mr S was then able to move to safe housing of his choice. She assisted him to advise relevant parties of this revocation, including the nursing home, Centrelink, support services and his family. The HJP lawyer also assisted him to have a ‘safe contact’ family violence intervention order put in place to protect him, representing him at two interim mentions.

Mr S’s family then applied for Guardianship and Administration orders over him at VCAT through their lawyer. The Seniors Law team then referred Mr S to a Justice Connect pro bono member firm who are now providing him with ongoing representation with this matter.

Mr S often exclaims that the HJP lawyer ‘saved his life’. He is now in safe housing that he chose himself. He has regained access to his Centrelink aged pension and can make his own financial decisions. He has ‘wrap around’ services in place to support his current and future needs and he has been reunited with his strong circle of friends. He now feels well supported as he makes decisions about his future.

The legal assistance he received means he now understands his legal rights, the legal systems in place to protect them and he has autonomy to make his own decisions. He has peace of mind knowing he has expert pro bono legal representation for his ongoing issues with his family.

The COVID19 pandemic raised tricky legal issues for Oonah Health and Community Services Aboriginal Corporation (Oonah), an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation operating in Healesville, near the culturally important Coranderrk mission site. Oonah delivers vital cultural and mainstream services to the local Aboriginal community and runs a Belonging Place that provides community access to primary care services including psychology, counselling, paediatrics and immunisation.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, Oonah was unsure about how the new ‘social distancing’ government directives interacted with the organisations responsibilities to provide annual leave, personal leave and remuneration. Confused, Oonah’s board member, Anita, approached Justice Connect for advice.

After submitting an online enquiry, Anita was contacted by a lawyer from the Not-for-profit Law team, Dan. “Dan is really wonderful to work with... he is so clear in his communication, so kind prompt and generous” reported Anita. Dan listened to the legal issue described by Anita and referred Oonah to law firm, Lander & Rogers, for specialist pro bono advice.

When Anita discussed Oonah’s matter with the lawyers, they quickly realised Oonah’s legal issues were more complex than they had anticipated. The first legal matter raised issues which led to further advice aimed at ensuring that Oonah’s premises were safe and secure for staff and clients accessing a range of community services. Lander & Rogers was happy to assist. Their subsequent advice meant that Oonah avoided what Anita described as a “legal landmine”. Oonah’s board was supported to make prudent decisions and they had peace of mind that they were doing the right thing. Oonah is now able to focus on making Oonah a thriving and welcoming place to supports local Aboriginal community members, both during and beyond the pandemic.

Anita was grateful for the legal help Oonah obtained via Justice Connect. She reflected that *“had we not had that advice, there could have been negative outcomes that would have impacted not only the organisation but also the staff, with a flow-on effect to the community”* and that *“Oonah was able to incorporate that advice into new policies and procedures”*. She added that *“Oonah may not have had the means to access such valuable advice without the provision of this free but highly professional service”*. Apart from the financial value, Anita noted the immense mental relief the board members and senior staff at Oonah felt after accessing Not-for-profit Law’s service. This was particularly important during the pandemic, where staff were already feeling pressure on their mental health. *“To be able to access this pool of knowledge and expertise about these really critical issues for our centre has been so so great. It has added so much value to the board and to the organisation, and I can’t say thank you enough.”*

7. Strategic engagement for better systems laws and policies

Justice Connect leverages the insights, evidence, and expertise gained through its work to increase awareness of systemic issues, and increase buy-in to solutions that will reduce the incidence of legal problems, and improve social justice.

Justice Connect has committed to increasing its reach and impact through developing and delivering an organisation-wide advocacy strategy. In FY19, Justice Connect mapped out how to build an advocacy program across the organisation, including establishing regular Strategic Casework Meetings. In FY20, this program was enhanced by the launch of a new CRM. Enabling them to better identify emerging issues and respond in a timely and appropriate manner.

As a member of the Charities Crisis Cabinet, Justice Connect was able to continue campaigning for a national fundraising framework through their #FixFundraising campaign. The organisation also identified gaps in the protection of volunteers (not covered for COVID-19 by workers compensation or 'accident' insurance) and worked with volunteering peak bodies to advocate for solutions at state and federal levels.

Justice Connect was also deeply involved in tenancy reform in Victoria and advocated for access to housing nationally. When COVID-19 saw a new cohort of renters facing housing insecurity, Justice Connect carried out advocacy around specific measures related to COVID-19. They were instrumental in advocating for Australia's strongest residential tenancy protections during COVID-19, including an eviction moratorium in Victoria and increased financial supports for renters who had been impacted by the pandemic.

Justice Connect advocated for more social housing with supports through the Make Social Housing Work and Everybody's Home campaigns. In May, they helped launch Make Social Housing Work as part of the Victorian Housing Peaks alliance. The blueprint urged the Victorian Government to build and buy 6,000 social (public and community) housing properties every year for 10 years, so that all Victorians have a safe, stable place to live. As a result, the Victorian Government made a significant commitment to increase social housing stock.

Justice Connect convene the Victorian Justice Navigation Working Group, with members from across the Victorian legal assistance sector, government, academia and funders. Through this group they share research, insights and work collaboratively to deliver a better whole-of-sector response improve the legal services ecosystem for people trying to connect with legal help.

The organisation also continues to engage in policy reform by making submissions to all levels of government. In FY20, Justice Connect made submissions to the National Inquiry into Workplace Sexual Harassment, Royal Commission into Aged Care, NSW Department of Customer Service in response to the draft Community Gaming Regulation 2020, Federal Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia, Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, Victorian Government's Sentencing Act Reform project, and the PAEC Inquiry into the Victorian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

As co-convenors of the Infringements Working Group, they also contributed to the group's position paper to the Fines Reform Advisory Board, making 10 evidence-based recommendations to ensure the fines systems is more effective, accessible and fair for all Victorians.

Justice Connect has also undertaken essential preparatory work for a 12-month strategic engagement pilot program under their new 2020-2022 organisational strategy. The pilot program will be launched to help build cross-organisational capacity for systemic level work. By leveraging the insights, evidence, and expertise gained through Justice Connect's casework, the pilot program will help raise the profile of the organisation,

advocate for and achieve better law and policies, lead on better legal service and system design, and ensure that the underlying drivers of unmet legal need is a key priority politically across the community. The 12-month long pilot will test how a more coordinated and supported cross-organisational approach to strategic engagement work increase the impact of Justice Connect strategic engagement work. The program will undergo a 6-month and 12-month self-assessment by the team including output, coordination levels, and reviews against measurements of success.

8. Method

This Report was designed and written through collaboration between Justice Connect and an evaluation consultant; Justice Connect staff wrote sections 1 and 7, and the evaluation consultant produced sections 2 – 6 and 8.

The evaluation consultant reviewed the quarterly reports prepared by Justice Connect programs throughout the year. These include data about program activities, enquiries received, responses to enquiries (e.g. type of legal assistance provided) and client stories that provide examples of program impact.

The evaluation consultant aggregated the quantitative data¹³ across programs and produced a summary of the demand for and supply of help by Justice Connect.

NVivo 11¹⁴ was used by the evaluation consultant to analyse 19 client stories and identify the types of impacts experienced by Justice Connect's clients as a result of the help they received. Each story was read at least twice, and then coded using the current theory of change as an organising framework, along with any emerging themes.

Program managers reviewed a draft of this report and feedback was incorporated into the final version.

8.1. Limitations

Financial year 2020 represents another transition year for Justice Connect. Reflecting the process of evaluation and iterative improvement, the organisation has continued over the last year to refine its theory of change and to embed online tools and processes for enquiries and intake. Along the way, the organisation has revised its reporting and some metrics, however this process is incomplete. A new monitoring, evaluation and learning framework will be developed in 2021 and it is expected that future impact reports will contain even richer data.

¹³ The use of common metrics across programs enables quantitative data to be aggregated.

¹⁴ Qualitative data analysis software.

9. Appendix

Services delivered by Justice Connect

| INTAKE AND RESPONSES | | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | Court Programs | Homeless Law | Not-for-profit Law | Public Interest Law | Seniors Law | TOTAL |
|----------------------|--|--|----------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Intake | | # intake – TOTAL | 1556 | 2297 | 1951 | 1695 | 1695 | 9194 |
| | | - via online intake tool | 511 | 93 | 928 | 467 | 14 | 2013 |
| | | - via online referrer tool | 14 | 106 | 0 | 192 | 13 | 325 |
| | | - via phone, in-person, or email (<i>not via online intake tools</i>) | 1031 | 2098 | 1023 | 1036 | 1668 | 6856 |
| Responses | Discrete legal assistance (unbundled, one-off advices and legal tasks) | # instances of discrete assistance (unbundled) provided by JC Services | 598 | 45 | 389 | 97 | 170 | 1299 |
| | Intensive legal assistance (Representation provided by in-house lawyers and via Justice Connect clinics) | # new casework files opened by JC services where JC is in a lawyer-client relationship | 0 | 484 | 0 | 0 | 139 | 623 |
| | Pro bono referrals | # referrals to member firms, non-member firms ¹⁵ and barristers | 54 | 0 | 360 | 554 | 18 | 1000¹⁶ |
| | Legal information (no advice) | # help-seekers given legal information one-to-one | 388 | 34 | 905 | 0 | 64 | 1391 |
| | External Legal or Non-legal referral ¹⁷ | # outbound referrals to legal and non-legal services | 652 | 589 | 0 | 662 | 478 | 2381 |
| | Secondary consultations | # secondary consultations to health and community workers | 0 | 56 ¹⁸ | 0 | 0 | 1392 ¹⁹ | 1448 |
| | Non-legal assistance (Homeless Law only) | # individuals provided one-to-one non-legal assistance by the Homeless Persons Liaison Officer ²⁰ | NA | 217 | NA | NA | NA | 217 |

¹⁵ In addition to member firm referrals, the Public Interest Law Program made 37 referrals to non-member firms after the Pro Bono Portal was opened to non-member firms to assist in the pro bono response to the bushfires.

¹⁶ 14 referrals were not tied to a specific program.

¹⁷ Legal – a service outside of Justice Connect (e.g. LIV, CLC, etc.) Non-legal – a support service that assists with non-legal issues (e.g. employment, financial planning, AOD, etc.)

¹⁸ This captures the information provided by Homeless Law lawyers (i.e. in-house lawyers) to external legal and non-legal workers regarding their clients' legal issues, timeframes, risks and options.

¹⁹ Under the Health Justice Partnership model, a health professional who recognises that a patient has a legal issue can consult a lawyer and then relay the relevant legal information (but not legal advice) to the patient.

²⁰ HPLO are social workers employed by Justice Connect.

| TRAINING AND EDUCATION | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | Court Programs | Homeless Law | Not-for-profit Law | Public Interest Law | Seniors Law | TOTAL |
|---|--|----------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Training for consumers – individuals and not-for-profit organisations | # consumers attending (in person, by webinar, etc.) | 0 | 123 | 5441 | 0 | 375 | 5939 |
| | # sessions | 0 | 8 | 123 | 0 | 14 | 145 |
| Training for professionals (e.g. community workers) | # professionals attending (in person, by webinar, etc.) | 0 | 727 | 0 | 61 | 915 | 1703 |
| | # sessions | 0 | 30 | 0 | 2 | 52 | 84 |
| Training for pro bono lawyers | # pro bono lawyers attending (in person, by webinar, etc.) | 147 | 1011 | 36 | 122 | 0 | 1316 |
| | # sessions | 5 | 16 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 28 |

| WEBSITE | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | TOTAL |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Justice Connect's website | Page views | 425,978 |
| | Unique page views | 350,771 |
| | Unique users | 173,305 |
| | Sessions | 229,301 |
| Justice Connect's Not-for-profit Law website | Page views | 561,362 |
| | Unique page views | 425,089 |
| | Unique users | 168,035 |
| | Sessions | 240,699 |

| ONLINE SELF-HELP RESOURCES | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | TOTAL |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------|
| Access by individuals | # unique page views of self-help resources for individuals | 141,409 |
| | # unique users of self-help resources for individuals | 109,424 |
| Access by community organisations | # unique page views self-help resources for community organisations | 288,516 |
| | # unique users of self-help resources for community organisations | 238,290 |

| CONSUMER OUTREACH | | IMPRESSIONS | ENGAGEMENT |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------|---------------|
| Paid social media | Facebook, Instagram and Audience Network | 273,528 | 17,072 |
| Organic social media | All | 1,429,474 | 54,104 |
| | - Facebook | 128,592 | 24,415 |
| | - Instagram | 46,516 | 1,662 |
| | - Twitter (all) | 1,034,006 | 18,961 |
| | - LinkedIn | 220,360 | 9,066 |
| Search engine ads | Google Ad Grant | 28,600 | 1,337 |
| | Total | 1,731,602 | 72,513 |