

Annual Report

2021-22





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About Justice Connect

Justice Connect designs and delivers high-impact interventions that increase access to legal support and progress social justice.

We believe in a fair and just world, where people and communities are supported to engage with and fully participate in our legal and social systems, and avoid the negative impacts on their wellbeing or organisational health that flow from unresolved legal problems.

Acknowledgement of Country

Justice Connect acknowledges the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, and the Gadigal peoples of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and pay our respects to Elders past and present.



Letter from the CEO

At Justice Connect, responsiveness is one of our core values.

We define this value as looking out for changes — in the community, in the law, among the people we help, and our stakeholders — and then swiftly and appropriately responding to that change. This isn't an easy value to live up to; it's aspirational. And yet **when I reflect on our Annual Report for the Financial Year 2021-22, I see numerous inspirational examples of our ability to respond and be of service, at a time when people and community organisations need us most.**

Being responsive means we can better fulfil our strategic goal of increasing access to legal support and progressing social justice. To succeed in that aim, we have to remain intentional. We must be reflective and thoughtful about the services we provide, and how we use this evidence and expertise to build new systems that help more people in our community experiencing legal need, or prevent their problems from arising in the first place.

In this report you will find large-scale examples of this approach — like our global Pro Bono Portal project which grew out of our day-to-day work in collaborating with member firms to activate the power of the

pro bono sector. We have discovered the growing need for efficiency and effectiveness in connecting the many people and community organisations that need help, with law firms that have the capacity and desire to deliver more pro bono work. And this isn't just a problem we face here, in Australia. Our research and global engagement has shown that this challenge — and the need for our Pro Bono Portal solution — is shared with pro bono partners and community organisations across Hong Kong, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Germany, and beyond.

A more intimate example of the links between our individual and systemic work shines through in the story of David: an older client who we supported to both resolve and protect himself from the abuse he was experiencing. It's a heart-warming success story, and is just one of the many, many good outcomes achieved by Justice Connect's staff and partners this year. But this case highlights more than just our work in the prevention of elder abuse. David was able to appoint a guardian and attorney even though COVID-19 restrictions prohibited him from meeting with a lawyer face-to-face, because of a system-level change we advocated strongly for — the ability to witness documents digitally.

This year Justice Connect staff and our partners have walked the difficult line of delivering individual legal services, while using insights and a diverse mix of expertise to develop systems and solutions that address the root causes of legal problems. While there are more examples of this from the last year than I can count, I specifically remember a moment in August 2021 when our Not-for-profit Law team started hearing major concerns from community organisations about public health orders and mandatory vaccination directions. Within a week we had scheduled a series of webinars to guide community organisations through their legal responsibilities, which went on to have well over 2,000 registrants. As I remind myself of living through that moment, of Justice Connect's own efforts to grapple with rolling policy changes and the deep uncertainty we all faced, I recall listening to that webinar and hearing the palpable feelings of anxiety from other online attendees.

Yet another example comes from our work keeping people safely housed amidst a worsening housing crisis. Our Homeless Law team and our pro bono partners are on the frontline of this justice emergency every day, which is reflected in the major rises in our legal and social work case numbers. We also used digital engagement to share our online self-help tool, Dear Landlord, far and wide to help renters understand their rights and options. This year, 24,044 people used Dear Landlord, and people accessed our COVID-19 self-help resources on understanding Victoria's rental laws or seeking financial help 103,998 times.

Behind this work sits Justice Connect's highly capable and dedicated team. Their ongoing, multi-disciplinary work enables us to deliver more impact to the individuals and community organisations who desperately need our help.

To do all this work strategically, efficiently, and effectively, we must keep a clear eye on our internal mechanisms and ways of working. This year we have continued our focus on using our systems and processes to better capture and use our data; on strengthening our approach to learning and development; and on keenly understanding the outcomes of our work. We have also started a process of more deeply engaging with our value of inclusion, to make sure our services meet the needs of everyone in our community, and ensure we provide a workplace where everyone feels safe and valued.

Our focus at Justice Connect has always been on increasing access to justice. In the face of an ever-changing external (and internal) environment, this challenge has never been more complicated, nor more important.

I extend my deepest thanks to every supporter of Justice Connect's mission, and look forward to continuing our work together to build a world where everyone can access the legal support they deserve.



Chris Povey
CEO
Justice Connect



Letter from the Chair

At the end of this financial year, our world looks very different from the way it looked at its beginning.

International borders have reopened, some employers are adopting permanent hybrid working models, and lockdowns appear to be over. **Somewhere in the last 12 months, we've shifted into a "post-COVID-19" landscape. But we know that the crisis has not actually ended.**

Thousands of people are still getting infected with COVID-19 every week, and are experiencing housing and employment problems. Organisations are navigating increasing employment and resource shortages.

Continued disasters fuelled by climate change are affecting communities across Australia. Many people have lost their homes, livelihoods and work because of floods and storms across the Eastern coast.

The political landscape is changing too. In the last year, we've had a new Premier in NSW, a new Federal Labor Government led by Anthony Albanese, and Victoria is fast approaching another state election.

In this time of overlapping crises and change, a focussed and strategic approach to social justice is critical. I hope to see deeper collaboration between our governments and the not-for-profit sector to continue improving community health, wellbeing, and safety.

Over the past year Justice Connect has gone from strength to strength in rising to the challenges which face the community. I am proud that we have continued and expanded our service delivery to provide legal services to meet the needs of thousands of individuals and community organisations, and we have also run high-impact strategic advocacy to improve the legal system for all.

I also want to congratulate Justice Connect for the recognition they have received for their exceptional work. Justice Connect received 5 awards in the last year, which you can read more about on page 32.

These awards are a testament to the innovative, effective, and high quality of Justice Connect's work, and we greatly appreciate this recognition.

This year, I have also been delighted to welcome Jidah Clarke, Vicki Jamieson, and Dr Crystal McKinnon to the Justice Connect Board.

Jidah Clarke is a Djab Wurrung man also with Kirrae Wurrung, Boon Wurrung, Taungurung, Wemba Wemba, and Palawa ancestry. He is a lawyer with a



wealth of policy expertise, is currently the Director, Truth & Justice Response Unit, Aboriginal Justice (Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety). Vicki Jamieson is a partner in EY's People Advisory Services practice with over 19 years of experience in leading large-scale transformation projects. And Dr Crystal McKinnon is an Amangu Yamatju academic, researcher, and community organiser, and is currently working at RMIT as a Vice Chancellor's Indigenous Research Fellow in the Social and Global Studies Centre.

I am very grateful to have Jidah, Vicki and Crystal join our Board., with their wealth of knowledge across social justice, change-making, and truth-telling that will be instrumental in helping Justice Connect navigate this ever-changing landscape of drivers to legal need. The Board will learn a great deal from the insights they bring to our work.

I also extend my thanks to our ongoing Board members: Nicky Friedman, Tristan Cutcliffe, and Professor Sarah Maddison for their invaluable contributions. I am sad that Nicky Friedman, who has made an outstanding contribution to Justice Connect, is now serving her final term with us.

I acknowledge Chris Povey for his steadfast leadership. Chris has stewarded the organisation through a very tumultuous year, and ensured staff and clients are as well supported as possible.

There are many other members of Justice Connect's staff who have made dedicated contributions to Justice Connect. Unfortunately I cannot name them all. **But I thank all staff members for their hard work and dedication to increasing access to justice and pursuing social justice, despite the challenges they have had to meet and which continue to lie in Justice Connect's path.**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Marcia Neave".

Marcia Neave, AO
Chair of the Board
Justice Connect

Our year at a glance

NEED



Each year, **one in four** Australians will experience a legal problem substantial enough to require a lawyer¹.

¹ Law Council of Australia, 'The Justice Project: Access To Justice', Law Council of Australia, 2018, accessed in July 2022.



OUTREACH

21,030

enquiries
↓4% decrease
(21,916)

5,852

intakes
↓28% decrease
(8,153)

34,625,779

people reached through digital consumer outreach
↑141% increase
(14,343,614)

1,316,015

unique pageviews on our websites
↑14% increase
(1,149,610)

299

education sessions
↑6% increase
(282)

SERVICES

724,662

unique pageviews to self-help resources
↓4% decrease
(758,568)



33,159

self-help tool users
↓18% decrease
(40,347)



7,661

one-to-one services
↑1% increase
(7,577)



RESULTS



5

awards won

53,219

pro bono hours leveraged
↑3% increase
(51,599)

\$20,584,322

value of pro bono hours
0% change
(\$20,639,400)

ADVOCACY

We take the data and evidence from our service delivery into our systems-level advocacy and law reform.

13

law reform submissions
↑117% increase
(6)

17

media articles our experts were quoted in
↑42% increase
(12)



OUR STRATEGY IN ACTION



Our 2024 strategy is designed to increase our reach, impact, and sustainability.

Our three strategic directions in our 2024 strategy are:

1. Extending the reach and impact of our services through digital strategies

2. Amplifying and extending the impact of our work through strategic engagement to help drive systems-level change

3. Achieving our purpose in the most effective and financially sustainable way

These strategic directions guide us to focus on six key pillars of work:



Develop and deliver education and self-help resources



Community outreach



Complementary services



Legal services design and delivery



Legal sector improvements



Strategic engagement

The following chapters of our Annual Report paint a picture of just some of the ways our dedicated team have met people where they are, right-sizing services to suit their issues and their needs over the last financial year.

Develop and deliver education and self-help resources

The law can be confusing for many people and organisations. We democratise legal information with helpful, plain language explainers of how people can self-advocate to solve their own legal issues with the right knowledge.

We have published over 120 self-help resources for individuals, over 370 self-help resources for not-for-profit organisations, and over 150 self-help resources for lawyers providing pro bono services.

In FY22, these resources were viewed **724,662 times**.



We helped renters in Victoria stay safely housed and avoid financial stress

Once the COVID-19 eviction moratorium was lifted, renters were once again placed in precarious situations, at risk of being evicted into homelessness, if they found themselves falling behind in rent.

We shared our online self-help tool, Dear Landlord, far and wide with renters in Victoria to help them understand their rights and options as a renter. This year, 24,044 people used Dear Landlord and created 835 customised legal documents, and people accessed our COVID-19 self-help resources on understanding Victoria's rental laws or seeking financial help 103,998 times.

We will continue to update these resources to help renters stay safely housed and push for better rental protections.



We helped older people understand how to protect themselves from elder abuse

One in six older Australians has experienced elder abuse, including psychological, physical, financial, sexual abuse and neglect. But there are plans and legal documents people can put in place that work to prevent elder abuse and protect their wishes as they age.

In consultation with older people, we developed comprehensive and plain language self-help resources on how older people can plan for their future. These were then tested with 85 members of our target audiences across Victoria and New South Wales. We translated and adapted these resources for the Vietnamese community, the LGBTQIA+ community, and people who use Easy English.

We have plans to continue making these resources available for more communities and helping them safeguard their wishes and rights.



We helped not-for-profit organisations understand their workplace vaccination requirements

Before COVID-19, employers rarely had to grapple with their legal requirements surrounding workers' vaccination status. As states and territories began publishing their roadmaps out of COVID-19 lockdowns, a variety of public health directions were issued that made it compulsory for particular workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

We quickly sprung into action to deliver a suite of online resources and training sessions to build the capacity of the not-for-profit sector to understand their obligations to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees, volunteers, and clients. Our first webinar was oversubscribed within hours and was followed by eight further COVID-19 focused training events in the following weeks, which together received 2,265 registrations to attend.

We received consistent feedback from community organisations that our timely information helped them navigate uncertain terrain and complex requirements, and quickly take action to protect the health, safety, and welfare of their employees, volunteers, and clients as our community transitioned out of pandemic restrictions.



We helped people facing bankruptcy navigate the journey

Close to 6,000 people in Australia entered into bankruptcy in FY22. This journey can be highly emotional, and fraught with difficult decisions and complex procedures.

We have a suite of self-help resources designed to help individuals navigate this path and understand their options at each stage of the process. As more and more people faced financial pressures during rolling disasters like COVID-19, floods, and storms, we made sure these resources reached anyone who needed them. Over the year, they were viewed 100,489 times.

We anticipate financial problems will be of increasing concern to people as communities continue recovering from a devastating few years, and we are motivated to continue providing helpful information for people facing financial problems to understand the legal effects.

Community outreach

In an increasingly digital world, it's imperative that we make sure the people and organisations who need our help know we exist. We use consumer-focused online marketing and outreach strategies to increase our reach, scale our legal services to assist more people, better understand our clients, and inform the design of our services.

In FY22, we were able to collectively reach people **34,625,779 times** — a 141% increase on last financial year's 14,343,613 impressions.

People clicked on our content **812,035 times** — a 149% increase on last financial year's 326,138 clicks.

We reached
people online
34.6M
times



We collected language samples from diverse communities to train our AI tool

Research shows that when people search for legal help, they often struggle to correctly articulate their legal problem. This poses a major challenge for legal assistance organisations trying to connect them with the right information and services.

But we shouldn't expect people, especially people already marginalised by the power structures and institutions in our society, to learn technical legal language to access help. We worked with the University of Melbourne to build an artificial intelligence (AI) tool to diagnose legal problems from everyday language and connect them with legal help more quickly and easily.

However, knowing that most AI-driven text classification models are problematically biased and perform substantially worse for under-represented or socially disadvantaged groups, we reached out to diverse communities to ensure their voice was heard. Specifically targeting older people, people with disability, people with mental health issues and chronic illnesses, people with HIV, First Nations people, people without tertiary qualifications, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTQIA+ people, and people who have recently migrated to Australia, we asked them to share anonymous stories of legal problems they had encountered, using their own unedited language, syntax, grammar, shorthand, or slang. We took these samples and trained our model to detect the specific legal problems held within.

We're continuing to work with community organisations that support these communities to collect further samples and continue training our AI model to improve its performance.



We plotted the archetypes of people who use our online self-help tool Dear Landlord

Every person using our online self-help tools has a different story and will be different from the next person. But understanding the commonalities these people share can help us understand more about their needs, mindset, and expectations. We conducted rigorous user-testing and audience mapping to uncover who the people typically looking for support in understanding their rental rights are, and how we can better serve them.

As a result, we now have four 'archetypes' that help us guide better messaging, outreach, and service approaches based on their needs. We're already seeing fantastic results from tailoring our offer for each archetype, such as increased click-through-rates when we use archetype-specific messaging in our content, and we plan to take the learnings from this project into even more of our self-help tools.



We relaunched our Not-for-profit Law website and made sure not-for-profits could find legal help online

Our Not-for-profit Law program has been delivering free and low-cost legal help to Australia's not-for-profit community organisations for over 10 years. Our website had stood the test of time but was ready for a refresh to make it easier for not-for-profits to seek out accessible legal information to help them deliver their valuable services.

We embarked on an ambitious website redevelopment process to design the most user-friendly website we could, rich with content and resources organisations can use to comply with their complicated legal requirements. We spent time understanding how they go about searching for information and updated all corners of our website to have the best chance of appearing in search engines for relevant search terms.

In the first 3 months after launching the redeveloped website, we saw a 105% increase in users arriving on Not-for-profit Law's website from search engines, indicating more people are finding us more easily. We take a continuously iterative approach to our website management and will continue optimising our website so that more community organisations can be supported with their legal needs.



We amplified our resources about workplace sexual harassment when they were needed most

Everyone has the right to feel safe at work, but workplace sexual harassment is experienced by approximately 1 in 3 people. Sexual harassment can occur across industries, levels of seniority, and locations. From seeing spikes in sexual harassment claims by employees and volunteers following end-of-year parties, we know that people are more likely to experience workplace sexual harassment during work social events.

So, we made sure our self-help resources on what to do if you experience sexual harassment at work were front-and-centre in the public conversation during the end-of-year period. We ran a targeted social media campaign that reached 65,265 people and resulted in 716 clicks to our resources about sexual harassment. This is just one example of how our lawyers and subject-matter experts keep a keen eye on rising legal need and take responsive action to provide free legal information and assistance.



Complementary services

Legal problems are life problems. When people miss out on legal help, we know that a cascade of complications often follows, threatening peoples' finances, health, relationships, and housing. To stop these issues from spiralling, we take a holistic and integrated approach to offer both legal and non-legal supports to our clients.

We have dedicated staff social workers who work alongside some of the most isolated and disadvantaged members of our community, such as people sleeping rough and victim-survivors of family violence.

We delivered
1,494
specialised
supports through
our integrated
social workers



With our clients facing more interconnected issues than ever before, our complementary services make sure people have a wide support net around them. Over the last year, we delivered 179 direct, intensive social work services to holistically address the complex needs of our clients who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Our integrated social workers also provided a further 1,315 specialised supports through tailored referrals to other non-legal services, such as family violence case-management, financial counselling, employment supports, housing services, and community connections.

"Thank you for all your incredible help and support over the past couple of months. Your generosity and calm voice have put my woes at ease. People like you make good change happen."

By offering wrap-around, trauma-informed non-legal services, we can help address the underlying issues that may be contributing to justice-system interactions, and support our clients to be more resilient to the threat of significant disadvantage.

We know this holistic model of assistance is working, and we witnessed a 36% increase in our social work services over the last year. We hope to be able to expand our suite of complementary services in the future to provide stability and support to even more people navigating the legal system.

Legal services design and delivery

More people need legal help than ever, at a time when free legal services are stretched desperately thin. The nature of our legal system also makes it hard for people to find the help they need. By thinking differently and using smart service design, Justice Connect aims to get more help to more people by tailoring the support we provide according to our clients' needs.

Working hand-in-hand with our community of clients, pro bono and community lawyers, partner organisations, and generous supporters, we are developing new and improved ways to deliver our legal services.

We cast a wide net in the delivery of our legal services. We help both people and organisations that need early strategic interventions, and those who will benefit from deeper, more holistic legal support. We're striving towards a future where everyone who needs help navigating the legal system will be supported in successfully doing so.

This year, we supported 2,902 individuals and not-for-profit organisations with 7,661 direct one-to-one legal services, tailored to their needs.

**We delivered
7,661
one-to-one
legal services**



We piloted a specialised list in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria for people experiencing homelessness

As courts continued to navigate the shift to online hearings, we took the opportunity to work with the Magistrates' Court to create a specialised list for people experiencing homelessness. This involved creating an online space where our specialist lawyers and social workers could coordinate the representation of people appearing in the online court system.

Each client was offered integrated legal and social work supports pre-court to make sure they could access the hearing and knew what to expect. Over four afternoon sittings, we supported 13 clients with complex vulnerabilities to deal with 43 sets of criminal law charges. Of these clients, 62% reported having slept rough, and 100% reported having mental health issues. After one of the hearings, the presiding Magistrate noted that it was remarkable that everyone attended, supported by an environment where people were able to participate and engage in the court process.

Our innovative approach significantly enhanced the ability of our clients with criminal charges to successfully access, navigate, and exit the justice system, providing them with a tailored process to secure more therapeutic, long-term outcomes.



We helped community organisations improve their governance with customised health checks

Governance and compliance for not-for-profits can be more complex than for for-profit organisations. From our experience, we know that community organisations often struggle to find the time to self-assess their risk issues, or even work out where to start.

Our Governance Health Checks help organisations stay on top of their legal and governance obligations so they can focus on delivering vital services and programs for our community. This year, our lawyers individually assessed 58 organisations' governance, legal processes, and obligations, and provided recommendations for areas of improvement.

By providing one-on-one support, our lawyers help organisations manage risk and embed good governance practices, as well as improve their skills and knowledge to identify and deal with legal issues and avoid penalties. This relieves pressure on their resources, so they can continue spending their time and energy on serving their communities.



We responded to emergencies like climate-fuelled disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic

As climate-related emergencies increase in frequency, more people need legal help than ever and legal service organisations like ours are under increasing pressure. By thinking differently, Justice Connect aims to get more help to more people throughout the disaster cycle — particularly to provide better support for legal issues that are most likely to arise during the long recovery period.

We design quick, effective services to adapt to the specific type of legal help communities need, whether they are impacted by severe floods or fires and need legal advice on their insurance, property, or business; or if they are an organisation swiftly trying to understand a changing pandemic landscape to protect the safety of their staff, volunteers, and clients. We also worked closely with other frontline organisations such as legal aid commissions, community legal centres (CLCs), and law societies to ensure that disaster-affected communities could access legal help as quickly and seamlessly as possible. In FY22, we saw a 22% increase in one-to-one services delivered on COVID-19 related matters; a 1200% increase in COVID-19 enquiries among not-for-profits; and a 116% increase in allocated disaster-related referrals..

With disasters happening more and more frequently, this work will remain a key strategic priority for Justice Connect into the future.



We evaluated our online legal clinic, Justice Connect Answers

In-person drop-in legal clinics have always been a reliable way for people to access legal help. In 2020, we identified an opportunity to build an online legal clinic that could connect more people with free lawyers who could answer their legal questions via an online platform.

This service became especially important during lockdowns when visiting a clinic or lawyers' office was impossible, or when people who needed specialist subject matter experts didn't have access to someone in their area. In FY22, 183 questions were answered by four firms, equating to 287 hours of pro bono time. When our pilot concluded, we undertook a comprehensive evaluation to assess this new service delivery model and learn how we could improve the platform for future use.

We're excited to be relaunching an enhanced version of Justice Connect Answers in FY23.

Legal sector improvements

We explore how digital transformation and innovation can be used to meet ever-increasing levels of unmet legal need in the Australian community, and beyond. Our digital innovation work has been, and continues to be, focused on co-designing solutions to improve the experience, efficiency, and impact of access to justice legal services.


We focus on improving all stages of the legal help-seeking journey, with scalable interventions that benefit both help-seekers and legal service providers, so that the process of getting legal help is easier and providing legal services is more seamless.

Our deep understanding of the needs and desires of people seeking legal help, combined with our leading expertise in the law, research, design, communications, digital outreach, and product development, ensure our projects are designed to meet the community's needs and deliver meaningful outcomes to transform the legal ecosystem.

Our innovation work improving the legal sector has been widely recognised as leading the field, winning awards in areas of design, technology, and research. **This year we were awarded 5 prestigious awards in recognition of our commitment to improving the legal sector.**

We received
5
awards for
our innovation





Australian Not-for-Profit
Technology Awards: Not-for-Profit
Technology Innovator of the Year


Legal Innovation Awards:
Disruptive Technology of the Year
for our Global Pro Bono Portal


World Summit Awards
Australia for our
Global Pro Bono Portal


Good Design Awards
Australia for our online self-
help tool Dear Landlord


Good Design Awards Australia for our
research Seeking Legal Help Online:
Understanding the missing majority



We trained our artificial intelligence model to perform fairly for everyone

Research shows that when people search for legal help, they often struggle to correctly articulate their legal problem. This poses a major challenge for legal assistance organisations trying to connect them with the right information and services. This challenge is exacerbated in an online context where people often use different syntax or slang when communicating. Instead of expecting people to build the capacity to technically explain and categorise their legal problem, we've partnered with the University of Melbourne to develop a natural language processing artificial intelligence (AI) model.

But we also know that most AI-driven text classification models are problematically biased, performing substantially worse for under-represented or socially disadvantaged communities. This year, we have mobilised our extensive pro bono network to help us train the AI model and address performance fairness through a data diversification project. We reached out directly to diverse and marginalised communities asking them to share stories of legal problems they've encountered, in their own words. Then, we worked closely with pro bono lawyers from our member firms to carefully annotate thousands of these language samples. So far, over 260 pro bono lawyers have participated. They have annotated 8,970 language samples 45,267 times, with 203,353 highlights of legal areas. This extraordinary contribution has assisted us in delivering a working model with over 85% accuracy across 11 legal categories and is estimated to be over \$300,450 of pro bono assistance.

We're now working on making our AI model widely available across the legal help ecosystem so that other community legal organisations will be able to use the technology to improve the experience of seeking legal help, and deliver more help more efficiently.



We expanded our Pro Bono Portal to even more jurisdictions around the world

Globally, over 5 billion people have a legal problem each year. 1.5 billion people cannot access justice, and 253 million people experience extreme conditions of injustice. Over the last 6 years, we've designed, built, and evolved a technology-driven system to match unmet legal need with the capacity of pro bono lawyers. Our Pro Bono Portal is revolutionising the pro bono landscape in Australia and beyond, with its reach and impact growing year on year.

After the successful launch of the Pro Bono Portal in Australia, we knew there was enormous potential to share the Portal with other jurisdictions around the world, and our worldwide research only strengthened our conviction. This year, we have continued to strengthen pro bono ecosystems around the world, with six jurisdictions now up and running using our Portal across Hong Kong, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Germany, with further jurisdictions launching soon. Across these jurisdictions, our Portal is currently used by over 1,400 users, 25 legal services, and 533 law firms. This year alone, it has helped increase access to pro bono legal services for people worldwide, connecting 724 individuals with pro bono assistance across 857 matters.

Adapting the Portal to meet various place-based requirements takes time and care. We are currently working with a range of European and Asian clearinghouses that will be launching the Portal in their jurisdictions soon, with new features that support posting in multiple languages including a recently completed intake form available in both Russian and Ukrainian to support efforts to assist people displaced by the war in Ukraine.



We built new software for law firms to manage their pro bono practices

Around the world, law firms are increasing the contribution of pro bono hours to assist people and NGOs with unmet legal need. In many jurisdictions, law firms field requests for assistance directly, rather than through clearinghouses. The process of managing these requests, as well as requests made via clearinghouses, can be challenging, with significant work involved in triaging and placing matters with an appropriate lawyer or team at the firm. Drawing on Justice Connect's expertise in human-centred design, this year we've worked closely with two of our member firms to design a solution to support pro bono teams at law firms. We have gathered their input on workflows, features, and practical considerations regarding firm processes.

The result is Firm Manager, a product to help pro bono teams at law firms streamline the intake, triage, and placement of pro bono matters with their lawyers and support tracking of outcomes. We hope that the tool will help firms be more efficient and effective, ultimately freeing up time to assist more help seekers and focus on higher-value work. By empowering the legal help ecosystem with tools like Firm Manager, we're supporting the efficiency and effectiveness of the pro bono workforce. We will be scaling-up our distribution of Firm Manager in FY23.

Strategic engagement

We focus on strategic engagement because we know that so many of the cases that come across our desks shouldn't have to. There are system-level solutions that can prevent or avoid many of the negative consequences of unresolved, or unfair, legal problems.

Through our team of experienced staff, and our network of over 10,000 pro bono lawyers, we have a unique perspective on how to not only mend but improve and safeguard the path to justice.

By focusing deeply on the structural drivers of legal problems, it means that any potential suffering and damage to people's lives as a result of unresolved legal problems is avoided or addressed earlier. And by pushing for a simpler and smoother regulatory environment for not-for-profit organisations, we're making sure charities stand the best chance of dedicating their limited resources to delivering on their purpose, rather than complying with complex laws.

This financial year, we made 13 submissions to governments, inquiries, commissions, and intergovernmental organisations. Each submission was grounded in rich insights and data from our casework, which allows us to shine a light on the stories of the people and organisations we help, and the policy solutions we can propose to fix unfair laws.

Our experts were quoted in 17 media articles, applying public pressure on law makers and representing our clients' and communities' calls for fairer laws.

We made
13
law reform
submissions



July 2021
Submission to Federal Attorney-General Department's National Register Enduring Powers of Attorney Consultation

August 2021
Submission to the Treasury on developing a Transparency Code

August 2021
Submission on the Secrecy Provisions in the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Act 2012

September 2021
Submission to the Victorian Government's Inquiry into Victoria's Criminal Justice System

December 2021
Submission to the Victorian Government's Parliamentary Inquiry on Support for Older Victorians from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds

June 2022
Submission to the Federal Treasury on Crypto asset secondary service providers

July 2021
Submission to the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety on sexual harassment in the workplace

August 2021
Submission to the NSW Government on Part 3A of the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991

September 2021
Submission to the Victorian Government's Social Housing Regulatory Review

November 2021
Submission to the United Nations on the decriminalisation of homelessness

January 2022
Submission to the Federal Attorney-General's Department's Privacy Act Review — Discussion Paper

April 2022
Submission to the Federal Treasury on DGR Category for pastoral care services

June 2022
Submission to the Queensland Government's inquiry into the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022



We celebrated bi-partisan support for fixing Australia's outdated fundraising laws

We've been calling for action to fix fundraising for over a decade. Over the last 12 months, we've seen multiple positive movements in the right direction, with the Federal Government announcing they will commit to reducing red tape for charities via the Council on Federal Financial Relations (CFFR) and making charitable fundraising reform one of the CFFR's top 10 priorities for 2022.

We were pleased to see Federal, State and Territory governments work together to establish a national fundraising framework working group to implement a simpler, single national scheme for the regulation of charitable fundraising. However, we won't cease until the final reforms are protected in place, and will continue to advocate for a simpler legislative environment for our society's crucial charities.



We ran a test case to fight for rental protections for renters who couldn't pay rent because of COVID-19

Our client, who had rented her home since 2015 without missing a rental payment, became unable to pay her rent during the pandemic when her ride-sharing work significantly decreased. The client paid as much rent as she could every month, making difficult decisions about cutting back on food costs, health costs, and vet visits for her pets. We ran her case as a test case on whether COVID-19 rent arrears following the conclusion of the eviction moratorium could form the basis of eviction. First, the case went before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), and was then appealed to the Victorian Supreme Court of Appeal.

The Victorian Supreme Court of Appeal found the client was unable to pay her rent due to a COVID-19 reason, and was unable to be evicted while the eviction moratorium and transitional laws were in place. However, the Victorian Supreme Court of Appeal also found that from the day following their judgment, renters could be evicted for COVID-19 rent arrears because the transitional laws related to the eviction moratorium were expiring. In our subsequent media coverage of the case and advocacy to government, we immediately renewed our calls for the Victorian Government to introduce long-term, targeted supports for renters.



We pushed for fairer treatment of people with fines

People experiencing disadvantage and complex vulnerabilities are disproportionately affected by the fines system, which entrenches their disadvantage and inequality before the law. We have over 20 years of experience running the state-wide specialist legal service for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, which has shown us that people experiencing homelessness are particularly vulnerable to interactions with the law, and for being fined or charged for poverty-related offences. We're making the Victorian fines system fairer for vulnerable Victorians, including through co-convening the Infringements Working Group which brings together 37 community legal centres (CLCs) and financial counselling members.

Through our collaborative leadership of this group, we've contributed to 8 evidence-based submissions calling for reforms to the fines system. This work has unlocked more options for people experiencing complex vulnerabilities to have their fines waived, improved access to information for CLCs and their clients with fines, allowed people to access new alternatives to resolve their fines debt, and called for full implementation of the Fines Reform Advisory Board's expert recommendations. We will continue this important work to make the fines system fairer for people experiencing disadvantage to ensure that people with fines are not unfairly caught up in the justice system.



We helped block proposed legislative changes that would threaten charities

Last year, the Federal Government proposed charity regulation changes that could see charities deregistered for unintentional and inadvertent minor breaches of the law — including lawful and peaceful protest activities. We joined the sector in voicing our concerns that these regulations would discourage charities from advocating for better laws and policies, and stifle democratic debate.

After carefully coordinated pressure, the Senate voted to disallow the rules; a significant win for charities and the communities they support.



We called for remote witnessing laws to become permanent

Traditionally, the law has required solicitors to be physically present to witness the making or revoking of documents crucial to enshrining agency and preventing elder abuse (such as Enduring Power of Attorney documents). During the COVID-19 pandemic, some states across Australia trialled 'remote witnessing' to allow important legal documents to be witnessed and executed over an audio-visual link. In 2021, the Victorian Parliament made permanent some of these important changes, increasing access to justice for many people in our communities.

We called on NSW to follow suit and provided comprehensive feedback on the NSW Government's consultation paper. In early 2022, in response to advocacy from across the sector, these temporary measures were made permanent. This change unlocked the availability of lawyers and support services to help older people put safeguarding legal documents in place, regardless of where they live or traditional barriers to access.





STORIES FROM OUR CLIENTS

Standing behind organisations that support their communities

Starting a new job can be a daunting experience for anyone. This is especially true for workers in the not-for-profit sector, who need to use their limited resources to effectively impact their communities.

When Sally Aurisch started as the CEO of Blind Citizens Australia (BCA), her first few weeks were inundated with legal challenges, including trying to improve her organisation's governance, and launch a new internship program. Not knowing where to begin navigating this complex regulatory environment, she went online to find help. Through a series of searches, she came across Justice Connect's Not-For-profit Law website.

BCA is the only disability-led organisation representing people who are blind or vision impaired in Australia, with 100% of its board having lived experience of vision impairment. BCA's purpose is to inform, connect, and empower Australians who are blind or vision impaired and the broader community.

For over four decades, BCA has staunchly advocated for making Australian society more inclusive of people who are blind or vision impaired. They've pushed hard for the introduction of widespread use of tactile ground surface indicators across the built environment and introducing public transport concessions for travellers who are blind or vision impaired.

Sally came to Justice Connect with a range of legal challenges, hoping to strengthen BCA's current practices and facilitate new growth opportunities. Through our pro bono network, we connected BCA with lawyers from our member firms, who reviewed legal documents (such as an employment contract and consultancy agreement). We also provided some policy templates to help BCA draft their own internal documents.

BCA also registered for one of our free Governance Health Checks, which provides eligible organisations with personalised governance legal advice. Having strong governance ensures an organisation can operate smoothly, manage risk, and respond to change.

"In our final discussion with the lawyers we got feedback about what we were doing well and where we could improve. This helped [BCA] create a work plan and work out who was going to do what over the next year," BCA's CEO Sally said.

"It's been a really positive experience. For someone who is new to this role, I can't explain how helpful it was to speak with someone who has so much knowledge and experience. And to have it done in such a constructive and collaborative way; I never felt like I was being told off, it was all positive."

BCA was also interested in starting a new internship program to create sustainable, inclusive employment pathways for people who are blind or vision impaired. However, they needed the right legal documents in place to get it off the ground. We connected BCA with pro bono lawyers, who reviewed a Memorandum of Understanding that protects the rights of interns, BCA, and employers.

BCA's internship program has since successfully launched, providing employment opportunities for people who are blind or vision impaired people, and enabling employers to start practising inclusion in a safe and supported way.

"We're about to place our fifth intern, and we've used the MOU in every case."

Through our range of legal information, assistance and referrals, BCA's decades-long legacy of building a more inclusive society for blind and vision impaired communities could continue. Sally and her team can now spend their time and resources on furthering their important work, without the burden of worrying about complex legal obligations.



Fighting 20 years of wage theft, thanks to an online search

After nearly 20 years of working as a chef, Cassandra* was shocked to find that she had been underpaid. After resigning, she identified that she was owed almost \$200,000 in unpaid wages and entitlements and had never been paid superannuation.

Scared for her financial future and unsure of her legal rights, Cassandra went online to find help. In her online searching, she came across Justice Connect.

Being underpaid over a long period of time deprives employees of their lawful entitlements, often resulting in lasting financial disadvantage, financial strain, and a sense of injustice and distress. Complex workplace laws mean employees can be left in the dark about the full extent of their rights and entitlements, and can lose years of wages and entitlements. We help workers navigate these laws to ensure they can get a fair outcome from their past or current employer.

After calling Justice Connect, Cassandra was connected to a lawyer through Justice Connect Answers (JCA). JCA allows help-seekers to ask specific questions about their legal issue and get personalised and timely responses from a lawyer.

As Cassandra asked questions about her situation, she began to feel calmer as she understood her legal rights, and the process to make a claim for unpaid wages.

Cassandra's lawyer could see her matter would require some time and expertise to



calculate exactly how much she was owed. With Cassandra's permission, the lawyer referred her to their law firm for ongoing advice and representation.

After an initial Letter of Demand was ignored, we supported Cassandra to take action in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia. We connected Cassandra with a barrister with employment law expertise to represent her at her directions hearing. The directions hearing resulted in a mediation, where the matter was resolved and Cassandra received a settlement payment of \$160,000.

Cassandra describes finding Justice Connect through an online search as "a blessing". Since receiving her settlement, Cassandra could move on with her life with newfound financial security. She was able to buy a house for her and her family, and kickstart her next career move. Equipped with knowledge about her rights, Cassandra is keen to help others experiencing wage theft in the future.

By asking simple questions about her rights online, and Justice Connect's efforts to make ourselves discoverable in online settings through digital outreach, Cassandra was able to access Justice Connect's services to recoup the money she was owed, and dramatically improve her financial future and wellbeing.

*All names in this story have been changed to protect their identity.

Meeting complex housing needs through integrated supports

Opening your letterbox to find an eviction notice can feel like you're living in a nightmare. When compounded by other financial, physical, and mental health strains, the possibility of also losing your home can be nothing short of overwhelming.

Shania*, a mother of five children, was facing eviction following a car accident that left her with a physical disability and an acquired brain injury. Our lawyers stepped in to keep her and her family safely housed, laying the foundation for them to lead meaningful lives.

Shania and her family arrived in Australia in 2017, leaving family and friends back in their home country. Her car accident had a catastrophic effect on her finances. **Between medical bills and purchasing a new car to transport her family, Shania fell behind in rent and was served with an eviction notice. Scared and overwhelmed, Shania contacted Justice Connect.**

Our Homeless Law program uses integrated legal and social work assistance to keep people safely housed across Victoria. With over 20 years of frontline experience, a key part of our work is stopping homelessness before it starts by preventing evictions, and breaking the links between family violence, poverty and homelessness.

Justice Connect's specialised lawyers advised Shania about her legal rights and options. Our social worker referred her to a financial counsellor to help with budgeting, and Shania and her

young family received financial support to keep food on the table. As we continued supporting her, Shania began to feel more confident about her rights and her options.

We also represented Shania at her Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) hearing, where an agreement was reached by consent to postpone the application. Our social workers were able to secure a one-off grant to go towards Shania's rental arrears, which directly supported successful legal negotiations to avoid eviction.

Several months later, Shania's property developed severe mould, and the landlord told Shania she had to remove the mould herself. She spent all the money she had getting the mould removed, leaving nothing left to cover rent and food.

Back in the VCAT hearing room, our lawyers once again successfully represented Shania and had a subsequent eviction application dismissed. During this time, Shania applied for many new properties as issues with mould persisted, and she did not feel safe due to ongoing threats from her landlord. Shania was able to secure a safe and affordable new private rental housing property, avoiding a period of homelessness.

In addition to legal help, we provided assistance that allowed Shania and her family to look forward to the future. Shania let us know her 17-year-old daughter was hoping to study to become a doctor, and our social worker provided support for Shania's daughter to sit the University Clinical Aptitude Test, so she could potentially be selected by a university to study her medical degree. **Shania expressed her absolute gratitude for our help, as our integrated legal and social support means she can prioritise the wellbeing of herself and her children and make positive steps towards their future.**

We believe everyone has the right to a safe, secure home. Through our wrap-around integrated legal and social work support, we prevent evictions into homelessness and keep people safely housed. Shania and her family can now focus on their future, with financial stability and secure housing.

*All names in this story have been changed to protect their identity.



Protecting people's safety and dignity as they age

It's never easy for someone to disclose that their loved ones are hurting them.

When David* finally opened up to a social worker, revealing his partner was physically and psychologically abusive, he spoke of how he'd been isolated from seeing his close friends at Synagogue, prohibited access to medical services, and had money taken from him. At 75, David was afraid of what this would mean for his financial position, his health, and his two beloved dogs.

Losing control over our financial, physical, and psychological wellbeing, especially to a once-trusted partner, can be a devastating and confronting experience, that no one should have to go through alone.

That's why we partner with community services to have a presence in the spaces older Australians use, so we are available to support early identification of legal risks, and provide older people with the right legal help before problems escalate.



After learning of his abuse, David's social worker called us to discuss his situation and refer him to our lawyers. We advised David of his legal rights and options to stop the abuse. While David was fearful of his partner, he decided he wanted to remain in the relationship, so we helped him draft an Apprehended Violence Order, which worked to stop his partner's abuse, giving David back a sense of safety and autonomy.

David wanted to put decision-making control about his health and money into the hands of people who he trusted. There are important legal documents, such as a power of attorney or a will, that work to protect the interests of older people as they age. This kind of future planning empowers older people to think deeply about what matters to them, retain dignity and control over their lives, and make legally binding decisions about their future. Every day, our lawyers help older people draw up these documents, to ensure their interests are safeguarded.

We helped David draft a Power of Attorney, Enduring Guardianship Appointment, and Will, appointing his close friends as his Attorney and Guardian. Once the documents were in place, David could rest easy knowing his partner cannot make decisions on his behalf, and he has protected his wishes to have people he trusts make choices in his best interests.

Older people deserve respect, autonomy, and control over their affairs as they age. By working with healthcare professionals in Health Justice Partnerships, we can identify signs of elder abuse early, and intervene to protect their rights, assets, and wellbeing. **Now, David can enjoy spending time with his friends and walking his dogs, trusting his interests will be legally protected as he ages.**

*All names in this story have been changed to protect their identity.



OUR THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our people

There is an entire community of people that make our impact possible.

Staff

Our work is conducted by 90 staff across Australia. Our exceptional team has continued to deliver outstanding client-centred services in both remote and hybrid workplace arrangements due to COVID-19. We recognise that the process has not been straightforward or easy, and deeply appreciate their efforts.

Volunteers

Our volunteers include a diverse range of professionals, law students, and practical legal trainees. We extend our thanks to them for their remarkable commitment and service.

Patrons

We offer a special thanks to our patrons whose support and commitment to our organisation has been vital to engaging new supporters and scaling our services to reach more individuals and not-for-profit organisations who need legal help.

- Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs
- Ruth McColl AO
- Robert Fitzgerald AM



Our board

We are governed by an independent, skills-based volunteer board whose commitment to Justice Connect is crucial to our success.

Our directors for 2021-22 were:



Marcia Neave, AO
Chair



Nicky Friedman
Deputy chair



Tristan Cutcliffe
Director



Prof. Sarah Maddison
Director



Dr Crystal McKinnon
Director



Jidah Clark
Director



Vicki Jamieson
Director

Our members

Our valued network of over 10,000 pro bono lawyers offers their time, expertise, and dedication to prevent the negative consequences of legal problems experienced by individuals and not-for-profit organisations.

With their help, we can deliver impactful responses to unmet legal need, and improve the community's wellbeing.

abode migration lawyers
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Allen & Overy
Allens
ARC Justice
Arnold Bloch Leibler
Arnold Dallas McPherson
Ashurst
Baker McKenzie
Banki Haddock Flora
Barry.Nilsson. Lawyers
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The Victorian Bar
Thomson Geer Group
Transport Accident Commission
Webb Henderson
White & Case
Wisewould Mahony
Women's Legal Service Victoria
Woolf Associates Solicitors
Wotton + Kearney



Our secondees

Our member firms offer invaluable support to our initiatives by providing secondees for three- to six-month periods.

These partnerships are critical to our capacity to provide timely and effective legal support to the community, and we thank each of our secondees for their valuable contributions.

Biana Banchetti, Landers and Rogers
Victor Bold, Herbert Smith Freehills
Bec Cunningham, MinterEllison
Daisy Eales, DLA Piper
Laura Elliott, DLA Piper
Piper Fraser, Corrs Chambers Westgarth
Cameron Inglis, MinterEllison
Tatum Joseph, MinterEllison
Philippa Lo, Ashurst
Su Lwin, Thomson Geer
Kristyna Moravec, Ashurst
Courtney Spears, Norton Rose Fullbright
Romany Tauber, Australian Government Solicitor
Xavier Vale, MinterEllison

Our funders

Our high-impact interventions for individuals and community organisations are made possible by the generous support of our valued funders.

Australian Government Attorney-General's Department
Australian Government Department of Social Services
Bushfire Recovery Victoria
City of Melbourne
Consumer Affairs Victoria
Court Services Victoria
Equity Trustees
Helen McPherson Smith Trust
Herbert Smith Freehills
Ian Potter Foundation
Launch Housing
Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund
Mannifera
National Recovery and Resilience Agency
New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council
New South Wales Government Ageing & Disability Commission
New South Wales Government Attorney-General's Department
New South Wales Government Department of Communities and Justice
New South Wales Government Women NSW
Perpetual Limited

- H & L Hecht Trust
- Ian Rollo Currie Estate

Portland House Foundation
Seniors Rights Victoria
St Vincent's Curran Foundation
StreetSmart Victoria
The Pratt Foundation
The Shine On Foundation
Transport Accident Commission
Victoria Legal Aid
Victorian Government Department of Justice and Community Safety
Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner

Our partners

Our last year's achievements would not have been possible without the collaboration and fellowship of our partners across the sector.

Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies
Caulfield Hospital and Community Health Service, Alfred Health
cohealth
Council on the Ageing Victoria
Council to Homeless Persons
Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic)
Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
Health Justice Australia
Law Institute of Victoria
LawWorks
Murrumbidgee Local Health District, New South Wales
New South Wales Council of Social Services
PILA
Sacred Heart Mission
Seniors Rights Victoria
St Vincent's Health Network, Sydney
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne
Te Ara Ture
Uniting War Memorial Hospital, Sydney
University of Melbourne
Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Victorian Council of Social Service



Our supporters

We recognise the many committed individuals, community groups, and organisations who support our work by making generous contributions to help achieve our purpose.

Julian Burnside AO, QC
Gaudry Foundation
Mitzi & George Gilligan
Eric Gomez
Hewlett Packard
Lesley Hitchens
Will & Jennie Irving
La Trobe University Hockey Club
Yasmin Masri
Fiona & Angus McLeay
William Pitt

Jarrad Salmon
Chaman Sidhu & Richard Taylor
Tamieka Spencer Bruce
Andrew & Kerry Stephenson
White & Case
Anonymous
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Anonymous
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Anonymous
Anonymous

Other thanks

We receive help in many ways from people and organisations, whether through reduced-fee services, access to facilities, or research.

Ability Rights Centre
Allens
Clyde & Co
Committo
Diversity Council of Australia
Equality Australia
FAL Lawyers
Herbert Smith Freehills
Hive Legal
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intelliHR
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Melbourne City Library
Pat Stragalinis
Performance Culture Consulting
Piper Alderman
Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Reed Consultants International
Safetrac



For more information about supporting Justice Connect please contact:

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justiceconnect.org.au/donate





OUR FINANCES

Our finances

The audited financial result for the 2021-22 financial year is a surplus of \$211,333 representing 2% of our annual income. At 30 June 2022 we maintain healthy net assets and retained earnings of \$2,298,381.

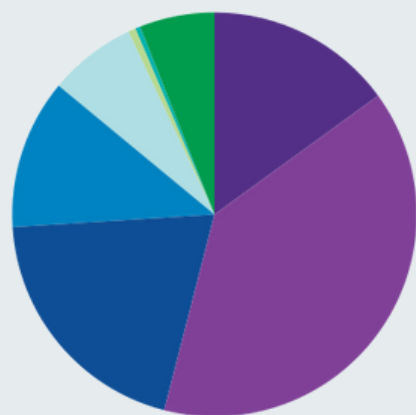
We continue to have diversified funding sources with our annual income totalling \$10,396,200.

Our work is made possible largely thanks to the financial support of our members and our partners in government and philanthropy.

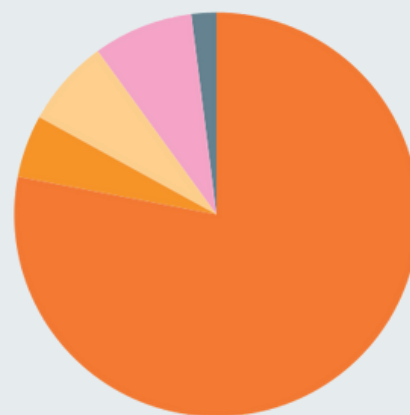
Achieving our purpose in the most effective and financially sustainable way is one of our three strategic directions, enabling us to focus our limited resources on initiatives that achieve our strategy and build our organisational financial strength.

In 2021-22, we received funding from the sources shown in the charts. We also received a range of very generous in-kind support from our members which assisted in making our work possible through staff secondments, volunteer engagement, and donation of resources and facilities.

Income



Expenses



Federal Government (15%) State Government (39%)
 Philanthropic (20%) Fee for service (12%)
 Membership fees (7%) Fundraising (0.6%)
 Investment income (0.4%) Other (6%)

Employee (78%) Administration (5%)
 Occupancy (7%) ICT (8%)
 Direct program (2%)

Connect with us



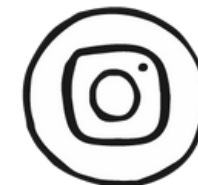
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Photos by Anna Carlisle.

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