

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre

Annual Report 2024



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first people. They have never ceded sovereignty, and remain strong in their enduring connection to land, water and culture.

Caring for local people since 1979, Mallee Family Care promotes strong, connected and inclusive communities by embedding diversity and equity practices at the centre of everything we do.

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From the Manager and Principal Solicitor

Reflecting on 2023-24

Phrases like 'Justice for all' and 'Access to justice' are synonymous within the community legal sector. But these are not just slogans. They are the reason our service exists, and this ethos has continued to underpin Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre (MFC CLC) operations throughout the 2023-24 Financial Year.

From the moment someone calls for assistance they are our priority, and we work hard to ensure their needs are met, either through our programs or referral to another program. The client does not stand alone.

Demand for community legal services continues to grow, and the legal and non-legal issues clients present with are increasingly complex and multi-faceted. Over the past year our dedicated team supported 1,047 clients across a catchment area of more than 120,000 km².

Our integrated practice delivers a holistic wrap-around service, ensuring that clients are provided with non-legal support in a trauma informed and empathetic manner.

As a place-based service provider we are continually evaluating and evolving our practice to ensure we're meeting the needs of our communities of interest. This year we undertook a Legal Needs Analysis to ensure that our services meet community needs. This, plus the results of the Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS) have guided and informed our work.

In 2023-24 we implemented innovative new programs including Flood Support (both legal and financial), Mabels partnership with Mildura Rural City Council and Eastern CLC and the Emerging Lawyers Program in partnership with Women's Legal Service Victoria. Our Principal Solicitor also provided regular legal education sessions through the Mallee Family Care Family Relationship Centre.

Law reform and advocacy is a critical element of our work, as we strive to ensure the unique perspectives of our regional, rural and remote communities are considered in reform activities. The Inquiry into Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Perpetrator Data, Strengthening Victoria's Laws against Hate Speech & Conduct and Family Law Amendment Bill (No 2) were among the nine submissions we contributed to.

Our team of legal and non-legal staff continue to provide a high level of support for all clients, through care and commitment. This is reflected in client feedback, with 98.6% of service users reporting they were provided information about their legal rights and responsibilities in a way that could be understood.

Our Annual Report demonstrates MFC CLC's unwavering commitment to enabling access to justice for all members of our community.



Corrina Graham
Manager Community Services



Leanne Bosman
Principal Solicitor



Free and confidential legal advice for communities across the Loddon Mallee region

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre (MFC CLC) is an integrated practice that delivers a holistic, wrap-around service to vulnerable people. We assist clients with legal matters including:

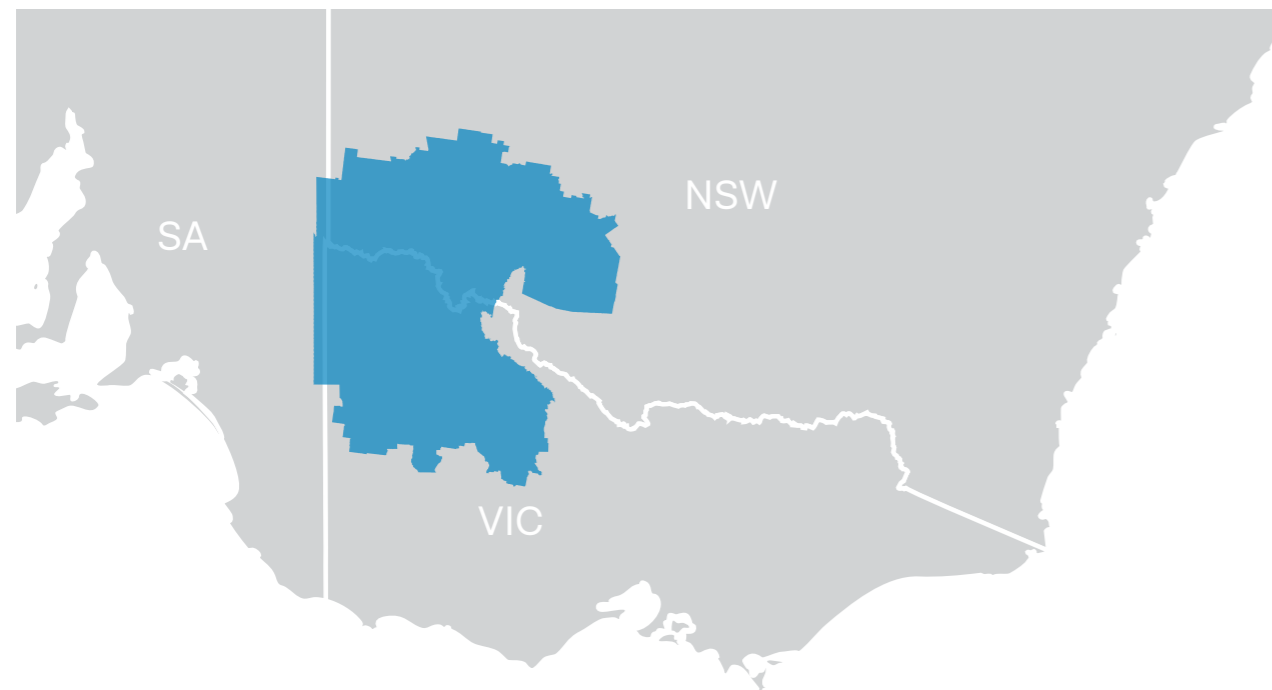
- Family Law
- Family Violence
- Intervention Order Support Service
- Welfare Rights
- Equal Opportunity
- Traffic Offences
- Credit and Debt
- Consumer Problems
- Complaints
- Employment
- Motor Vehicle Accidents
- Victims Compensation

We also assist people with non-legal issues relating to family violence, mental health, cultural needs, disability and financial well being.

Regular outreach services are delivered in Robinvale, Swan Hill, Kerang and Dareton.

We also have dedicated outreach services to The Orange Door, Mallee Sexual Assault Unit, Mallee Domestic Violence Unit and Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council.

We work closely with many other agencies including Victoria Police, The Orange Door, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Mildura Rural City Council, Services Australia, Victoria Legal Aid, Department of Justice and Community Safety and Court Services Victoria.




120,000 km²
Catchment area 

 **1,517** Intake assessments

1,047 Clients supported 

 **1,691** Services provided

345 Events and stakeholder engagements 

17 Different towns visited 

 **106** Community Legal Education presentations



Who we support

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre (MFC CLC) operates across a 120,000km² catchment. We are committed to providing a safe, welcoming service for everyone and recognise the unique and individual needs and circumstances of each client who accesses our programs.

Of our 2023-24 client base:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 77% identified as experiencing financial disadvantage | 75% identified as female |
| 92% identified as being geographically disadvantaged | 12% identified as older persons |
| 39% identified as living with a disability or mental health illness | 7% identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse |
| | 11% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander |

The top 10 matters we assisted clients with:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Other civil | 6 Parenting plan |
| 2 Family or Domestic Violence | 7 Credit and debt |
| 3 Family or Domestic Violence Order | 8 Divorce |
| 4 Child contacts or contact orders | 9 Victims Compensation |
| 5 Property in marriage | 10 Property de facto |

Client outcomes

- **74%** of service users reported that they better understand their legal issues following legal assistance.
- **74%** of service users reported that they better understand how to manage their legal problems following legal assistance.
- **98.6%** of service users reported that they were provided information about their legal rights and responsibilities in a way that could be understood (no service user disagreed with this statement).
- **92%** of clients felt safe in the service (6% remained neutral and 2% disagreed).
- **85.5%** felt supported in all their interactions with the CLC staff.
- **92%** reported that they were listened to and staff understood their issues.

What clients said

“I found the person that worked with me was really great and tried to answer all my questions... and I could relate to her. Some people you speak with you can’t relate to but I could really relate to her.”

“The Solicitor was absolutely awesome, and so was the Intake Worker! She actually spent quite some time with me and really tried to find other ways to help.”

“She was very supportive, I’m so grateful for your service”.



Board of Directors & Audit, Finance & Risk Committee



Ross Lake OAM
Chair
Bachelor of Law, Bachelor of Economics, Diploma of Education

Mr Lake has been a Board member almost every year since the inception of MFC in 1984. He was appointed Chair in 2011. He was appointed to the Audit, Risk & Finance Committee in 2005. Mr Lake is also a Director of the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre Strategic Advisory Panel and Northern Mallee Integrated Water Management.



Jenna Yetman
Deputy Chair
Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting), Bachelor of Laws and Legal Practice, GAICD

Ms Yetman was appointed to the Board in 2018 and Deputy Chair in 2020. She is employed as a Corporate Lawyer for a national retail and manufacturing business and is a graduate of the Northern Mallee Leaders program and the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Previous Directorships include MADEC Australia and Mallee Track Health and Community Service.



Christine Cottrell
Chair Audit, Finance & Risk Committee
Graduate Certificate in Business Administration, Advanced Diploma Business (Legal Practice)

Ms Cottrell was appointed to the Board in 2020 and Chair of the Audit, Finance & Risk Committee in 2021. She has 20+ years' experience in the Not-For-Profit sector and is currently a Director of Mildura Community House and Connected Beginnings Mildura.



Geoff Dea
Bachelor of Business (Accounting), CPA

Mr Dea was appointed to the Board in 2019. He is the former CEO of SuniTAFE and is currently a Director of Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network.



Dr Suriya Hariprakash
MBBS, DCH, MRCP (Paediatrics), MRCPCH, CCT in Paediatrics and Paediatric Intensive Care Medicine, FPCCM, FRACP

Dr. Hariprakash was appointed to the Board in 2020. He is the Senior Staff Specialist Paediatrician and Clinical Director of Paediatrics at Mildura Base Public Hospital. Dr. Hariprakash is a member of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and the Australian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy.



Belinda Hudak
Master of Leadership and Management, Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Arts

Ms Hudak was appointed to the Board in 2022. She is the Principal of Mildura Senior College, on the Committee of Management for the Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network and is Deputy President of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals.



Dr Chelsea Todd
Bachelor of Psychology (Hons), PhD Occupational Health Psychology

Dr Todd was appointed to the Board in 2022. She has worked as a senior researcher and adviser at universities and government departments in South Australia as well as in policy and management for the Victorian government. Dr Todd has also completed the Australian School of Applied Management's Advanced Leadership Program.



Eelco Vugs
Masters in Mental Health Science, Masters in Criminology

Mr Vugs was appointed to the Board in 2021. He has more than 15 years' experience in child protection and safeguarding roles for both government and non-government organisations in Australia and overseas. He is currently the Global Director of Safeguarding for Oxfam International.



Anthony Venneri
Independent Member, Audit, Finance & Risk Committee
Bachelor of Business, Chartered Accountant, CPA

Mr Venneri was appointed to the Audit, Finance & Risk Committee in 2024. He has extensive experience in providing business advice and compliance obligations to SME's and over the last 10 years, has been in executive roles in a business that is the largest provider of integrated financial solutions across Australasia.



Don Wall
Independent Member, Audit, Finance & Risk Committee
Bachelor of Business

Mr Wall was appointed to the Audit, Finance & Risk Committee in 2019. He has extensive experience in high-risk industries within the resource sector throughout Australia. Before retiring and relocating to Mildura he worked in local government risk management in South Australia.

Our Team

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre's team of legal and non-legal professionals are committed to providing the best service, support and outcomes for all clients.

Operating within an Integrated Practice Framework and wrap around model of care, paired with the place-based nature of our wider organisation has proven to be both vital and valuable to our communities.

Corrina Graham
Manager Community Services

Leanne Bosman
Principal Solicitor

Tessa Amatya
Generalist Solicitor

Christine Bishop
Social Worker

Bernadette Brougham
Family Violence Financial Counsellor

Tahlia Brown
Team Leader Family Violence Program CLC

Emily Craig
Generalist Solicitor

Allie Collyer
Community Education Worker

Geoff Dunstan
Senior Solicitor

Sarah Merry
Intake and Assessment Officer - Legal - Family Violence

Tory McNabb
Family Violence Financial Counsellor

Katherine Myles
Social Worker

Lauren Moore
Specialist Family Violence Solicitor

Kate Mliswa
Generalist Solicitor

Robyne Rundell
Intake and Assessment Coordinator

Colin Rawnsley
Financial Counsellor Legal

Samantha Stitt
Generalist Solicitor

Sarah Taha
Senior Social Worker - Specialist Family Violence

Debbie Thompson
Administration Officer

Jayden Seamer
Generalist Solicitor

Tania Pearce
Community Engagement Worker



“They actually called on time and it caught me off guard. They were punctual which was great.”

Client feedback

Intake and Assessment

Intake is a comprehensive assessment of the client’s needs, conducted over the phone or face-to-face. Face-to-face intakes are beneficial for clients who do not have access to a phone, reside or work in areas with poor signal, and those with specific requirements that are better suited for in-person assistance.

Operating in an inclusive and culturally safe manner, Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre’s (MFC CLC) intake workers offer a phone interpreting service to communicate with culturally and linguistically diverse or non-English speaking clients. In the 2023-24 Financial year, 90 clients accessed our CLC using an interpreter.

During the intake process a holistic assessment is undertaken to identify non-legal issues that a client is experiencing. These issues can include concerns around safety, mental health, trauma and financial issues. Clients are offered warm referrals to alternative services as identified and required.

Intake Workers also engage with other stakeholders to provide

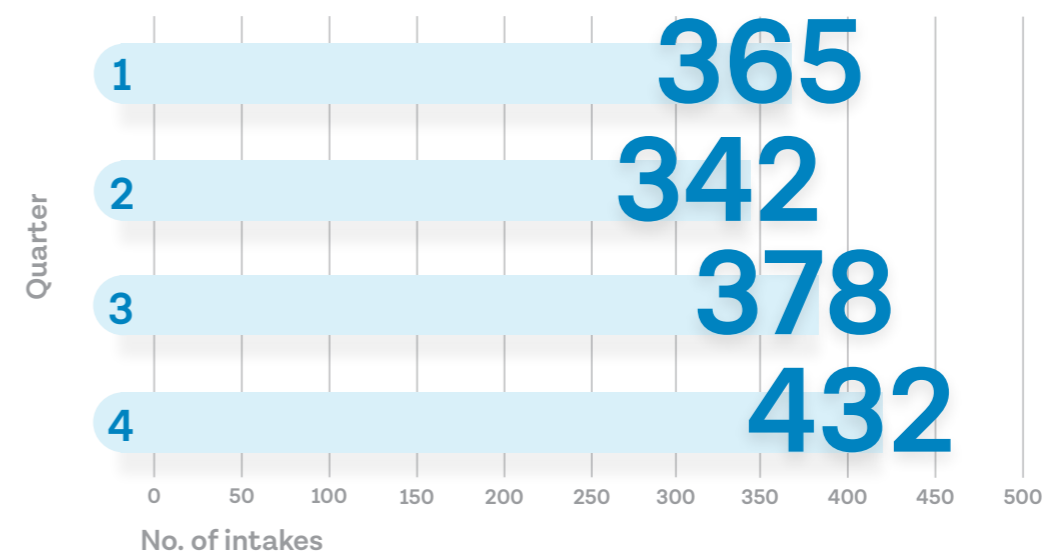
information and referral pathways to get the best outcome for the client. The demand on intake continues to increase.

Due to increased demand for free legal advice, MFC CLC has appointed an additional Intake Worker.

This role is dedicated to supporting intake for the Health Justice Partnership (HJP), including HJP financial counselling, ensuring cohesion across both programs.

The average time between the first point of contact and scheduled appointment in the 2023-24 Financial Year was 8.4 days. This is a slight increase from the previous year, which can be attributed to the significant rise in demand during this reporting period. It also reflects our commitment to ensuring a comprehensive intake process is undertaken for every person accessing the service.

Number of Intakes
June 30, 2023 - July 1, 2024





Generalist Legal Program

Mallee Family Care's Generalist Legal service aims to provide accessible legal services to individuals in the Mallee region. The program typically focuses on a variety of legal issues, including family law, housing and tenancy disputes, consumer rights and fines.

The generalist program offers confidential legal advice, legal tasks, representation and has community education initiatives to help empower clients with knowledge and enhance their understanding of their legal matters. By promoting social justice equality, the program plays a vital role in supporting vulnerable clientele who are facing legal challenges in the community.

There's been a noticeable rise in demand for legal services, most likely due to the aftermath of the pandemic and current economic challenges. Many people are seeking help with family violence, family law, housing issues and financial disputes. It could also be assumed that the cost-of-living crisis is impacting demand on these services, due to the added pressures individuals and families are currently facing.

There has been an increase in clients experiencing mental ill-health whilst attempting to navigate their legal issues. This has resulted in increased complexity of matters as legal issues become intertwined with social issues which require multi-faceted approaches such as collaboration with other social services. Mallee Family Care has

established integrated support services to ensure a more holistic approach when providing support to these vulnerable clients.

Additionally, there has been a significant increase in clients experiencing financial hardship due to the current economic climate. This has resulted in clients presenting with matters relating to financial issues such as debt and tenancy issues.

Demand for online or telephone appointments remain high, with many clients preferring to access our services remotely. Despite this trend, we are aware that vulnerable clients can often experience digital exclusion due to lack of access to devices or familiarisation with technology.

We have therefore implemented a hybrid service model, by combining in-person and phone consultations to accommodate client preferences and needs. By offering clients this flexibility, Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre is increasing our clients' access to justice.

Undertook **537** referrals

Delivered **309** discrete legal services

Provided ongoing legal support/representation to **35** People

Intervention Order Support Service

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre's (MFC CLC) Intervention Order Support Service is for victim survivors from diverse communities who have experienced family violence and are applying for a Family Violence Intervention Order in Court.

Our service provides assistance on a duty basis at Mildura, Swan Hill, Robinvale and Kerang Magistrates' Courts. A Social Worker also attends Court to provide clients with non-legal support in appointments as well as external referrals to other services if required.

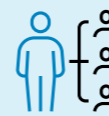
Our Intervention Order Support Service is provided in-person but victim survivors and affected family members can attend remotely via audio visual link with the assistance of the Magistrates' Court

Remote Hearing Support Service. Having the option to appear remotely allows victim survivors to participate in the legal process, to feel safe, and can be a less traumatising experience. Furthermore, affected family members and victim survivors who attend Mildura Magistrates' Court in person, can utilise a safe waiting area at the Court.

An ongoing issue that has been presenting in the family violence jurisdiction is the misidentification of the primary aggressor. This misidentification can occur when the primary aggressor uses an application for a Family Violence Intervention Order as another way to perpetrate ongoing family violence against a victim survivor. These applications by primary aggressors can have immense consequences for the victim survivor.



Courts attended:
Mildura, Swan Hill, Kerang, Robinvale



141 clients assisted



81% of all clients were female



Health Justice Partnerships

Legal and non-legal support for vulnerable clients

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre's Health Justice Partnerships (HJP) integrate non-legal services to provide holistic and unified support for vulnerable clients.

HJP programs are delivered by two Family Violence Social Workers, a Mental Health Social Worker, a Family Violence Financial Counsellor, Intake Officer, Team Leader and HJP Solicitors, who work collaboratively with the Centre's legal staff.

The non-legal team supports clients with complex needs, who may be experiencing family violence, mental ill-health and/or financial stress.

Early intervention strategies play a crucial role in mitigating the impact of family violence, promoting safety, and facilitating recovery our Integrated Practice Framework promotes shared goals within the non-legal and legal space and encourages co-ordinated care to address the multifaceted nature of family violence, financial stresses and mental health issues.

All Health Justice Partnership programs offer support using a trauma-informed lens and client

centred approach to ensure services are provided in a way that supports safety and trust and empowers vulnerable clients.

Health Justice Partnership programs assist the legal practitioners to ensure vulnerable individuals receive early access to legal advice and representation, as early intervention leads to better long-term outcomes.

During the 2023-24 Financial Year, the Health Justice Partnership team successfully secured more than \$262,000 in debt waivers, Flexible Support Packages and Escaping Family Violence Payments for clients.

The team continues to have a strong focus on collaboration between legal and non-legal staff, and fostering partnerships between stakeholders, other legal services, and community organisations. Outreach services are provided to multiple locations ensuring community members receive access to legal and non-legal support regardless of the point of entry.

Trends identified over the 2023-24 Financial Year include:



People are facing increasingly complex legal and non-legal issues

367 clients accessed support through Health Justice Partnership programs in the 2023-24FY, up 12.23% on the previous year.



The number of older people accessing non-legal services is growing

15.57% of clients in 2023-24FY were aged 65 and over, compared to 12.84% in the previous FY.



The rising cost of living is putting people under significant financial stress

84.47% of clients identified as experiencing financial disadvantage and 74.93% were on low to medium incomes.



“It was nice to have that support (Social Worker) there because she could answer the things the lawyer couldn’t.”

Client feedback



Domestic Violence Unit/Health Justice Partnership

The Domestic Violence Unit/Health Justice Partnership (DVU/ HJP) program offers a comprehensive approach to supporting victim survivors of family violence within an Integrated Practice Framework. This specialist team comprises a Family Violence Solicitor, a Family Violence Financial Counsellor and a Family Violence Social Worker.

This wrap around service ensures that the victim survivor has legal support with any pending Family Violence Intervention Orders or family law matters, access to financial support for debt waivers or other financial applications, and social support to assist with client coordination, risk management and safety planning.

This program receives referrals directly from family violence services such as The Orange Door, Mallee Domestic Violence Service and Mallee Sexual Assault Unit. Our team conducts outreach regularly to these services in their Mildura and Swan Hill locations using a collaborative approach.

Our program also collaborates with other like services in Victoria to provide feedback to state bodies to assist with policy development. In May 2024 new Family Law amendments were introduced, which have enhanced the importance of protecting children and their caregivers from family violence. This shows that the family violence sector's advocacy for the safety of women and children is successfully initiating positive change in the Family Law jurisdiction.

- 297** Referrals received
- 159** Legal services provided
- 234** Non-legal services provided through the FV Social Worker and FV Financial Counsellor
- \$121,724** Worth of debt waivers secured for clients
- \$76,152.56** Worth of Flexible Support Packages secured for clients
- \$65,000** Escaping Family Violence Payments secured for clients



Mental Health Program

The Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre (MFC CLC) provides a vital resource for individuals in the Mallee community who are facing legal challenges, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds.

Many clients who access the CLC struggle with mental health issues, which can complicate their ability to navigate the legal system. Integrating mental health practices and legal services can significantly improve client outcomes by addressing the interconnectedness of legal and mental health challenges.

People with mental health issues often face unique barriers, including difficulty understanding legal processes, challenges in communication, and emotional distress which can affect decision-making.

In the past year we have noted an increased number

of clients who have experienced mental health issues related to financial burden and the rising cost of living. Individuals have approached the service with legal issues that have resulted from not being able to stay ahead of the financial demands being placed on them.

The program has also encountered an increased number of individuals who have had their basic human rights violated. This has been most evident in the Aged Care space. How this violation has presented itself has been through door-to-door scams, withholding information, limiting informed choice, internet fraud and identity theft. Clients have discussed an increase in mental health symptoms due to not being able to afford regular medication or medical consultations. Advocacy for these clients has been a vital role played by the HJP team.

The HJP integrated practice model has assisted clients with legal, financial and mental health concerns. Teamwork between legal, financial and mental health professionals ensures an effective integrative practice environment. This is achieved through collaboration, with the legal, financial and mental health staff holding regular case

- 91** People supported
- 29.67%** Were aged 65 and over
- 68.13%** Identifying as female, 30.77% identifying as male
- 80.22%** Experiencing financial disadvantage
- 47.25%** Low income
- 80** Legal services provided
- 78** People accessed Mental Health Social Worker





Mabels partnership

Helping women and children access legal and family violence services sooner

Mabels is a philanthropic funded partnership between Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre (MFC CLC), Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) and Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) which was formally launched on 11 July 2024. The launch was attended by over 60 partners, stakeholders and service providers and included representatives from The Cybec Foundation, our philanthropic funders.

The Mabels program aims to foster collaboration among key stakeholders with the goal of providing a supportive environment that enhances the wellbeing of mothers and children, ensuring that they receive the comprehensive legal and non-legal care they need.

Referrals made to the Mabels program are coordinated by MFC CLC Mabels team in conjunction with MRCC. Our Mabels solicitor and social support worker liaise with clients and make legal appointments at locations suitable to the client.

Since the Mabels official launch in July, we have received steady and increasing referrals to this service, evidencing the need for an early intervention response to family violence.



Victims Legal Service

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre (MFC CLC) provides free legal advice, casework and support to people who have suffered injury or loss because of a violent crime. We assist victims to access financial assistance through the existing Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) and support services, such as counselling, to aid in their recovery from the violent crime.

Our second year of delivering this service has seen a steady increase in the number of victims we have been able to assist. The vast majority of clients access this service via telephone appointments given MFC CLC's large catchment area. We are responsible for delivering and supporting services to victims of violent crime in the Loddon Mallee region. This includes the City of Greater Bendigo, Mildura Rural City, Macedon Ranges, Campaspe, Swan Hill, Mount Alexander, Central Goldfields, Gannawarra, Loddon and Buloke local government areas.

MFC CLC also covers areas outside of our catchment including Barwon, Hume and Greater Shepparton areas.

By 1 December 2024, a new Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) will replace the existing VOCAT. Many of our clients have chosen to await the commencement of this new Scheme given its benefits.

Whilst victims of crime engage with our service primarily for access to financial assistance relating to the violent crime, we are often able to assist further by empowering them with advice in relation to other areas of law, most commonly Family Violence Intervention Orders and Personal Safety Intervention Orders.

Family Advocacy and Support Services

Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) comprises an integrated Duty Lawyer and Social Worker who support individuals impacted by domestic and family violence currently dealing with family law matters in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA). This service is also available to extended family members, including carers. FASS was established in 2017 in major Family Law Court registries around Australia with funding from the Commonwealth Government.

During the 2023-24 Financial Year the Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre (MFC CLC) had a dedicated team of two Solicitors who delivered the FASS Duty Lawyer Service.

The FASS Duty Lawyers provided essential support such as legal advice, preparing court documents, and representing clients in select instances. Additionally, they assisted clients involved in ongoing cases if they met our casework guidelines.

Common matters the service assisted clients with include family law matters such as parenting, property and divorce proceedings.

The FASS service is accessible every alternate Tuesday through remote sessions via Microsoft Teams, as well as during the in-person Mildura Circuit for a week in February, May, and November Circuit lists.

FASS work in action

FASS Solicitors represented the Respondent Mother in parenting proceedings commenced by the Applicant Father in the Magistrates Court. The Father sought to injunct the Mother from travelling overseas to a non-Hague convention country with the parties' minor child.

We successfully obtained orders allowing the Mother to travel to the non-Hague convention country with the child. The proceedings were subsequently transferred to the FCFCOA. We represented the Mother in the FCFCOA proceedings, including appearing in mention and directions hearings, and eventually a two-part dispute resolution conference.

The parties were able to reach an agreement that was in the child's best interests and allowed the Mother to travel to the non-Hague convention country every year with the child.



31 People assisted



7 Involved in ongoing litigation cases before the FCFCOA

“I’ve been really happy with the service; they have been fantastic. It’s the first time in 18 months I have actually received help, and for so many things in such a short time.”

Client feedback



Flood Support Program

In July 2023, the Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre (MFC CLC) received additional funding to deliver a legal and non-legal response to the 2022 October floods. This program aims to assist impacted community members with legal issues, financial concerns and referrals.

We engage with the local community who are seeking assistance through telephone, email, the MFC website or face-to-face. The program covers Mildura, Swan Hill, Gannawarra and Buloke local government areas.

A significant proportion of people accessing the program have sought legal assistance for insurance matters including under insured properties, low insurance payouts and no insurance cover.

The additional financial burden placed on those affected has resulted in a high number of people accessing the program also receiving assistance from the CLC Flood Financial Counsellor.

More than 70 flood affected clients have been assisted by the Solicitor and Financial Counsellor, while disaster mitigation events have been supported in Charlton, Wycheproof, Donald, Cohuna and Kerang.

MFC CLC is well-placed to deliver community education on disaster-related legal issues like preparing important documents, housing and tenancy laws, social security, and financial literacy including insurance.



88 Services through the program



15 Community legal education sessions



28 Stakeholder engagement activities

Community Legal education and community engagement

Engaging with the community and providing legal education is a critical element of Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre's (MFC CLC) work.

Through education and engagement, we aim to empower individuals, organisations and agencies with knowledge and tools to navigate the often complex and intimidating legal system.

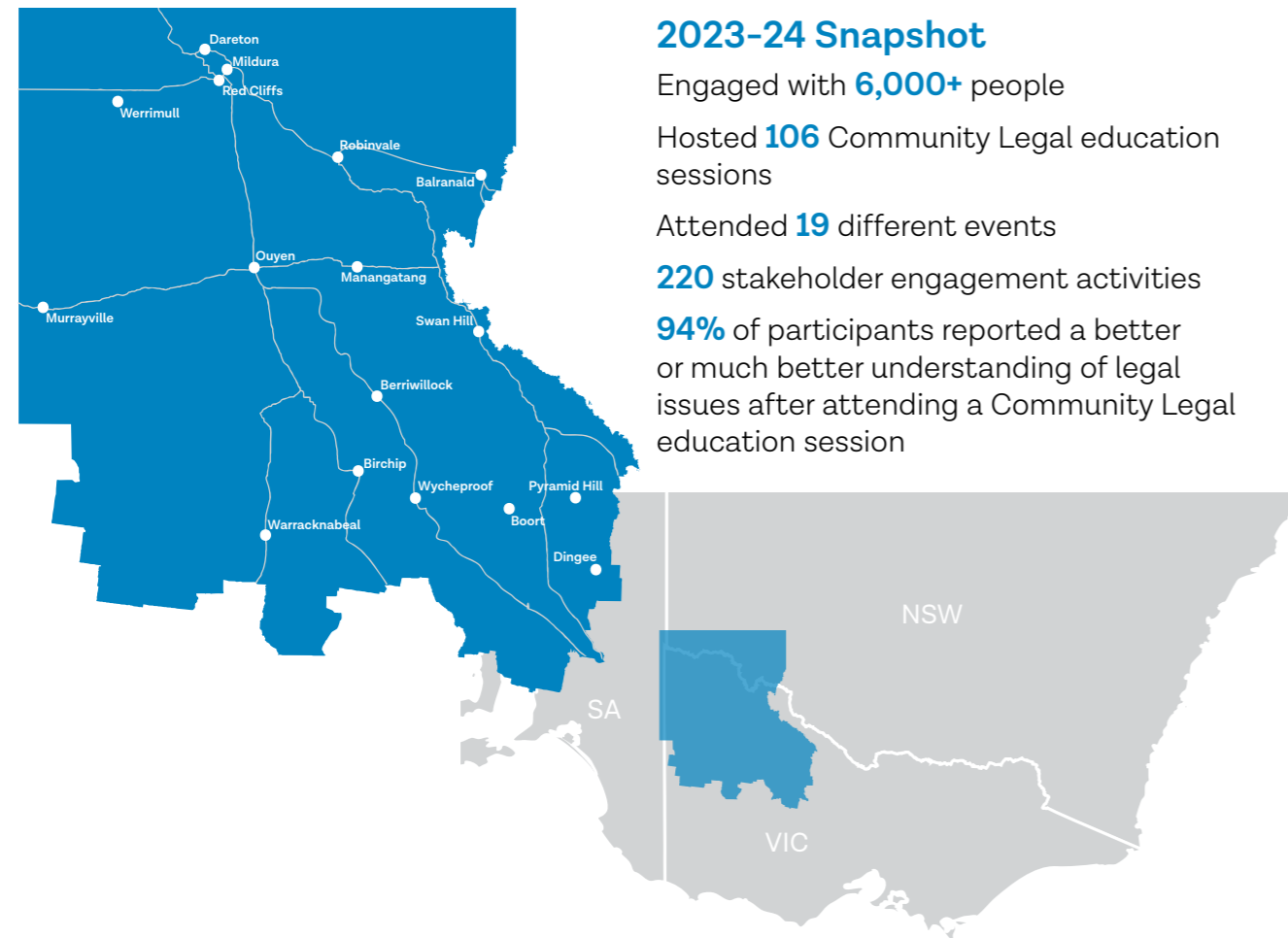
By providing accessible legal information, resources, and support, these initiatives help bridge the gap between legal professionals and underserved communities, ensuring that people are not left

vulnerable due to a lack of understanding or awareness of their rights.

Legal education can also help prevent costly legal issues by fostering early intervention and resolving disputes before they escalate.

Working collaboratively, our Community Legal Education Worker and Community Engagement Worker have connected with more people than ever in the 2023-24 Financial Year. We are grateful for the many and varied opportunities to promote CLC services and to engage with people across the Mallee region.

Where we visited



- 2023-24 Snapshot**
- Engaged with **6,000+** people
- Hosted **106** Community Legal education sessions
- Attended **19** different events
- 220** stakeholder engagement activities
- 94%** of participants reported a better or much better understanding of legal issues after attending a Community Legal education session

Community Legal Education and Engagement by numbers

	Presentations	Attendance
Education sessions		
General	43	638
Youth	49	1187
Workplace	11	286
Health Justice Partnership	3	73
Total presentations/attendance	106	2184
Events		
Stakeholder engagements	19	2461
	220	1370
Total activities	245	6015

Stakeholder Engagement

Our involvement in and presence at 19 different events across our catchment area increased the CLC's visibility to disadvantaged population groups, rural and remote communities and local services. These events provided opportunities for engagement with new stakeholders, further interagency liaison and referrals to our legal services and Community Legal Education sessions.

We attended 69 stakeholder network meetings as a CLC, with opportunities to promote our services including legal outreach to Dareton, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, Robinvale and Swan Hill. From these networking meetings and other interactions and enquiries, we had 151 informal contacts with external service providers across nine Local Government Areas. These contacts create

critical linkages and referral pathways to and from our CLC services, and opportunities for interagency collaboration to benefit vulnerable people and population groups.



Separating Smarter video resource

The 2023 Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS) showed people have poor understanding of family law, which prompted MFC CLC to produce a video resource specifically about this topic. Separating Smarter: Property, parenting and family law essentials features our Principal Solicitor and Community Legal Education Worker providing information about family law, myths around separation, parenting and property and where to go for resources and help.

Aimed at people in the initial stages of separation looking for clear information, this video was released on social media during Victorian Law Week however it is a resource that will be available long term on the Mallee Family Care YouTube channel and to use at future information and engagement sessions.



Victorian Law Week

We used Victorian Law Week to engage with agencies who work with vulnerable community members in Mildura and Swan Hill. Our aim was to strengthen referral pathways with workers who are crucial to linking their clients with legal help.

We hosted two 'Meet the Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre Team' events. These included a presentation on our services, introduced our staff and provided time for networking afterwards.

43 people attended the Mildura event, representing 20 different agencies. Attendees were extremely positive about how helpful these events were to improve understanding about the CLC and many noted that they felt much more confident in referring their clients to us, after attending.



Workplace information sessions

The release of Victoria Law Foundation's Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS) results in August 2023 showed that 29% of people experiencing a legal problem went to a non-legal service for help. This gave us an excellent evidence base to focus on strengthening our connections with local agencies to ensure that they were aware of our services and how we could help their clients.

This year we delivered sessions to organisations that work with people in multicultural communities, job networks, mental health, homelessness, youth, seniors, disability, domestic and family violence and alcohol and drugs.

Affirmative Consent education in schools

In July 2023, Affirmative Consent laws were introduced in Victoria. The laws make it clear that everyone has a responsibility to obtain clear and enthusiastic consent before any sexual activity. We delivered 41 sessions in schools across the catchment area on this topic to ensure that young people had the most up to date information to empower them to have healthier relationships and make informed decisions about sexual activity.

A number of schools book sessions with the CLC every year, while others were arranged following proactive engagement from the Community Engagement Worker.

In the latter half of the year, every school that hosted a session advised us that they have had students affected by sextortion. This is a huge area of concern and is real evidence that the

presentations we deliver are crucial in raising awareness of this issue and empowering young people with information to prevent them becoming victims.



Financial Report

AUDITOR'S CERTIFICATION

Name of Organisation: William Buck (SA)
Financial Year Period: 01/ 07 / 2023 to 30 / 06 / 2024


I hereby certify that:

- a. I am not a principal, member, shareholder, officer, employee or accountant of the Organisation or of a related body corporate as defined in section 9 of the Corporations Act 2001
- b. In my opinion, the attached financial statements which comprise a Statement of Financial Position, a Statement of Comprehensive Income (previously known as a Statement of Financial Performance) and Notes to the Financial Statements of the above-mentioned Organisation ('the Organisation'), and, if general purpose reports are provided, a Statement of Cash Flows, for the stated Financial Year Period are:
 - i. based on proper accounts and present a true and fair view of the Organisation's financial position and financial performance in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements in Australia, and
 - ii. in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Agreement between Commonwealth of Australia, Victoria Legal Aid and Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre dated 23 July 2020, a copy of which has been made available to me, in relation to the provision of community legal services.
- c. The final, full year, Funds Report, containing details of the Organisations transactions for the financial year, including audit adjustments, and the Organisation's grant position at the beginning and end of the financial year is provided in respect of funds provided in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of the Agreement referred to in b.ii. above for all Funding Categories.

This is a unqualified audit report.

Unless written under separate cover, I hereby further certify that, in my opinion, there is no conflict of interest between myself and the Organisation or its Management Committee.

AUDITOR DETAILS

Full Name: G. W. Martinella
Name of Company (if applicable): William Buck (SA)
ACN or ABN Number: 38 280 203 274
Registered Auditor: *If Yes:*
 Yes **No** **Registration No.:** 3 3 9 0 6 0
Signature: 
Date: 13/08/2024

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre Consolidated Income and Expenditure Report For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Consolidated		
Surplus/Deficit From Previous Year		
Surplus/Deficit from previous year	201,438	288,591
Approved Expenditure from Surplus	-	-
Net Surplus Deficit from previous year	201,438	288,591
CLSP Income		
Commonwealth	1,351,038	1,330,238
State	1,169,432	440,748
Service Generated Income	1,145	7,170
Total CLSP Income	2,521,615	1,778,156
CLSP General Purpose Income (Total CLSP Income plus Net Surplus /Deficit)	2,723,053	2,066,747
CLSP Expenses		
Salaries	1,191,452	1,240,760
Superannuation	147,199	130,083
On Costs	222,518	22,450
Rent	75,571	70,326
Repairs and Maintenance	4,374	4,348
Other Premises Costs	47,445	45,579
Staff Training	26,463	30,473
Staff Recruitment	29,696	3,143
Communications	-	4,180
Office Overheads	7,460	17,317
Insurance	-	-
Finance, Audit & Accounting Fees	-	-
Library, Resources & Subscriptions	11,561	15,566
Travel	69,329	49,530
Programming and Planning	236,896	152,296
Client Disbursements	-	-
Leases	12,446	-
Minor Equipment	133	-
Auspicing or Management Fee	142,805	79,258
Salary and Related Expenses	1,561,169	1,393,293
Total Operating Expenses	664,179	472,016
Total CLSP Expenses	2,225,348	1,865,309
Surplus/Deficit for Current Year	296,267	(87,153)
Other Income (Not to be added to CLSP Funds Surplus/Deficit)		
Total Funds received from Other Bodies	272,193	-
Less Actual Capital Expenditure in Current Year	-	-
Surplus /Deficit for Next Year	769,898	201,438

**Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre
Balance Sheet As At 30 June 2024**

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current Assets		
National Australia Bank Operating Account	593,415	329,873
Total Current Assets	593,415	329,873
Total Assets	593,415	329,873
Current Liabilities		
Creditors		
- Accrued Wages	27,072	27,663
Employee Entitlements		
- Annual Leave	40,380	51,206
- Long Service Leave	19,156	20,442
Total Current Liabilities	86,608	99,311
Non-Current Liabilities		
Employee Entitlements		
- Long Service Leave	4,225	24,247
Total Non-Current Liabilities	4,225	24,247
Total Liabilities	90,833	123,558
Net Assets	502,582	206,315
Accumulated Funds		
Retained Surplus/(deficit) at Beginning of Year	206,315	293,468
Surplus/(deficit) for Year	296,267	(87,153)
Total Accumulated Funds	502,582	206,315

**Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre
Cashflow Statement For the Year Ended 30 June 2024**

	2024 \$ Inflows (Outflows)	2023 \$ Inflows (Outflows)
Cash flows from operating activities		
Receipts		
Operating grants from Government	2,772,517	1,948,085
Other income	1,260	7,887
	2,773,777	1,955,972
Payments		
Payments to employees	(1,593,894)	(1,367,542)
Payments to suppliers and providers	(730,597)	(519,218)
GST paid	(185,744)	(130,614)
	(2,510,235)	(2,017,374)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities (a)	263,542	(61,402)
Net increase (decrease) in cash for the year	263,542	(61,402)
Cash at beginning of financial year	329,873	391,275
Cash at end of financial year	593,415	329,873
(a) Reconciliation of net cash from operating activities to surplus from operating activities:		
Net (deficit) surplus for the year	296,267	(87,153)
Add (Less):		
Increase (Decrease) in employee provisions	(32,134)	17,207
Increase (Decrease) in creditors	(591)	8,544
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	263,542	(61,402)

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 30 June 2024

NOTE 1: BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

Income in these Income and Expenditure Reports is recognised on a cash basis, while expenses are recognised on an accrual basis.

NOTE 2: Scope of Reporting

The term consolidated is used in the Income and Expenditure Report to indicate that the report includes income and expenses for all programs and projects funded by Victorian Legal Aid.

ORGANISATION'S CERTIFICATION

I certify that:

1. These financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre as at 30 June 2024 and its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Notes 1 and 2.
2. The financial statements are in accordance with the funding agreement, applicable Australian Accounting standards and are based on proper accounts and records.
3. The Organisation has maintained complete and proper accounting records in respect of the Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre.
4. The funds received by Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre from Victoria Legal Aid under the funding agreement have been properly spent in accordance with the funding agreement.



NATALIE MORGAN
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
22/07/2024

Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre

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