

Annual Report

2024--2025



Westjustice

Executive Summary



This Report represents our current focus and highlights the incredible work of the organisation and its people over the past decade dating back to our inception in 2015.

Westjustice was created after the successful amalgamation of four Community Legal Centres providing services for Melbourne's West. The initial three were Footscray Community Legal Centre, Western Suburbs Legal Service and the Wyndham Legal Service. A few years later we absorbed the Sunshine Youth Legal Centre. Over the past decade we have grown exponentially in size and impact. We now employ over 100 people and work across 40 different sites spread across the five suburbs of Melbourne's West, home to over a million people.

Over the years we have refined and deepened our impact, expanded our programs and services and led or contributed to major state and federal systemic reform.

Our Strategy 2024-27 sets out our 5 Impact Areas:

- Children and Young People's Rights
- Women and Gender Diverse People's Rights
- Economic and Housing Rights
- Workers Rights
- Our Team

It also stipulates our 6 Priority Groups

- People experiencing family and gender-based violence
- People with a disability
- LGBTIQA+ people
- People experiencing poverty
- First Nations people
- Culturally and racially marginalised people

In working across these Impact Areas and Priority Groups we embrace the following Values:

1. **Courage**
Providing creative solutions and fearless advocacy.
2. **Community-Led**
Accessible and meaningful engagement towards empowerment.
3. **Real Impact**
Targeted and holistic outcomes through collaboration.
4. **Respect**
Continuing commitment to inclusion and cultural safety.
5. **Kindness**
Dedication to helping people.
6. **Trust**
Act with integrity and renowned for producing high quality results.

It is through this strategic and targeted lens that we aim to achieve our Priority Outcomes:

The outcomes that we prioritise for our clients, delivered through our Impact Areas are follows:

1. Increased personal safety
2. Improved housing security
3. Increased financial security
4. Improved wellbeing
5. Increased social inclusion
6. Improved empowerment and engagement in education and employment.

In order to capture the results evidencing our success in achieving these outcomes, we have rebuilt our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and will provide more detailed data on our impact in our next Annual Report.

We hope you enjoy reading this report and get a sense of the extraordinary efforts of our Team and the work they do within our Western Suburbs Communities. We acknowledge all of our partners and funders (*on page 26*) and the critical roles you play in enabling us to do what we do.



80%

**staff on
ongoing
contracts**



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Message from the Chair and CEO



Reflection on the past decade...

It has been a remarkable decade fighting for fairness, justice and safety for Melbourne's West.

From our inception, through the initial leadership of Denis Nelthorpe (former CEO) and Verne Fetke (former Chair), it was always intended that we be more than a transactional legal service. This was evidenced by the first 5 years as our organisation generated hundreds of submissions, reports, and systemic reform recommendations across children and young people, culturally and racially marginalised communities, migrant workers, and economically disadvantaged communities. During this time, we launched some of the most innovative and groundbreaking programs and services. This included the launch of the School Lawyer Program, Mortgage Wellbeing Service, My Name Clinic, the Burmese Financial Counselling Clinic, the School Myki Project, and the Employment Law Project culminating in the iconic It's Not Just Work Report. Westjustice was also at the forefront of important work across Toll fines and infringements more broadly within the context of the criminalisation of poverty (see Table 1: Toll and Infringement Map).

Over the subsequent 5 years, we were both fortunate to lead the Westjustice in our respective roles as Board Chair and CEO. This included the intense challenges of numerous lock downs during the pandemic, the loss of three wonderful staff, Skye Hawkins, Pa Hmun, and Dr Za Tuah Ngur, and major issues experienced by our communities including some of the highest rates of family violence, gambling and mental unwellness. It's fair to say that many of the current societal crises we are experiencing are either direct or indirect consequences of 2020-22.

Our economic position has grown steadily from \$3.76 million annual revenue in FY 2019 to almost \$15 million in FY 2025-6 (\$18 million if we include Mortgage Stress Victoria). Despite this, the demand for our services far exceeds what we are funded to deliver. It is therefore critical that we work as efficiently and effectively as possible and ensure that our Westjustice Team (Our Team) receive the best support and resources possible.

During our tenure, Westjustice has built on the first 5 years and produced a huge volume of highly impactful individual support and large-scale systemic reform. We have refined our multidisciplinary integrated approach to client services focusing on life outcomes, not just legal outcomes. To do this we have expanded Our Team to include Social Workers, Financial Counsellors, Community Development and Engagement Officers, and Bilingual Workers. We were successful in our campaign for statewide free public transport for young people, the expansion and separation of Mortgage Stress Victoria, the expansion of



Dana Nelson
Chairperson, Director





Restoring Financial Safety into the Safe at Home project (first of its kind), and the statewide SJ4YP Action Plan. There has been steady growth across the School Lawyer Program, our Tenancy and Housing Justice services, our work across the Family Violence Duty Lists and significant expansion of the Health Justice Support for Families.

New exciting developments include our Out of Home Care Legal Clinics, Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Program, Settlement Justice Partnerships, Youth Employment Justice Program, Equality Law Service and servicing the new Wyndham Law Courts across Family Violence Child Protection, and welcoming the wonderful YouthNow team to Westjustice.

In addition to our generalist legal practice, we have refined and expanded specialist practice areas:

- Criminal Law
- Children's Civil and Criminal Law
- Child Protection
- Family Law
- Family Violence
- Consumer Law
- Debts and Fines
- Insurance Law
- Citizenship
- Tenancy Law
- Employment Law
- Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Law

We have also commenced several transformative multi-partner collaborations, including Target Zero, the Working Women's Centre, Tenancy Stress Victoria, the Family Law Access Program, and the Rental Stress Hub.

It's been an incredible decade, and we are extremely grateful to all those, past and present, who have contributed to this enormous body of work including our Board Members, our Team, our Volunteers and Interns, our Partners and Stakeholders, Funders and the Western Suburbs Communities.



Melissa Hardham
CEO, Director



Board Members



Dana Nelson
Chairperson, Director



Melissa Hardham
CEO, Director



Greg Levine OAM
Director



Susie King
Director



Annamarie Rooding
Director



Dharmini Sivananthan
Director



Cindy Penrose
Director



Marie Pewhairangi
Director



Sarah Wood
Director



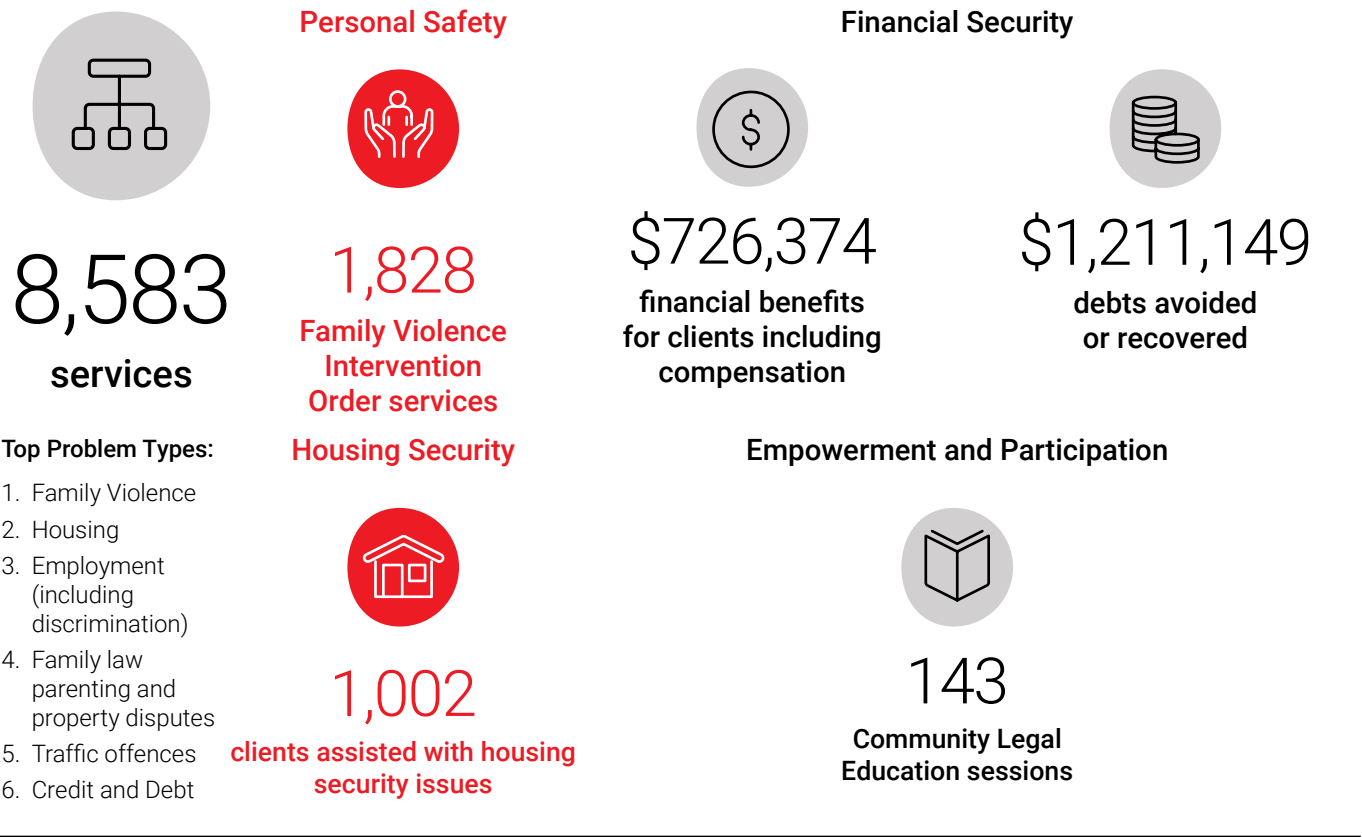
Akbar Shah
Director



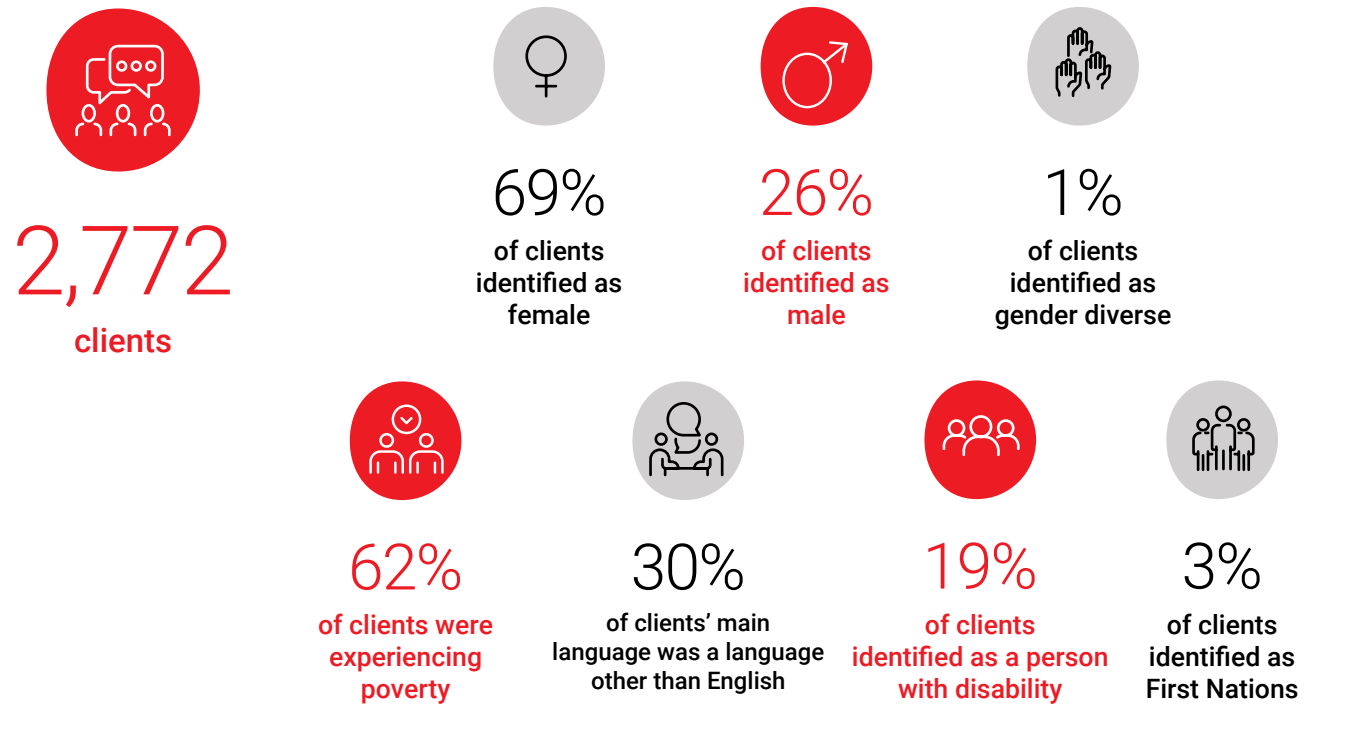
Geoffrey Gedge
Company Secretary

Our Impact 24–25

HOW WE HELP



WHO WE HELP





Reconciliation Action Plan



We are currently implementing our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2024-6. Our plan creates the framework to deepen our impact through strategic partnering, innovative projects and ongoing learning and development.

This year, we have taken steps to actively recognise, and learn from First Peoples' cultures, histories and knowledge by celebrating and participating in National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week and Reconciliation Week events both internally and externally. Our internal events included screening the powerful documentary, *In My Blood It Runs* to amplify evidence-based restorative youth justice solutions and the campaign to raise the age of criminality based on lived experiences of First Peoples.

We also look forward to better embedding First Peoples' knowledge and history in our organisational policies in collaboration with our Cultural Safety & Inclusion and Climate Emergency Working Groups. By hosting an all-staff event

at the Torch Gallery, we are encouraging deeper reflection and have centered First People's storytelling where possible.

In recognition that the law has been a crucial element of maintaining the ongoing impacts of colonisation on First Peoples, we remain firmly committed to the Victorian Treaty and Truth Telling process. Following the historic introduction of the Statewide Treaty bill in Victoria, we have publicly pledged our commitment to walking alongside all First Peoples in Victoria for Treaty.

As we strengthen our allyship, we continue to strive for a future in which First People's rights, truth and sovereignty is better respected and First Nations people have true self determination.

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

October 2024–July 2026

REPORT CARD

Here is our report card on our RAP. We have used traffic lights to show our progress.

● On Track
 ● Under way
 ● Not started

RELATIONSHIPS

Westjustice believes relationships are central to reconciliation. We intend to create new and deepen existing relationships over the course of this RAP. Further, we intend to support and champion self-determined solutions to the problems experienced by First Nations people. We intend to support, learn from and work with First Nations legal services.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations stakeholders and organisations.	●
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	●
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	●
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	●
5. Establish mechanisms for First Nations communities to inform and influence our service design, strategic direction and actions towards reconciliation.	●
6. Integrate reconciliation aims into our organisational strategy and strategic advocacy.	●

RESPECT

It is a privilege to live and work on the lands of the peoples of the Kulin Nations. We feel proud to live in a country that is home to the oldest, continuous living culture. As an organisation we intend to not just recognise but celebrate and learn from First Nations cultures, histories, and knowledges.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE
7. Support the process of Truth and Treaty.	●
8. Increase understanding, value and recognition of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	●
9. Demonstrate respect to First Nations peoples by observing cultural protocols.	●
10. Build respect for First Nations cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	●
11. Increase visibility of First Nations cultures and histories through our offices.	●
12. Build cultural safety within our workplaces, services, and online spaces.	●

OPPORTUNITIES

It is often easier to stay with the status quo, to not disrupt. However, as an organisation we know that there is an urgent need to disrupt colonial and racist systems and that affirmative action is required to ensure equal opportunities.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE
13. Improve employment outcomes by increasing First Nations recruitment, retention, and professional development.	●
14. Reduce the criminalisation of First Nations children and young people.	●
15. Increase First Nations supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	●
16. Improve the accessibility and cultural safety of our services for First Nations community members and clients.	●
17. Establish and continue the RAP Committee.	●
18. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	●
19. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	●
20. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	●





Child Safe Standards and Anti-Discrimination

REPORT CARD

Here is our report card. We have used traffic lights to show our progress.

● On Track
 ● Under way
 ● Not started

STANDARD NUMBER	DESCRIPTION OF STANDARD	PROGRESS
Standard 1	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.	●
Standard 2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.	●
Standard 3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.	●
Standard 4	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.	●
Standard 5	Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.	●
Standard 6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.	●
Standard 7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.	●
Standard 8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.	●
Standard 9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.	●
Standard 10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.	●
Standard 11	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.	●

Anti Racism

REPORT CARD

Here is our report card. We have used traffic lights to show our progress.

● On Track ● Under way ● Not started

ALLYSHIP & RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTIONS	PROGRESS
Allyship	(a) Our Voice: We will speak up when we see racism happening by institutions, to colleagues and clients.	●
	(b) Community Voice: We will relay or amplify community voices when our communities are experiencing racism.	●
	(c) Allyship with racialized communities: We will demonstrate allyship with racialized communities	●
	(d) Agent for Change: We will advocate to change systems, laws and processes that discriminate against racialized people	●

SHOW LEADERSHIP

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTIONS	PROGRESS
Leadership	(a) Anti-racism training for management: Our leadership team will undertake training to educate themselves about the harms of racism and how to be leaders in this space	●
	(b) Dissemination of information: Our leadership team will show leadership by regularly sharing information with staff	●
	(c) Internal policies and procedures will be in place to support this commitment.	●





ANTI RACISM REPORT CARD

INVEST

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTIONS	PROGRESS
Invest in Culturally and Racialized Communities	(a) Recruitment: We will invest in racialized communities by reviewing recruitment processes to ensure that our employment opportunities are accessible to all communities, especially racialized communities, utilising a multi-dimensional/intersectional approach.	●
	(b) Procurement: We will invest in racialized communities by reviewing our procurement strategy and making sure that it is values and purpose aligned.	●
	(c) Investment in grass roots community organisations: We will invest in racialized communities by building the capacity of grass roots community organisations.	●
	(d) Strategic Client work focused on investing in racialized communities – we will invest in racialized communities by using our resources to assist clients who have experienced race discrimination	●

DATA

AREA OF FOCUS	ACTIONS	PROGRESS
Collection of data	(a) Invest in the data, monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that we are capturing the information to support our above commitments.	●
	(b) Regularly review our current systems and determine effectiveness.	●

Workers Rights Program



The Year That Was

In 2024-25, the Workers' Rights Program delivered five employment and discrimination law services: the Youth Employment Program (YEP) for under 25s; International Students Employment and Accommodation Legal Service (ISEALS) with Study Melbourne; Restoring Financial Safety for people experiencing family and gender-based violence; the Settlement Justice Partnership for newly arrived migrants and refugees; and the Equality Law Service (ELS) for people who have experienced workplace sexual harassment or discrimination.

A major milestone was opening the Working Women's Centre Victoria (WWCV), in consortium with SMLS, Women's Legal Service Victoria, and Northern Community Legal Service on 1 August 2024, which more than doubled our capacity to help working women and non-binary people. Westjustice lawyers now deliver WWCV advice, information and casework services across the entire Western region of Victoria out to the South Australian Border. We ensure our regional and rural catchments have in-person legal clinics and CLE through regional roadshows in Geelong, Warrnambool, Ballarat, Horsham and Ararat.

We continued our outreach ELS clinic at Co-health in Footscray to ensure migrant and refugee workers can access a lawyer when they visit their GP, and presented at workshops for the WorkWell Respect Network with Women4STEM and the Australian Hotels Association Victoria

on workplace sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and reporting mechanisms.

We participated in the Workplace Justice Visa Pilot as an Accredited Third-Party certifier of claims and continued to advocate for temporary migrant workers' visa protections.

We completed our VLF "Equality Law Capability" research project – investigating the understanding and knowledge of migrant communities in the West in relation to discrimination and sexual harassment. We are implementing the recommendations to improve accessibility and cultural safety of the ELS.

We released our YEP Impact Report "**How Australia's Employment Laws are Failing Young People: Youth Employment Program Impact and Insights Report**" making recommendations to reduce young worker exploitation. We lodged a submission on reform of Non Disclosure Agreements (NDA) as part of the WWCV and advocated for strictly regulated use of NDAs. We continued our involvement in the Pathways in Place Action Network in developing resources to improve the employment opportunities for young people in Brimbank.

Thanks to our supporters: Pro Bono Firms: Maddocks, Slater and Gordon, Clayton Utz, Gilbert + Tobin, Vialto Partners, Maurice Blackburn; Pro Bono Counsel: Ester Fain-Valentin, Nilanka Goonetillake, and Declan Murphy ; Volunteer Imogen Szumer; and Workers Compensation referral firms: Gordon Legal, Zaparas Lawyers and Shine Lawyers.



Jennifer Jones
Director



WORKERS RIGHTS PROGRAM

420
clients

585
services

1,327
attendees at
77 CLE activities

\$346,127
financial benefits
to clients including
money recovered and
compensation



This year has seen significant changes and important developments across Westjustice and Our Team.



Children and Young People's Rights Program



The Year That Was

Our School Lawyer Program expanded from 4 to 6 campuses and completed an external evaluation. We also continued assertive legal outreach to children living in Anglicare-run residential care homes in Melbourne's West and welcomed Allen and Clark's positive evaluation of YCPEIP, a project we co-lead with Victoria Police and VLA.

Youth Law Clinics continue to be in high demand, servicing an unmet need for young people in the west. We're exploring options to run YLC more sustainably via further funding and pro bono partnerships.

Into its 4th year, TARGET ZERO is working towards its shared 10-year goal of ending the criminalisation and over-representation of western suburbs young people in the criminal justice system. The problem is complex, and our strong 31-partner coalition is working collectively to identify and tackle the root causes, including early prevention family support, improving school transitions and minimising reliance on police as first responders. We launched and have screened our powerful 'Never too Late' mini documentary.

We also continue co-convening SJ4YP and energised to implement our new strategy and enabling all Victorian children and young people to have great lives.

We were thrilled by the announcement of free public transport for students in 2026 and to see our advocacy over the years have an impact.

The legal needs of children in residential care are complex and the access to justice barriers they face are immense and we are committed to deepening our work with partners and helping children to thrive in care and post-care.



Anoushka Jeronimus
Director



We welcomed Youth Now into the CYPRP team in 2025 and are excited by what their expertise is bringing to our work. We were also excited to continue partnering with VLA and employed a dedicated lawyer to support young people and their families with citizenship needs, building on the successful pilot project.



601
clients

1,572
services

31%
of clients were
experiencing
poverty

654
criminal law
services

Economic & Housing Rights Program



The Year That Was

The Economic and Housing Rights Team's vision is a Western Melbourne community in which people can participate meaningfully in social and economic systems. We have four teams:

- Consumer & Settlement Justice (working with recently-arrived people and other areas of disadvantage to ensure fairer market access to essential goods and services).
 - Financial Safety (working with women escaping family violence to overcome the repercussions of economic abuse).
 - Tenancy (working across Westjustice's key cohorts to avert homelessness or unsafe rental housing situations, and fight for renter rights with legal and social work interventions).
 - The Burmese Financial Counselling Clinic, our long standing Friday opportunity for members of the Communities of Burma to liaise with a community worker and financial counsellor.
- RFS are also working in tandem with McAuley Community Services for Women, Barwon Community Legal Service and Meli on delivering Victoria's first Safe At Home response to keep women house with timely legal, social and financial interventions in the Barwon area.
 - The EHR team informed an independent review into billing failures by Greater Western Water and provided a disadvantaged consumer voice.
 - The team fed practical and evidence-informed examples into Victoria's Residential Tenancies Act reforms, a new General Insurance Code, and Australia's new Scams Prevention Framework.
 - In the coming year, we hope to find ways for our place-based partnerships to integrate the excellent work of the organisation's other impact areas, and to broaden our scope to include support for social security and NDIS matters.

Systemic and Project Highlights

- Westjustice launched Restoring Financial Safety: A Roadmap to Recovery in mid-2025. The report was a sequel to our first Restoring Financial Safety report in 2021 and laid out the findings of providing an economic abuse response in both Orange Door and refuge settings, potential cost avoidances, and the structure for a statewide model.



Joseph Nunweek
Director





824
clients

1,620
services

41%
of clients' main
language was a
language other than English

\$1,432,959
financial benefits to
clients including money
recovered and
compensation



Women & Gender Diverse People's Rights Program



The Year That Was

Our team of lawyers offer legal advice appointments during business hours and fortnightly after-hours support provided by our dedicated volunteer lawyers. We welcome self-referrals and referrals from internal and external partners from community organisations. Our duty lawyers service two of the busiest courts in Victoria, being Sunshine and Werribee Magistrates' Courts, and provide critical assistance in the family violence list through pre-court engagement and in-court assistance. Our Health Justice Support for Families partnership with Werribee Mercy Hospital and Wyndham City Council's Enhanced Maternal and Child Health team, allows us to reach pre and postnatal birthing parents experiencing family violence in key health spaces to promote access legal services early and safely. We completed our two year evaluation report for this program.

We also provide ongoing representation to clients through strategic casework, guiding clients through negotiation and court processes to achieve safe, just outcomes. In response to the housing crisis, our Safe Settlement: Advancing Housing Justice initiative addresses homelessness post-family violence and expands our focus on equitable property settlements.

We were awarded the Victoria Law Foundation Major Grant to conduct research alongside La Trobe University and five CLC partners about police responses to family violence. We prepared a written submission and gave evidence to the Federal Inquiry into Family Violence Orders parliamentary inquiry. We contributed to submissions about Family Violence and Personal Safety Reforms including the Victorian Law Reform Commission's project to continue protection for children who turn 18. We contributed to the establishment and planning for the new Wyndham Law Courts.

We have expanded our community reach by forming relationships with key community service providers and leaders to support our clients alongside us. We've also continued to strengthen lived experience contribution to our impact.

We also hosted 9 law interns completing their practical legal training.



Cleona Feuerring
Director

WOMEN & GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS PROGRAM

967
clients

2,470
services

95%
of clients were
experiencing
family and
gender-based
violence

1,828
Family Violence
Intervention Order
services provided to
752 clients



Our aim is for women and gender diverse people and their children to be safe from violence and have access to resources to thrive. We deliver holistic legal support to those navigating complex family violence, family law and child protection legal problems.

Our Team



Westjustice welcomed Youth Now into the fold of our services in the past year. Originally founded to support disadvantaged youth who face access barriers to education, training and employment, Youth Now provides holistic and tailored services for young people to build life skills and improve their learning and working lives. The service is a great addition to Westjustice and complements our focus to break down barriers for Children and Young People.



↑ Ellen Flint
Director (People and Culture)



↑ Annette Au Yeung
Director (Learning and Development)

The People & Culture function has further developed the WISED UP way of working introduced by Westjustice in 2023. Made possible by the Strong Foundations grant from the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, WISED UP is developing a positive workplace culture that promotes Wellbeing, Inclusion, Safety, Equity and Diversity (WISED) to support our people achieve an uplift in their performance and potential (UP). When our employees are thriving we are best placed to provide exceptional services to our clients. Some key achievements include:

- Further development of wellbeing supports.
- The creation of our Cultural Safety & Inclusion working group.
- Tailored learning and development initiatives.
- Preparation in the investment of a new Human Resources Information System.

Future focus

The new Human Resources Information System (Employment Hero) will be implemented to provide greater functionality of people processes systems and tools. This includes the introduction of a learning management system, performance reviews and other tools that ensure

greater efficiency, effectiveness and the ability to capture meaningful data.

Due to continued growth, Succession Planning will be a key focus to ensure we meet the service needs of the future and provide our people with development and career pathways to grow with us.

Westjustice will engage with staff to develop an action plan to identify strengths and areas for further development in regard to workplace psychosocial safety and the positive duty to prevent discrimination and harassment. Consistent with the *Victorian Mentally Health Workplaces Framework*, this work will strengthen our focus on employee Wellbeing so our people can perform at their best.

We will continue to embed our WISED UP culture and look forward to measuring the ongoing improvement in staff engagement and wellbeing.

The Practical Legal Trainee (PLT) Program

Building on the success of the PLT pilot program in 2024, the PLT Program underwent consolidation and growth this year with refinements to recruitment, induction and supervision processes. We are on track to grow the program next year, which will expand to include other types of volunteers and placements.



OUR TEAM



In the last financial year:

9

Total number of PLT students who completed the program

2

Impact Areas that hosted a PLT student

4

Paid employment opportunities offered to PLT students afterwards

100%

Survey respondents recommend Westjustice for PLT placement



As one of our PLT students reflected:

“My workload was challenging and manageable. I completed a diverse range of tasks such as preparing and conducting a client intake, drafting engagement letters, chronologies, file notes... The work was challenging but I was always provided with enough information and resources to carry out each assigned task. I was also provided enough feedback on my work to assist with future tasks of the same nature.”

Learning and Development

We are committed to fostering a culturally safe and inclusive workplace through our Organisation-Wide Learning (OWL) program and initiatives. This year, our training focused on enhancing our capabilities in engaging with First Nations communities, strengthening LGBTIQ+ inclusive practices, deepening trauma-informed approaches and culturally responsive approaches, and supporting neurodiversity and autism in the workplace. We also built our capability in safely diffusing individuals who exhibit aggressive behaviour. Looking ahead, we're excited to explore the capability of our new HRIS, which will enhance our learning capability by providing easier access to training resources and will enable more effective tracking of learning outcomes. We also look forward to refining the program through the findings of our inaugural staff learning needs survey.

Policy, Impact and Engagement Team



The Policy, Impact and Engagement team has had a successful year of delivering the commitments in the Westjustice Strategy 2024-27. Through a focus on driving best practice community engagement, data and impact that measures our ability to deliver meaningful life outcomes for people, and informed and strategic policy and advocacy, we have had one of the biggest years to date.

This year, we updated our Strategic Advocacy Policy and Media and Communications Policy to refine advocacy priorities and ensure we are only speaking about the issues of the most significance to our clients and communities. These priorities are informed by all staff, and guide all our interactions with community, government, media and more.

These policies helped inform our successful Westjustice Budget Submission 2025-26 where we conducted close to fifty meetings in support and were successful in achieving renewals to our vital programs and receiving dedicated funding for the School Lawyer Program. We were also proud to have advocated for, trialled and influenced the state-wide rollout of free public transport for young people in Victoria from 1 January 2026.

We continued to build on our community engagement capacity by developing a Westjustice Community Engagement Policy, to ensure a structured and consistent approach to staff engagement with the eclectic and rich communities of Melbourne's West, ensuring that all our interactions are safe, responsive, anti-racist, inclusive and impactful. We also began the work of establishing community advisory groups for all our impact areas, beginning with the Workers' Rights Community Advisory Group. Through these groups, we will make sure that all our work is reflective, responsive and impactful for all our clients.

To ensure that monitoring, evaluation and learning is at the heart of our organisation, we also successfully delivered on our 'Building Data Capability to Maximise Impact' project as part of the Victorian Government's Early Intervention and Investment Framework. Led by a dedicated Data and Impact Program Manager, we built a systemised and consistent approach to data collection and use, built data maturity and capacity across the organisation, and build a deep, reflective understanding of our data including indicators and impact reporting. We also began building a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning framework for Westjustice that allows us to effectively measure

our performance in delivering meaningful life outcomes for Melbourne's West, demonstrating the effectiveness of our services for people and in taking pressure off acute services and achieve significant savings for government.

The Policy, Impact and Engagement team have built a remarkable reputation for Westjustice as a fearless, strategic and informed advocate for the people of Melbourne's West. We aim to continue to build on this reputation by continuing to advocate for a Wyndham Community Services Hub to support the new Wyndham Law Courts opening in November 2025 and for the Westjustice Budget Submission 2026-27.

Our thanks to our funders, the Helen McPherson Smith Trust and the Department of Treasury and Finance.



←
Caitlin Caruana
Director
(Parental Leave)



→
Owen Virtue
Director

Operations, Practice and Finance Team



The past 12 months has continued to be a time of change and development within the Operations, Practice and Finance Team. We welcomed in the team from YouthNow to the organisation, as part of the Children and Young Peoples Rights Program, and have been delighted to assist them with their fantastic work supporting young people through employment readiness and education programs.



 Aaron Osborne
Director

We have continued to improve our office locations working environments, both in regard to operational effectiveness and safety, and are committed to regular review to ensure the spaces are comfortable, welcoming and productive places for our team to work and clients and external stakeholders and partners to visit.

Reflecting on internal systems and processes and learning from feedback provided by the Legal Directorates has given us an opportunity to improve digital systems, reporting processes and internal structures to create less bottlenecks across the organisation and operate in a more streamlined manner to better support the broader team. We will continue to refine these system and process improvements across the next 12 months, to uplift the support capacity for staff and clients alike.

Across the next 12 months we look forward to continuing to develop our Client-led Triage System with the launch and optimisation of our newly designed website, improved safety processes with more robust reporting and risk mitigation tools and strategies and continuing to uplift our internal digital management systems to improve efficiency across the organisation.

The Operations, Practice and Finance Team would like to acknowledge the following funders for their support of our program, Victorian Legal Aid, The Collier Charitable Fund and The Federation of Community Legal Centres.

We would also like to say thank you to the following organisations who have been an integral part of the ongoing operations at Westjustice throughout the past year, HumanIT, Good Financials/ OneFocus, MVA Bennett, Clayton Utz, Maddocks and Jarrah Catering. We greatly appreciate your support.



Finance Report Summary

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

REVENUE AND OTHER INCOME	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Revenue	10,232,099	10,328,021
Other revenue	239,381	131,262
	10,471,480	10,459,283
LESS: EXPENSES	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Employee benefits expense	(8,190,346)	(8,802,167)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(483,086)	(210,689)
Lease expense	(127,856)	(47,646)
Occupancy expense	(117,344)	(165,982)
Other expenses	(1,360,757)	(1,277,041)
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	192,091	(44,242)
Net assets acquired from YouthNow Inc.	690,000	–
Surplus (Deficit) before income tax expense	882,091	(44,242)
Other comprehensive income for the year	–	–
Total comprehensive income for the year	882,091	(44,242)



BALANCE SHEET

CURRENT ASSETS	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Cash and cash equivalents	3,391,060	3,249,338
Trade and other receivables	152,206	62,632
Other financial assets	2,936,849	1,810,691
Other assets	182,103	162,268
Total current assets	6,662,218	5,284,929

NON CURRENT ASSETS	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Other financial asset	189,184	189,184
Property, plant and equipment	913,210	1,097,568
Right-of-use assets	1,238,476	1,422,761
Other assets	203,670	93,853
Total non current assets	2,544,540	2,803,366
Total assets	9,206,758	8,088,295

CURRENT LIABILITIES	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Trade and other payables	709,817	761,465
Lease liabilities	343,011	231,387
Provisions	878,692	722,011
Other liabilities	2,370,397	2,178,990
Total current liabilities	4,301,917	3,893,853

NON CURRENT LIABILITIES	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Lease liabilities	1,333,959	1,631,108
Provisions	247,698	122,241
Total non current liabilities	1,581,657	1,753,349
Total liabilities	5,883,574	5,647,202
Net Assets	3,323,184	2,441,093

EQUITY	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Reserves	871,400	250,000
Retained earnings	2,451,784	2,191,093
Total equity	3,323,184	2,441,093

Thank you and Acknowledgments



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