

Vision:

Westjustice believes in a just and fair society where the law and its processes don't discriminate against people, and where those in need have ready and easy access to legal education, information, advice, casework services, systemic advocacy and reform.

Purpose:

To service the legal needs in the West in a way that addresses the systemic nature of disadvantage.

Indigenous Engagement

Our commitment to reconciliation

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land. We acknowledge the ancestors, elders and families of the Kulin nations. We pay our respects to the deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and custodianship of Country. We acknowledge this land as a place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal, and that the Kulin peoples' living culture has a fundamental role in the life of this region.

As we work to achieve a just and fair society we acknowledge that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and underrepresented in relation to access to justice and fairness within our legal framework. We will continue to address this inequity and provide a culturally safe place for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients to access legal services, education and enhance their human rights.

We have developed an Indigenous Engagement Strategy and we are embarking on our first Reconciliation Action Plan. Our aim is to deepen our understanding and impact. We will work with the communities to determine how we can direct our services to address unmet legal need and injustices and inequities within our legal system.

Impact Areas

1. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

We recognise that culturally and linguistically diverse people experience disadvantage as a result of exclusion and racism.

Aim: Our aim is to assist and empower these communities to identify and enforce their legal rights and understand their responsibilities through case work, community development and education. Our case work and educational programs inform our reform agenda and systemic impact work.

Key Priorities:

- Address adverse impact caused by implied and express racism.
- Expose the practices of organisations, people and systems taking advantage of newly arrived people and advocate for change.
- Correct the systems causing financial exclusion and disadvantage of newly arrived people.
- Identify and address labour exploitation and unsafe workplace practices.
- Provide a culturally safe and accessible services for our client groups.

2. People experiencing family and gender-based violence

We recognise that family and gender-based violence are serious community concerns that disproportionately affect women, gender diverse people and children.

Aim: Our aim is to enable and assist these groups to respond strongly to family and gender-based violence and its effects. This includes providing targeted legal services, addressing injustice in systems and institutions, and engaging in evidence based systemic advocacy.

Key Priorities:

- Advocate for a fairer and more equitable justice system by addressing the current inadequacies and challenges.
- Address misidentification and criminalisation of victims as perpetrators.
- Remove economic abuse and restore financial safety and independence for those experiencing family and gender-based violence.
- Provide early intervention opportunities.
- Identify and address causes of family and gender-based violence.

3. Young People

We recognise that young people (10 to 25 years inclusive) are marginalised and often excluded from the legal system and youth support services.

Aim: We aim to offer holistic, youth centred, placed based services as a response to a legal system that is often not appropriately designed for our youth. We support young people to exercise their agency and legal rights in their family life, community, and society. Our case work and educational programs provide the evidence for our reform agenda and systemic impact advocacy.

Key Priorities:

- Divert children and young people away from the criminal justice system, including raising the age.
- Advocate for a fairer and more equitable system that leads to better access to services.
- Address discrimination, workplace exploitation and inequality affecting children and young people with a focus on the systemic drivers of disproportionate involvement with the justice system.
- Amplify the voice of children and young people and enhance agency through education and engagement.
- Collaborate with and influence stakeholders to maximise potential for positive life outcomes for young people.

4. Economic Injustice

We recognise that we have an intrinsically inequitable economic and legal system, a consequence of which includes the criminalisation of poverty.

Aim: Our aim is to assist people to navigate and enforce their rights within the justice system and effect fundamental and necessary improvements. Our case work and educational programs provide the evidence for our reform agenda and systemic impact advocacy.

Our priorities:

- Challenge organisations that take advantage of people experiencing hardship or barriers to accessing economic justice.
- Improve the systems, policies and procedures of government, industry and other parties which create economic injustice.
- Investigate pathways to promote and protect fundamental human rights including the right to safe housing, access to food and utilities.
- Enhance agency to improve people's ability to navigate, legal, housing and financial systems.
- Explore methods by which to advocate for a fair and generous safety net.

Accessibility

We understand that our clients often find it difficult to access supports, so we provide placed based, multidisciplinary services at targeted locations where our clients attend for other purposes. Therefore, ensuring safe and easy access and limiting multiple storytelling and referral fatigue.

Review and consultation

We acknowledge that our limited resources prevent us from addressing all relevant areas of legal support, education, community development, and systemic impact. We will endeavour to continue to be informed by the needs of our communities and we will review our priorities and impact areas annually.