

Annual Report 2015–16



Aboriginal Family
Violence Prevention
& Legal Service Victoria
**Standing Firm Against
Family Violence**



*Sisters Day Out –
making a difference since 2007*

The background is a solid orange color with a pattern of lighter orange polka dots. On the left and right sides, there are faint, light-colored silhouettes of people in traditional dance poses, with arms raised and legs in a wide stance.

Acknowledgment

The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria), its staff and directors would like to acknowledge the First Peoples and traditional owners of the lands and waterways on which we work and live and on which our clients across Victoria work and live. We pay our respects to our elders both past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's within our boundaries from whatever Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island nation you may come from.

Thank you

Thank you to our funders and other supporters

We express our appreciation to the following:

Federal and State Government funding

- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria
- Department of Justice and Regulation, Victoria
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Infrastructure and Development

Non-Government funding

- Victoria Legal Aid
- Victorian Legal Services Board
- Australian Communities Foundation
- Cancer Council Victoria
- Oxfam Australia
- City of Yarra
- City of Melton
- Harvard Club of Victoria
- Southern Metro Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee
- Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative
- Relationships Australia Victoria

Pro bono and other supporters

- Lander & Rogers
- John Burke
- Telstra Corporation through the Phone Card and Recharge Assistance Programs
- Margaret Portelli

We also acknowledge the many donors who have supported us during 2015–2016.

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About us

Established over 14 years ago, FVPLS Victoria is an Aboriginal community controlled organisation that provides culturally safe and holistic assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander¹ victims/survivors of family violence and sexual assault. FVPLS Victoria provides frontline legal assistance and early intervention/prevention, including through providing community legal education to the Aboriginal community, the legal, Aboriginal and domestic violence sectors.

With support from philanthropic sources, FVPLS Victoria also undertakes policy and law reform work to identify systemic issues in need of reform and advocates for strengthened law and justice outcomes for Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence and sexual assault.

FVPLS Victoria is open to Aboriginal women, children and men who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, family violence or sexual assault, as well as non-Aboriginal carers of Aboriginal children who are victims/survivors of family violence. FVPLS Victoria is not gender specific, however, at last count, 93% of our clients were Aboriginal women.

FVPLS Victoria's legal services include advice, court representation and ongoing casework in the areas of:

- family violence intervention orders;
- family law;
- victims of crime assistance;
- child protection; and
- where resources permit, other civil law matters connected with a client's experience of family violence such as: police complaints, housing, Centrelink, child support and infringement matters.

FVPLS Victoria has a holistic, intensive client service model where each client is assisted by a lawyer and paralegal support worker to address the multitude of interrelated legal and non-legal issues our clients face.

FVPLS Victoria's paralegal support workers, many of whom are Aboriginal women, provide additional emotional support, court support and referral to ensure the client is linked into culturally safe counselling and support services to address the underlying social issues giving rise to the client's legal problem and experience of family violence. This may include, for example, assistance with housing, drug and alcohol misuse, mental health, parenting, financial and other supports.

As an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, FVPLS Victoria is governed by an Aboriginal Board and has a range of systems and policies in place to ensure we provide culturally safe services in direct response to community need.

FVPLS Victoria's chief executive officer, Antoinette Braybrook, is also the Convenor of the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum ("National FVPLS Forum"), and FVPLS Victoria hosts the Secretariat of this Forum. The National FVPLS Forum comprises 14 FVPLS organisations across the country and is an important mechanism to raise issues concerning Aboriginal family violence on the national stage.

FVPLS Victoria also has special consultative status to the United Nations Economic, and Social Council (ECOSOC), which allows us to elevate issues affecting Aboriginal victims/survivors to the highest level.

¹ Hereinafter referred to as "Aboriginal"





FVPLS Victoria Directors

Marion Hansen, Chairperson

(appointed 2002)

Marion has worked in various positions within the Aboriginal community for more than 40 years. She is currently employed by the Department of Health Southern Region as Coordinator, Aboriginal Health. Marion has taken a lead role in advocating for the prevention of family violence in Aboriginal communities. Marion's leadership in this area is well recognised through her representation on key state-wide forums.

Karen Bryant, Deputy Chairperson

(appointed 2002)

Karen currently works as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at the Northern Hospital. Previously she worked for many years at the only Aboriginal women's refuge in Victoria. Karen is a well-respected leader in the Aboriginal community.

Damien Goodall, Secretary

(appointed 2002)

Damien is a proud Koori man who is the Family Services Coordinator at Yoowinna Wurnalung Healing Service, based in Lakes Entrance, which provides programs and

services to support Aboriginal victims affected by family violence. Damien has extensive experience in the areas of men's programs and the safety of Aboriginal women and children. Damien is well respected in the Aboriginal community for the work he undertakes in the prevention of family violence.

Jaynaya Williams

(appointed 2007)

Jaynaya is a young Aboriginal woman who works for the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO). Jaynaya is considered a role model for the work that she undertakes in respect of family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Bernice Clarke

(appointed 2013)

Bernice is a Gunditjmara/Kirrae woman. She was the driving force in setting up the Gunditjmara Co-operative in the late 1970s-early 1980s. Bernice is currently on the board at the Gunditjmara Co-operative and has extensive knowledge on how a board should operate. She has also completed a Certificate IV in Business Governance.

Chairperson's Report

This financial year commenced on a high with the official launch of our new head office in Abbotsford during NAIDOC Week. The building was purchased with assistance from a grant from the Indigenous Land Corporation last financial year and the launch was the culmination of an enormous amount of hard work and a long-standing vision of our Board to occupy our own space, expand our services, offer improved amenities to our clients and create a multi-use Koori Women's Hub.

Of historic significance this year was the release of the findings and recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence ("Family Violence Royal Commission") in March 2016.

The Family Violence Royal Commission raised unprecedented public awareness about the issue of family violence in Victoria. The community has become more aware of the prevalence and impact of family violence than ever before, yet awareness of the over-representation of Aboriginal communities in the context of family violence remains low.

The statistics are still shocking – even to those of us that work in the field and confront them daily.

Aboriginal women in Australia are 34 times more likely to be assaulted from family violence and 10 times more likely to die from that assault than other women. Family violence is a national epidemic and at the centre of the crisis are Aboriginal women.

Being the only Aboriginal-specific organisation working exclusively with victims/survivors of family violence has meant the Family Violence Royal Commission has brought greater public and media attention to our service, creating increased demand for our involvement in forums, conferences, inquiries and committees and greater demand for our client services. The Family Violence Royal Commission also highlighted, without any ambiguity, the absolute necessity of early intervention and prevention programs.

Despite the alarming – and escalating – statistics and the striking acknowledgement by the Family Violence Royal Commission that FVPLS Victoria has developed successful and trusted early intervention and prevention programs, ongoing funding for our early intervention and prevention programs again remained elusive this financial year.

As the Family Violence Royal Commission highlighted in its final report in the context of our *Sisters Day Out*, *Dilly Bag* and *Dilly Bag: The Journey* programs:

"It is of great concern that programs that clearly support women are left to such uncertainty. The Commission is of the view that these sorts of programs show the way that family violence early intervention can be creative, non-judgmental and effective. These are the ways of working that we need to see more of, not less. As a priority the Victorian Government should ensure that early intervention

and prevention programs that have the confidence of the community and have been positively evaluated receive ongoing funding so that this work can be undertaken with certainty and scaled up to the level required."

Despite the ongoing funding challenges, FVPLS Victoria continued in its commitment to deliver highly effective community legal education and early intervention and prevention programs to support our women and build capacity within the service sector during the 2015–16 year.

In 2015–16 FVPLS Victoria's integrated services touched more than 6,000 people. We provided legal services to over 600 clients (with more than 900 children), and delivered community legal education, early intervention and prevention activities to almost 1,800 community members and over 1,000 mainstream services staff.

This included nine *Sisters Day Out* workshops, including our 100th *Sisters Day Out*, two *Dilly Bag: The Journey* workshops and seven *Young Luv* workshops.

Through necessity, and by virtue of the dedication and commitment of our staff, FVPLS Victoria also conducted activities to raise funds to save *Sisters Day Out* so that this program could continue.

Much work went into the development of the Koori Women's Hub during the year as the project moved from the consultation to the implementation phase. The Hub is a culturally safe space for women to reduce social isolation, build resilience and break down barriers to accessing support, including legal support. It is an innovative example of how to deliver a holistic and accessible service to Aboriginal women.

With our dedicated new head office, enhanced space and the commencement of operations in the Hub, this past year has seen FVPLS Victoria deliver a more comprehensive service to our clients than ever before. It has been incredibly exciting and rewarding to see our operations approaching the vision our Board held many years ago.

I am immensely proud of the great efforts of the FVPLS Victoria team in making this long-standing dream a reality. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the members of the Koori Women's Hub steering committee, who generously gave their time and shared their expertise and insights. I would particularly acknowledge the tireless work and commitment of our former Hub Manager, Alisoun Neville. Alisoun spearheaded the work of the steering committee and her dedication was instrumental in progressing the Hub from concept to implementation.

The relentless work of our dedicated chief executive officer, Antoinette Braybrook, again went unabated this year. Antoinette's presence was in demand more than ever this year and she gave numerous speeches, presentations and appearances across the country. Among other speaking engagements, Antoinette gave a



keynote address at the Long Walk Luncheon in October 2015. This long-running annual event celebrates the culture and resilience of Aboriginal peoples and this year the event raised awareness of family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Antoinette continued to act as the Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum and ensured that national – and international – advocacy on behalf of Aboriginal women continued throughout the year.

FVPLS Victoria's participation in international events and campaigns, such as the OXFAM *Pacific Violence Against Women and Girls Learning Event* in the Solomon Islands and the 16 Days of Activism, helped to both raise the profile of FVPLS Victoria, as well as broadening the networks of support and advocacy for Indigenous women nationally and globally. FVPLS Victoria has long supported the 16 Days of Activism but this year marked the first year that FVPLS Victoria ran its own campaign in recognition of the importance – and power – of joining hands with our sisters not just nationally, but internationally.

I conclude by congratulating all the dedicated staff at FVPLS Victoria for their work and passionate commitment. These past 12 months have indeed been more demanding than ever but we must also remember to celebrate our achievements.

As always, it is important to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of my fellow directors. I am tremendously proud of the important work FVPLS Victoria carries out. Providing legal representation and holistic support to the women who most require it is one of the most important roles I can imagine and I know how proud the directors and I are of this organisation.

The women we work with are courageous – survivors – strong and resilient women who deserve, as we all do, the right to live their lives without fear and without violence. Our organisation will continue to demand that the voices of Koori women and children be heard, and that their rights to culturally safe services be met.

At the same time as we launched our new office this year, FVPLS Victoria simultaneously launched its new logo, based on Wanda Bargo's artwork, *Sister Spirit*. The image represents the strength, creativity and resilience of Aboriginal women and reflects the freedom and power that we, the staff of FVPLS Victoria, strive to release in the women we work with.

**Marion Hansen
Chairperson**



Highlights

In the last 12 months we have achieved:

Koori Women's Hub

- Secured funding to develop our new premises for the Koori Women's Hub, creating a large room for drop-ins, training, events and activities
- Established new partnerships for the Koori Women's Hub, hosting the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women and Women's Legal Service to better meet the needs of our women in community
- Our chief executive officer, Antoinette Braybrook, was selected to join a prestigious fellowship program at Harvard Business School

Community impact

- Our lawyers provided more than 1,400 casework services to more than 600 clients and 900 children
- *Sisters Day Out* reached over 1,000 women, bringing this to over 8,000 women since 2007
- Our regional offices continued their crucial work in Mildura, Gippsland and Barwon South West, working closely with local organisations and community networks

Standing firm for our Sisters

- In the face of ongoing funding uncertainty, *Sisters Day Out* continued to deliver, garnering support in community to save this vital program
- *Sisters Day Out* held its 100th workshop, gathering over 400 Aboriginal women across Victoria to celebrate this milestone
- Our fundraising event, *An Evening with Sisters Day Out*, attracted over 450 people and raised \$40,000 for the program
- The Family Violence Royal Commission recognised *Sisters Day Out* as a best practice early intervention and primary prevention program for Aboriginal communities

Expanding our reach

- Developed our new *Young Luv* program to better engage girls



and young women and promote healthy relationships, while securing funding to continue this important work

- Expanded our community legal education and legal outreach work, with monthly workshops at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
- Extended our reach through a duty lawyer being rostered at Melbourne Magistrates' Court

Strong Aboriginal workforce

- Increased Aboriginal employment across our organisation

Advocacy for systemic change

- With the help of our advocacy, the Family Violence Royal Commission put the needs of Aboriginal women at the centre of its report
- We welcomed a commitment of \$25.7 million in dedicated funding for Aboriginal communities, including for early intervention and prevention programs
- We helped drive reform through high level political engagement with Ministers, Parliamentary Committees and senior public officials at the Commonwealth and Victorian levels

Growing our national voice

- Our chief executive officer continued her role as Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum and ensured violence against Aboriginal women remained in the national debate through media campaigns and public engagements
- We contributed to the *Redfern Statement*, a landmark occasion where national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks and organisations presented an election manifesto across the portfolio

As we conclude our 14th year of operation, FVPLS Victoria remains a 'force to be reckoned with'!

The Royal Commission into Family Violence

FVPLS Victoria's early intervention and prevention programs praised as best practice.

“These are the ways of working that we need to see more of, not less”

Royal Commission into Family Violence

A defining moment

The release of the findings and recommendations of the Family Violence Royal Commission marked a defining moment in Australia, particularly for the victims/survivors of family violence, many of whom have suffered in silence for far too long. It was also an historic moment for those of us who advocate for the rights of victims/survivors and have toiled for years to seek recognition of, and give a voice to, their experiences, their fears, and their legal and cultural needs.

FVPLS Victoria's extensive submission to the Family Violence Royal Commission in June 2015 and the evidence provided by our chief executive officer, Antoinette Braybrook, cemented our reputation as a best practice provider of culturally safe and holistic assistance for Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence and sexual assault.

The Family Violence Royal Commission expressly recognised and strongly denounced the disproportionate level of family violence and sexual assault against Aboriginal women and their children. The report was unequivocal in its statement that the violence experienced by Aboriginal women “is unacceptable. It is also preventable... Clearly we are failing these women and children”. To our great satisfaction, the Victorian Government committed to implementing all of the Family Violence Royal Commission's recommendations by working closely with Aboriginal victims/survivors, including through FVPLS Victoria. FVPLS Victoria welcomed both the Family Violence Royal Commission's findings and the Victorian Government's response.

The Family Violence Royal Commission made a number of important recommendations with respect to funding for community controlled organisations, cultural competence of mainstream organisations and improvements in data collection. One exceptionally positive outcome of the Family Violence Royal Commission's report was the recognition of FVPLS Victoria's early intervention and prevention programs as best practice and a call for “more... not less” of these types of programs.

FVPLS Victoria's prevention and early intervention programs praised as “best practice”

The Family Violence Royal Commission highlighted that FVPLS's *Sisters Day Out*, *Dilly Bag* and *Dilly Bag: The Journey* programs had all been evaluated in 2014 and found they had “significant beneficial impacts on participants’

immediate wellbeing and access to services, and important medium and long-term impacts”. It observed that a further interim evaluation of our programs as a component of Koori Community Safety Projects by the Australian Institute of Criminology “found that they demonstrated leading practice in design of Aboriginal family violence prevention programs such as cultural grounding and inclusive community approaches”.

The Family Violence Royal Commission emphasised that the participant feedback from *Sisters Day Out* revealed that “more than one-third of participants said the most valuable thing about the event was learning more about family violence services”. Participants also reported “increased awareness of the causes and impacts of family and community violence, and improved knowledge of legal assistance services”.

The Aboriginal-specific recommendations (144–152) covered a vast range of issues facing our communities, noting the “clear connection between the high rates of family violence and the high numbers of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care”. Significantly, the Family Violence Royal Commission recognised that the impacts of under-investment in Aboriginal services such as FVPLS Victoria, combined with increasing demand, has left Aboriginal organisations and communities struggling to cope with the scale of the problem, jeopardising the safety of Aboriginal women and their children. It also found that broad reform of the Court structure – in both administrative and operational terms – is critical to better supporting Aboriginal victims/survivors to access justice.

Progress since release of the recommendations

FVPLS Victoria was heavily involved in the establishment of an implementation framework for the recommendations made by the Family Violence Royal Commission.

As the only holistic, Aboriginal community controlled organisation working exclusively with victims/survivors of family violence, FVPLS Victoria maintained a strong commitment throughout the year to ensuring Aboriginal women's experiences were embedded in the implementation process. Our participation in the following forums throughout the year was critical to building effective and sustainable plans for the implementation of the Family Violence Royal Commission's findings and recommendations.

FVPLS Victoria's chief executive officer, with support from the policy team, is participating as a member of the

following committees and forums in connection with the implementation of the recommendations of the Family Violence Royal Commission:

- Family Violence Steering Committee;
- Aboriginal Family Violence Steering Committee;
- Cross Sectoral Alliance (chaired by Domestic Violence Victoria);
- Aboriginal Co-design Forums (established by the Department of Premier and Cabinet)
- Ministerial Prevention Taskforce; and
- Chief Magistrate's Family Violence Taskforce.

What are the next steps?

In the short term, an urgent investment of funding is required to ensure FVPLS Victoria has the capacity to respond to the recommendations of the Family Violence Royal Commission and meet the needs of Aboriginal women across the state. A sustainable approach to meeting the needs of Aboriginal victims/survivors in the long term needs to be developed, along with a commitment by the Victorian Government to support culturally safe services like ours to meet the growing needs of our communities.

Saving Sisters Day Out – our 100th workshop and fundraiser

In highlighting that “[t]hese [Sisters Day Out] programs have always been reliant on one-off funding”, the Royal Commission into Family Violence stressed that “the Government should prioritise ongoing funding for early intervention and prevention programs such as these.”

Designed by Aboriginal women for Aboriginal women, FVPLS Victoria has been operating *Sisters Day Out* workshops throughout Victoria since 2007, engaging with over 8,000 Aboriginal women. This year alone, over 1,000 Aboriginal women took part in the workshops. *Sisters Day Out* provides a culturally safe space in which Aboriginal women can talk about family violence, discuss the impacts on their communities, and learn what supports are available.

In the 2015–16 year, FVPLS Victoria conducted nine *Sisters Day Out* workshops across the state in Warrnambool, Bairnsdale, Deer Park, Preston, Carlton, Orbost, Heywood and Caroline Springs. An additional workshop at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, supported by Corrections Victoria, allowed sisters in prison the opportunity to take part.

A vital component of the *Sisters Day Out* model is the involvement of community agencies and service providers. Family violence support services, health services, community legal services, Centrelink, Aboriginal corporations, parenting support services, elderly support services, Relationships Australia, Cancer Council, Breastscreen and Papscreen Victoria have been amongst those who have attended workshops this year. Their involvement provides an opportunity to interact informally with the participants and share information relating to family violence (and their particular services) in a culturally safe and trusted space. Papscreen Victoria deserves special note for funding acclaimed Aboriginal actress, Tammy Anderson, to perform “The Great Walls of Vagina”, a Papscreen comedy at many of our *Sisters Day Out* workshops during the year. The play was a huge hit.



This year marked the 100th *Sisters Day Out* workshop in Melbourne. A record attendance of over 400 Aboriginal women travelled from across the state and honoured the strength of Aboriginal culture and the resilience of Aboriginal women.

The celebrations culminated in a fundraiser *An Evening with Sisters Day Out*, during the week of International Women's Day in March 2016. More than just a gala dinner, it was recognition that Aboriginal women's lives matter and that there is hope for a future without violence.

Over 100 Aboriginal community members were sponsored to attend this exciting event, including elders and victims/survivors from across Victoria. The guests joined together with politicians (including Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Natalie Hutchins and Federal MP, Shane Neumann), state government staff and family violence sector workers to enjoy the gala dinner. Hosted by the acclaimed Anita Heiss and with standout performances by Casey Donovan and DJ Sage, the evening raised an incredible \$40,000 to help save *Sisters Day Out*.

Among the guest speakers was Andrew Jackomos, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, who emphasised the vital role that *Sisters Day Out* plays and the imperative of government providing ongoing funding to sustain the program.

"Sisters Day Out has evolved and survived because it is homegrown, community-based and designed and delivered by Koori women for Koori women. Despite the lack of ongoing government funding, Sisters Day Out has become part of our cultural landscape. The more girls and women empowered at Sisters Day Out, the more our young people will know what a healthy and respectful relationship is, and the flow on effect will be less babies and children in out-of-home care."

Andrew Jackomos, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.

Funders of *An Evening with Sisters Day Out* included the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Australian Community Foundation Towards a Just Society, the Department of Justice and the City of Yarra. FVPLS extends its gratitude to all those who helped make this event such a vibrant milestone.

We are truly proud that *Sisters Day Out* has been lauded by two pre-eminent sources. The Family Violence Royal Commission recognised *Sisters Day Out* as providing best practice early intervention and primary prevention for Aboriginal communities. Our *Sisters Day Out* model had earlier been highlighted as world's best practice by Professor Megan Davis at the 2012 United Nations Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva. That the organisation has achieved this recognition without an ongoing funding source is testament to the tenacity and ability of all those involved in its design and delivery and their commitment to meeting the demand of Aboriginal women for the culturally safe space that *Sisters Day Out* provides.



Community legal education, early intervention and prevention

FVPLS Victoria delivered a suite of significant community legal education and early intervention and prevention programs during the year, despite yet again facing enormous funding challenges. During 2015–16, nearly 1,800 community members attended *Sisters Day Out*, *Dilly Bag: The Journey*, *Young Luv* and Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (“Sexual Abuse Royal Commission”) workshops.

FVPLS Victoria’s role as the only holistic, Aboriginal community controlled organisation working exclusively with victims/survivors of family violence gives us a unique responsibility to identify all the tools in the continuum of services required to address and reduce family violence. Community engagement, legal education and early intervention and prevention are crucial components of FVPLS Victoria’s work to reduce Aboriginal women’s vulnerability to family violence.

Sharing our expertise

FVPLS Victoria successfully delivered training sessions in a diverse range of community and government agencies during 2015–16, including the Domestic Violence Resource Centre (DVRC), Women’s Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE), hospitals and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

These professional development and training sessions are designed to build capacity within the mainstream service sector. We see it as vital that professionals working with Aboriginal clients, such as health practitioners, lawyers and agency staff across the community and private sectors continually develop their skills in order to work effectively and respectfully with Aboriginal clients, particularly Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence. The recommendations of the Family Violence Royal Commission reinforced the importance of building the cultural competence of mainstream service providers working with Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence.

Ongoing Commitment – Child Protection and Sexual Abuse Royal Commission

In 2015–2016, FVPLS Victoria facilitated three workshops to help inform participants about the Sexual Abuse Royal Commission. The workshops featured Aboriginal actor and writer, Tammy Anderson, performing *I Don’t Want To Play House*, in which Tammy described through song and movement the abuse she and her family had suffered, connecting to audiences in a unique and personal way and helping to foster discussion on these difficult issues.

The three workshops, in Melton, Heywood and Morwell, were well-attended by community and local workers in the areas. Our solicitor and paralegal were in attendance

as well as counsellors from the Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA).

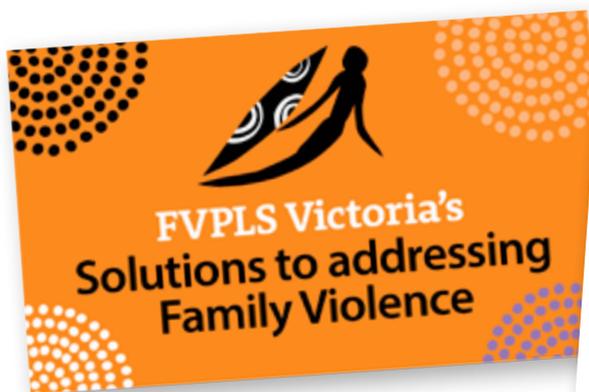
These workshops provided a culturally safe space to discuss issues, share stories and inform participants about the process of providing evidence to the Sexual Abuse Royal Commission. The legal service working with the Sexual Abuse Royal Commission, *knowmore*, utilised FVPLS Victoria’s established community reputation to deliver community legal education presentations at the events and reported this practice had significantly increased referrals from the Aboriginal community.

New community legal education resources

Great effort went into the development of our new community legal education resources during the year, *FVPLS Victoria’s Solutions to Addressing Family Violence*. These resources were launched during NAIDOC Week 2016, after the conclusion of the financial year, together with a campaign video featuring strong Aboriginal women and our Aboriginal staff calling on everyone to be part of the solutions and stand with us against family violence.

The “solutions to addressing family violence” can be accessed via our website: <http://www.fvpls.org/images/files/FVPLS%20Solutions%20Booklet%20FINAL.pdf>





Sisters Day Out and Dilly Bag: The Journey workshops

As highlighted earlier in this report, funding uncertainty remained a constant threat to the development and delivery of our tried and tested, life-saving, early intervention and prevention programs. We are, however, thankful for the support received during the year which, combined with our own fundraising efforts, enabled the ongoing delivery of our *Sisters Day Out* and *Dilly Bag: The Journey* programs.

In 2015–16, the *Sisters Day Out* and *Dilly Bag: The Journey* programs were funded by the Department of Justice, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department Prime Minister and Cabinet, Victorian Legal Aid, Department Health and Human Services, Corrections Victoria, Melton City Council and the Cancer Council.

Designed by and for Aboriginal women, *Dilly Bag: The Journey* workshops are founded on cultural principles that help Aboriginal women in their personal healing journey. These workshops prevent and reduce family violence by drawing on Aboriginal culture and women's traditional role as nurturers and leaders. The workshop format and activities emphasise self-nurturing and healing from trauma, promoting cultural identification and assisting women to strengthen their unique resilience.

In 2015–16, FVPLS Victoria conducted *Dilly Bag: The Journey* workshops in Barwon South West and Gippsland. Both workshops were well-attended and received wonderful feedback describing how the nurturing experience helped participants progress from trauma.

Feedback from Dilly Bag: The Journey participant

"Dilly Bag helps me to remember that I am special and human and it gives me back my confidence. The Dilly Bag program helped me to stand strong and believe in myself. I love this program and without it I would still be stuck in a bad situation. We need these programs to help our women stand strong."

Young Luv

Of particular note this year, was the continual development and enhancement of our *Young Luv*

program, which was rolled out to Aboriginal girls and young women in seven locations around the state.

In its second year of operation, the *Young Luv* program continued to grow and evolve as we embraced the experiences of our workshop participants and harnessed their energy and feedback to improve our workshop content, engagement and delivery techniques.

The *Young Luv* program is focused on promoting healthy relationships for Aboriginal girls and young women between 13 and 18 years old. It is an innovative and engaging program developed by and for young Aboriginal women.

Young Luv provides Aboriginal girls and young women with the opportunity to reflect on their own strengths and make positive decisions. It aids in understanding the dynamics of controlling behaviours, learning to identify warning signs of family violence and coping strategies to deal with issues impacting their lives. The *Young Luv* program provides a safe space to enable participants to reflect on the importance of healthy and respectful relationships and learn about the safe use of social media.

In 2015–16, *Young Luv* was funded by the Department of Justice, with extra funding from the Commission for Children and Young People.

The *Young Luv* program will continue to be rolled out during 2016–17.

Feedback from Young Luv participants

"(Today was good to) encourage young people to be confident in who they are and to constantly use their support network."

"(It helped me) to stay strong and don't let anyone stand over you. And talk to someone about things if you need to talk to anyone."

"It has informed me of what relationships should look like and other issues in my community."



Legal practice

FVPLS Victoria has seen enormous change in the past year. As the focus on family violence has been sharpened, the practice has felt a greater call on its resources.

The move to the new head office space in 2015 has allowed the legal practice to give effect to new ideas around delivery of service. The Koori Women's Hub ("the Hub") has allowed a greater capacity to provide a more holistic service through collaboration with other aligned service providers.

Through the work of the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People and Taskforce1000, we have learnt that family violence was the primary reason for the removal of nearly all Aboriginal children from their families in Victoria this year, and the rates of Aboriginal child removal have continued to escalate.

A significant legislative development during the year was the amendment to the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* in relation to permanent care, which came into effect in March 2016. FVPLS Victoria staff spent a significant period of time during the year attending consultations across government and the community sector in relation to these amendments. FVPLS has grave concerns that there are already disproportionate rates of Aboriginal children being removed from their families and that the consequence of the changes in the law relating to permanency may make reunification difficult, if not impossible, in many cases.

The greatest source of growth and potential for expansion of the legal practice this year has been through the introduction of two developments: the program supporting Aboriginal women pre and post-release from custody and the Koori Women's Hub.

Program supporting Aboriginal women pre and post-release from custody

Aboriginal women remained the fastest growing prison population this year.

Although the impact of family violence on the incarceration of women sat outside the terms of reference of the Family Violence Royal Commission, the Family Violence Royal Commission acknowledged that *"[family] violence is experienced in the childhood and early years of many women in prison and can disproportionately affect them in their adult life. Women can be imprisoned as a result of the direct and indirect effects of family violence: some women might commit crimes as a result of a history of childhood violence or other trauma or under duress or coercion from a violent partner. Their partner may pursue them while they are in prison or they may be at risk of violence when they leave."*

FVPLS Victoria's program supporting Aboriginal women pre and post-release from custody ("Support Program") has seen the collaboration with the Dame Phyllis Frost

Centre and Corrections Victoria to employ a paralegal to work alongside Aboriginal women in custody. This has involved the establishment of regular outreach days, a program of education and well-being delivered to those women and the ongoing case management of the women pre and post-release.

There are vast numbers of Aboriginal women in prison who have legal needs and other non-legal needs around housing, counselling and support. Through our Support Program, FVPLS Victoria can access those women and conduct a needs assessment whilst they are in custody with the view to linking them into services that will assist them post-release to remain safe from family violence in the community, reconnect with family and where possible, reunify with children. The Support Program has seen great success in the first six months and is set to continue in the coming year.

Koori Women's Hub

Fulfilling the long-held vision of the FVPLS Victoria Board, great progress was made during the year towards developing the Hub for Aboriginal women and victims/survivors of family violence as a meeting place – a retreat offering Aboriginal women the opportunity to have time out in a culturally safe environment, and a starting point for accessing legal and non-legal services. As the Board envisaged, the Hub will also extend our capacity as a resource centre, providing cultural awareness training and advice for the sector. It will be the first of its kind in inner Melbourne.

This financial year, we moved from the consultation phase of the Hub to the implementation phase, guided by a steering committee comprised of representatives from interested agencies and community. Building



works were almost complete as at 30 June 2016 and the open space shows great potential for community use.

A review of the physical space at our new head office location included research and consultation with service providers to determine how to best utilise the space to maintain the integrity and obligations of individual organisations. FVPLS Victoria has entered into memoranda of understanding with three external service providers to occupy space in the Hub.

Our first external service provider, the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women (LACW), commenced operating from the Hub in early 2016. This service fills an important gap in criminal law services for women. This has been a crucial sounding board for the forward vision of external service providers in the Hub and has allowed a seamless referral pathway for women with infringements or who need criminal law services. Likewise, FVPLS Victoria has been able to assist women referred to the practice when they have presented to LACW with criminal matters and

associated child protection or family law issues. We see this as a wonderful opportunity to provide a much more comprehensive service to our clients.

A partnership with the Women's Legal Service provides an on-site financial counsellor. Other services expected to commence operating from the Hub in the next financial year include a counsellor and tenancy law services.

The Hub was funded through an Innovation and Transformation grant from Victorian Legal Aid. We have actively pursued further funding for the Hub during the year, but it remains ongoing funding at the time of preparing this annual report.

"We believe the Hub is vitally important for Aboriginal women and we will do whatever it takes to create a vibrant, inclusive and culturally safe space that belongs exclusively to our community".

FVPLS Victoria CEO, Antoinette Braybrook.



Regional Offices and Outreach

The legal team has continued to provide excellent legal service and conduct ongoing outreach to community on a regular basis – both in the metropolitan setting and in regional Victoria, including through our regional offices in Bairnsdale, Warrnambool and Mildura.

Our chief executive officer and principal legal officer travelled to Mildura in October 2015 at the invitation of Victorian Legal Aid and participated in a workshop to explore the specific legal needs of the local community in the Mildura/Robinvale region. It was also an opportunity to highlight the great work of our Mildura office and to hear more about the challenges faced by Aboriginal women and their children impacted by family violence. The challenge of service delivery in a regional location with limited resources was the common experience of the stakeholders who participated in this workshop.

Feedback from clients

Clients complete surveys at the conclusion of their legal cases and at legal education and other community events. This is what they have told us:

- "Nice and friendly and easy to understand"
- "I would like to say thank you very much for being so helpful in my time of need"
- "To Lawyer and Paralegal – thank you for your support. I appreciated it very much, what you did for me. I was a bit hesitant at first but with my first contact with FVPLS I felt relieved and pleased that I went ahead with the order. Things are much quieter at home so hopefully it stays that way. Once again thank you so much"
- "Just keep up the good work Lawyer and Paralegal you made me feel comfortable and will gladly recommend you to anyone that needs help"

The potential for FVPLS Victoria, as an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, to prevent and respond to family violence must be fulfilled

The past year has seen the ongoing Sexual Abuse Royal Commission, the conclusion of the Family Violence Royal Commission and its delivery of findings and recommendations and the 25th anniversary of the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The tragic reality is that in 2016 the number of Aboriginal people in custody is higher than it was 25 years ago when the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was concluded. We are now faced with the highest numbers of Aboriginal children removed from family since the practice began over 200 years ago. There is work to do. Every level of government and every member of the community should be asking why this is happening.

To fail to recognise the intersection of the subject matter of these inquiries would be to set ourselves up as a community poised for ongoing trauma and fracture. There must be lessons drawn from these public inquiries and the implementation must be swift.

The capacity for small organisations, even properly funded, to impact in these figures and shift the story going forward is only possible where the whole of

government and the whole of community recognises and commits to change – guided by the Aboriginal community to have greatest impact for that community.

As identified in the report of the Family Violence Royal Commission: “[many] people want to use Aboriginal service providers, but the full potential of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to prevent and respond to family violence has not been realised... [There is] insufficient investment in culturally appropriate early intervention initiatives to strengthen families and reduce the number of Aboriginal children who are removed from their families”.

Recommendation 146 of the Family Violence Royal Commission echoes the demands that FVPLS Victoria has been making for its 14 years of existence:

Recommendation 146

The Victorian Government give priority to providing adequate funding to Aboriginal community controlled organisations (within 12 months) for ...

- *culturally appropriate family violence services for Aboriginal women and children...*
- *culturally appropriate legal services for victims and perpetrators – to meet increased demand and the need for statewide coverage...*
- *early intervention and prevention actions in Aboriginal communities...*

Law reform and advocacy

Advocating for systemic and long-term policy and law reform

Breaking the silence on the disproportionate impact of family violence against Aboriginal women requires concerted advocacy to engage government and other sector-related stakeholders. Through a grant from the Victorian Legal Services Board, FVPLS Victoria undertook significant activities in 2015–2016 to ensure that Aboriginal women’s voices were front and centre. FVPLS Victoria did not receive any government funding during the year to undertake policy, law reform and advocacy work.

This year marked a turning point in the struggle to end violence against women with the findings and recommendations of the Family Violence Royal Commission clearly denouncing the epidemic levels of violence against all women and children. The Family Violence Royal Commission specifically recognised the devastating impact of family violence against Aboriginal women.

The advocacy activities undertaken by the FVPLS Victoria during the year were varied and extensive both in breadth and depth. FVPLS Victoria consulted widely with community members and clients during the year and contributed to a number of important reviews and inquiries. The policy team also supported the chief

executive officer in speaking engagements and media liaison to elevate the voices of Aboriginal women and influence the broader social reform conversation.

Submissions

During the 2015–16 year, FVPLS Victoria provided extensive input and feedback to a significant number of Victorian Government inquiries. FVPLS Victoria’s advocacy work was critical to ensuring Aboriginal women’s experiences were heard and understood, particularly in relation to the barriers that Aboriginal women face in accessing justice and culturally appropriate services.

In February 2016, FVPLS Victoria contributed to the *Access to Justice Review* by the Victorian Attorney-General and the Department of Justice and Regulation. Whilst the findings of this inquiry were not public at the date of preparing this annual report, FVPLS Victoria considers that the outcome of this report will greatly influence the Victorian justice system and the experience of Aboriginal women within this system. The submission made by FVPLS Victoria called upon the Victorian Government to act immediately to ensure that barriers preventing Aboriginal women’s access to justice are mitigated.

In addition to the extensive work undertaken to implement the recommendations of the Family Violence

Royal Commission, FVPLS Victoria continued participating in the ongoing consultation process by the Victorian Government to develop a *Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*. In March 2016, FVPLS Victoria made a submission highlighting the intersectional nature of Aboriginal women's inequality. It is vital that the complex and multifaceted nature of Aboriginal women's experiences is recognised. These include historical and current experiences of institutional and societal racism, combined with deeply embedded and cyclical social and economic disadvantage.

FVPLS Victoria also provided input and feedback via consultation and submission into a number of other reviews and reports on Aboriginal women's rights and wellbeing, including:

1. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan;
2. Department of Justice and Regulation, consultation on the potential expansion of Koori Courts to hear intervention order (IVO) breaches; and
3. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) 2015 Report on the Operation of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*.

Regular forums

FVPLS Victoria also contributed to a number of justice-related forums during the year. These forums are critical to furthering the rights of Aboriginal women, overcoming barriers to accessing legal assistance and highlighting emerging issues that impact Aboriginal women. FVPLS Victoria has been a longstanding member of the Victorian Legal Aid Forum (VLAFF) and the VLAFF Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working group.

FVPLS Victoria has also enjoyed a long standing engagement with the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum (IFVPF), which is critical to ensuring representation of Aboriginal victims/survivors' experiences. The IFVPF is a forum for ongoing, high level dialogue between government departments and Aboriginal communities about the needs of Aboriginal communities in confronting issues of family violence.

FVPLS Victoria's participation as a member of the Aboriginal Justice Forum provides a platform for the justice-related needs of Aboriginal women to be addressed directly with Corrections Victoria and other relevant sections of the Department of Justice and Regulation.

Speeches by FVPLS Victoria's chief executive officer

FVPLS Victoria featured in the media and gave presentations at many conferences during the year. Each presentation created an opportunity for Aboriginal women's empowerment and placed the priorities of Aboriginal women clearly in the mainstream arena. From large audiences to small, speeches made by our chief executive officer demonstrate the organisation's commitment to breaking the silence on the family

violence experienced by Aboriginal women. Chief executive officer, Antoinette Braybrook, gave numerous speeches during the year, including:

- Family Law Pathways – 'Wear An Ochre Ribbon' Forum, Melbourne, 1 July, 2015
- Keynote – National Rural Law and Justice Alliance, 'Seeking Justice for Women who are Victims/Survivors of Family Violence in Rural and Remote Areas', Orange 4 July 2015
- VicHealth – 'Policy, People and Prevention: Ending Violence Against Women in Victoria' Conference, Melbourne, 15 July 2015
- FVPLS Victoria's chief executive officer participated as witness at Royal Commission into Family Violence Public Hearings, Melbourne, 20 July 2015
- Change The Record – fringe event at the Labor Party conference, Melbourne, 25 July 2015
- Victorian Women Lawyers – panel discussion on Intervention Orders and Family Violence, 30 July 2015
- NACLIC Conference – Plenary 'How a Powerful Story Can Open Doors to Change', Melbourne, 26 August 2015
- NACLIC Conference – Concurrent 'Royal Commission Family Violence: Incorporating the Voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women', Melbourne 26 August 2015
- SNAICC Conference – panel discussion on 'The Decade Ahead: Learning from the Past to Create a New Future', Perth, 17 September 2015
- Latrobe Valley Community Walk – Morwell, 1 October 2015
- Victorian Legal Aid – Family & Children's Law Staff panel, Melbourne, 9 October 2015
- Keynote – Long Walk Luncheon, Melbourne, 16 October 2015
- FVPLS Victoria and *knowmore* – information workshop for community on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Melton, 23 October 2015
- 100th Sisters Day Out Workshop, Carlton, Melbourne, 16 February 2016
- Judicial College of Victoria – Family Violence Program for Magistrates – 'Family Violence in the Koorie Community', Melbourne, 19 February 2016
- *An Evening with Sisters Day Out*, Melbourne, 5 March 2016
- International Women's Day, DLA Piper, Melbourne, 8 March 2016
- Judicial College of Victoria – Koori Twilight Seminar, Melbourne, 17 March 2016
- 25th Anniversary of the RCIADIC – panel discussion, Canberra, 15 April 2016
- Rotary Club of Bendigo screening and panel – 'As it is in Heaven', Bendigo, 17 May 2016
- Talking Justice 2016 – Celebrating and Safeguarding Cultural Identity, Bendigo, 21 May, 2016
- Launch of the Redfern Statement – Redfern Sydney, 9 June 2016
- Panel AIJA Conference – Court Management and Support of Family Violence Cases involving Indigenous Parents and Children, Melbourne, 17 June 2016

The need for ongoing law reform and advocacy

The historic focus on family violence during 2015–16 provides hope for the future as the implementation of the recommendations of the Family Violence Royal Commission continues. The particular circumstances of the deaths of two Aboriginal women nationally, however, and the subsequent lack of action by the justice system demonstrate that we have a long way to go.

FVPLS Victoria's chief executive officer with the assistance of the policy team presented an opinion piece in the Drum, ABC, commenting on the murder of Aboriginal woman, Lynette Daly and calling out the lack of justice outcomes for Aboriginal women:

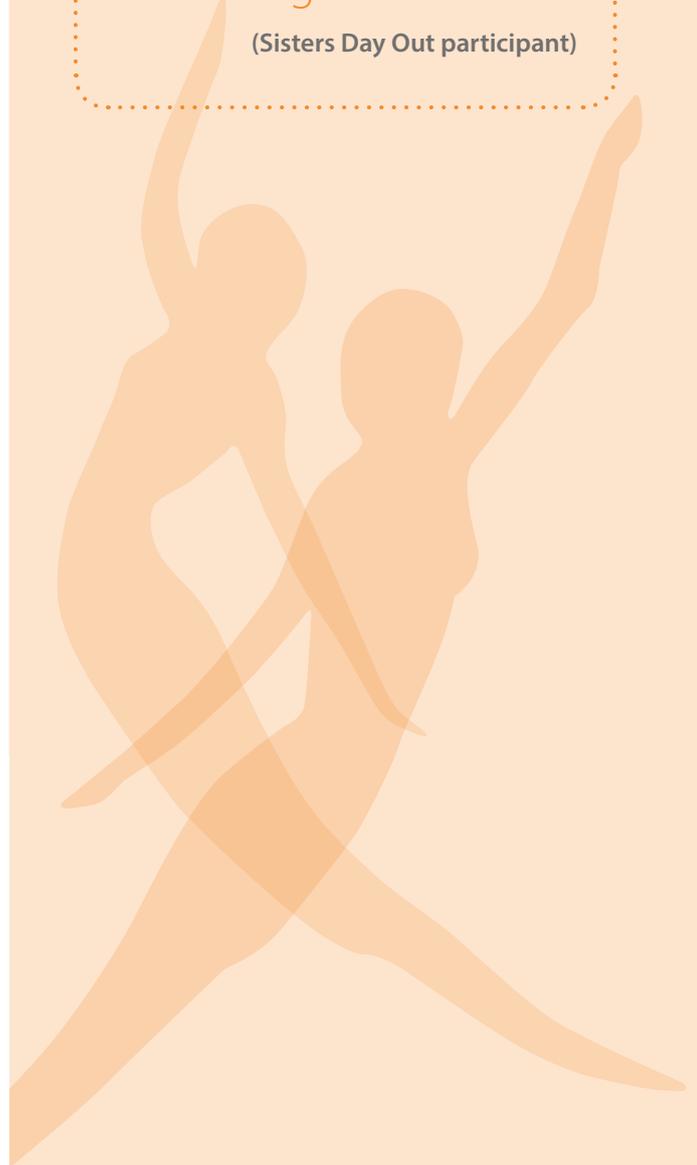
"Tragically, the abuse and violence inflicted on Lynette (Daly) is not an isolated case. Aboriginal women are at the epicentre of the national family violence crisis.

This reality sadly doesn't cut through into the national conversation. Stories like Lynette's are rarely told and justice is a scarcer commodity. The violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women is routinely ignored and our communities' silence stifles the kind of urgent action that is required."

The voices of our community

"Sharing problems with other Koori women helps me feel I am not alone, and 'Stories of survival' gave me hope and strength to carry on in life's journey as an Aboriginal woman."

(Sisters Day Out participant)



Sisters Day Out

What was good about today's workshop?

“Being in a safe space with other Black women is empowering.”

“Sense of community and pride, being empowered.”

“We all need to do better, just need more awareness that we have to take control of ourselves. If we don't see what's out there we can never know the difference.”

“I was feeling so miserable before I came and when I walked into the hall and saw such beautiful Aboriginal women having their pampering and chatting to one another and how the room was all set up, I feel so happy and had a great day.”

“Improved confidence. Helped with outside appearance. Pampering is wonderful going home relaxed. Meeting other sisters is essential.”

“Increased my understanding of women's experiences, need for connections, how fun connections lead to info and actions.”

“[I] gained some insightful knowledge that could help in the future.”

Dilly Bag: The Journey

“I just loved the support, fun and getting together with the women and being able to share problems and look for answers in a culturally safe space without feeling alone.”

“It gave me more strength, power, to be strong and gave me more courage to protect my own daughters and granddaughters and to educate and protect other women.”

Young Luv

Workshops were very well received by the communities in the southern metropolitan area and gathered great feedback from participants, such as:

“It was good to be able to talk about this important stuff.”

“Everything was helpful and fun.”

“It helped me to keep safe from social media.”

“It gave me information on privacy.”

“It helped me to stay strong and don't let anyone stand over you. And talk to someone about things if you need to talk to anyone.”

The National FVPLS Forum

In April 2016, the 14 member services of the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum) came together in Cairns. The National FVPLS Forum was established in May 2012 as the national peak body with the authority to speak about the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of family violence. The meeting in Cairns was an important opportunity for the members to build relationships and reflect on achievements and successes while taking stock of current challenges. The profile of the Forum, at a political, media and public level, continues to grow and the members expressed their commitment to furthering these efforts. FVPLS Victoria hosts the Secretariat of the National FVPLS Forum and participates in Forum activities in its own right.

Building the lobbying role of the National FVPLS Forum was a key focus in this election year and a request list of budget deliverables was developed in the lead up to the Federal election. These called on government to address family violence in Aboriginal communities and specifically to:

- fund Aboriginal community controlled organisations to meet need, with a commitment to an evidence-based and integrated government approach;
- develop and lead, through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), a national holistic whole-of-government plan to address violence against Aboriginal women and children, with membership including relevant government departments, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies and service delivery organisations;
- reinstate the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Program. This should include:
 1. a commitment to FVPLS as specialist providers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence legal services
 2. minimum five-year funding agreement including CPI increases
 3. national coverage of holistic FVPLS services commensurate to need within five years; and
 4. continued ongoing funding for the National Forum to build the capacity of FVPLS units and provide a unified national voice in law reform, policy and program development
- establish a national data body on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence and incarceration rates to ensure a consistent national approach to data collection to inform policy development; and
- work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in the development of policy priorities, focussing on addressing barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to accessing services, and the nexus between being victim/survivor of family violence, incarceration and the removal of Aboriginal children.

On 9 June 2016, the National FVPLS Forum participated in the historic launch of the *Redfern Statement* in Sydney, at which our chief executive officer, Antoinette Braybrook, delivered a powerful speech highlighting the magnitude of the social and economic cost of violence against Aboriginal women and children.

"It is estimated that violence against Aboriginal women will cost our Australian economy 2.2 million dollars by 2021. Its moral cost is much greater... with lives lost...and our communities destroyed... this is unquantifiable. Our sisters' blood stains this land."

Antoinette Braybrook, CEO, FVPLS Victoria and Convenor, National FVPLS Forum

The *Redfern Statement* was a significant demonstration of the cohesion of Australia's First Peoples in calling for a more just approach to our people. It called on political parties to urgently prioritise Aboriginal affairs during the election. At a glance, it called on the Federal Government to:

- restore \$534 million to the Indigenous Affairs Portfolio after the 2014 budget cut;
- commit to better and ongoing engagement with Aboriginal peoples through their representative national peaks;
- recommit to *Closing the Gap* by:
 - setting targets to reduce rates of family violence, incarceration and out-of-home care and increase access to disability support services; and
 - securing national funding agreements to drive the implementation of national strategies
- commit to working with Aboriginal leaders to establish a Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in the future; and
- commit to address the unfinished business of reconciliation.

"Aboriginal women's lives matter because our communities...our families...our children's lives matter. We implore the next federal government to listen and work with us and our national representative bodies"

Antoinette Braybrook, CEO, FVPLS Victoria and Convenor, National FVPLS Forum



Our staff

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Officer, Programs

Principal Legal Officer

Community Legal Education Manager

Finance Manager

Manager National Secretariat

Lawyers

Community Legal Education Worker

Paralegal Support Workers

Senior Policy Officer

Koori Women's Hub Development Manager

Grant Seeker / Fundraiser

Finance and Admin Support

Reception and Office Support

Workshop Program Project Officers

Community Engagement Worker

Executive Support

Program Support

Antoinette Braybrook

Paula Stewart

Simone Elias

Sam Nixon

Maggie Barford

Andrew Gargett

Barbara Shalit

Dale Gerner (maternity leave), Avital Kamil

Anne Lenton

Amy Moore, Amy Sherman, Lauren Avery,

Vivienne Topp

Meriki Onus

Debbie Edsall, Falea'i Fesili, Vanessa Day,

Renee Cumming, Jo Staunton,

Jamie McConnachie

Laura Vines (Maternity leave),

Jenna Davey-Burns

Alisoun Neville

Justine Russell

Petra Theilhaber

Casey Williams

Wanda Braybrook, Kelly Faldon

Nikahlia Braybrook, Tahnee Edwards

Ruth Milne

Kaitin Boyd, Gabrielle Raetz



Gippsland regional office (Bairnsdale)

Lawyer Joanna Colautti
Paralegal Support Worker Chloe Kenny

Mildura office

Lawyer Kim Avers
Paralegal Support Worker Natalie Larsek

Warrnambool office

Lawyer Alice Bewley
Paralegal Support Worker Stephanie Walker

Past staff

We acknowledge the contribution of the following former staff members of FVPLS Victoria during the year: Jill Prior, Melanie Ashman, Sarah Bain, Lucy Broughton, Anna Burke, Ashleigh Crees, Ester Faine-Vallantin, Aerin Hines, Talisa Juracich, Stephanie Kelly, Kate MacLennan, Heather McLean, Morgan Miller, Michelle Montague, Margaret Portelli, Jillian Prior, Kirsten Sullivan, Courtney Thomas, Elise Thomas, Barbara Tindall and Riordan Wagner.

Volunteers

Ester Faine-Vallantin
Andrea Lane
Wenyu Jiang
John Petras
Abuzar Mazoori
Julie Lawler
Emma Pistritto
Liza Harwood
Claire Alexander
Lucy Broughton
Amber Karanikolas
Carolyn Tariq
Ivana Blekic

*All staff as at 30 June 2016



Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Corporation
Family Violence Prevention
& Legal Service (Victoria)
Financial statements
for the year ended
30 June 2016

Directors' Report

Directors

Name of Director

Marion Hansen
Karen Bryant
Damien Goodall
Jaynaya Williams
Bernice Clarke

Directors' Meetings

During the year 4 Directors' meetings were held.

Operating Result

The surplus of the corporation for the financial year after providing for income tax amounted to:

Year ended 30 June 2016	Year ended 30 June 2015
\$ 40,671	\$ (116,837)

Review of Operations

A review of the operations of the corporation during the financial year and the results of those operations are consistent with the previous year.

Significant Changes in the State of Affairs

No significant changes in the corporation's state of affairs occurred during the financial year.

Principal Activities

The principal activities of the corporation during the course of the year were Assistance to Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence and sexual assault through, Legal Advice, Counselling, Information, Referral and Support, Community Education, Policy and Advocacy. No significant change in the nature of these activities occurred during the year.

After Balance Date Events

No matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the financial year which significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations of the corporation, the results of those operations, or the state of affairs of the corporation in subsequent financial years.

Future Developments

The corporation expects to maintain the present status and level of operations and hence there are no likely developments in the operations in future financial years.

Environmental Issues

The corporation's operations are not regulated by any significant environmental regulation under a law of the Commonwealth or of a State or Territory.

Directors' Benefits

No director has received or has become entitled to receive, during or since the financial year, a benefit

because of a contract made by the corporation or related body corporate with a director, a firm which a director is a member or an entity in which a director has a substantial financial interest.

This statement excludes a benefit included in the aggregate amount of emoluments received or due and receivable by directors shown in the corporation's accounts, or the fixed salary of a full-time employee of the corporation or related body corporate.

Indemnifying Officer or Auditor

No indemnities have been given or agreed to be given or insurance premiums paid or agreed to be paid, during or since the end of the financial year, to any person who is or has been an officer or auditor of the company.

Proceedings on Behalf of Corporation

No person has applied for leave of Court to bring proceedings on behalf of the corporation or intervene in any proceedings to which the company is a party for the purpose of taking responsibility on behalf of the company for all or any part of those proceedings. The corporation was not a party to any such proceedings during the year.

Auditors Independence Declaration

A copy of the auditor's independence declaration as required under section 339–50 of the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* has been included.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors:



Marion Hansen
Director



Jaynaya Williams
Director

Dated this 4th day of October 2016.

Statement of Financial Performance for the year ended 30 June 2016

Income	2016	2015
Grant Income		
Dept Prime Minister & Cabinet	2,198,080	2,130,286
Department of Justice	403,670	352,042
Victoria Legal Aid	463,143	333,779
Legal Services Board	100,000	135,000
Department of Human Services	567,344	324,455
Department of Premier & Cabinet	90,860	–
Other Grants	221,137	82,530
Grants brought forward	934,048	836,728
Grants carried forward	(1,461,408)	(931,507)
	3,516,874	3,263,313
Other income	179,055	173,555
Interest received	17,456	40,273
Total Income	3,713,385	3,477,141
Expenses		
Staff Costs		
Salaries	2,009,961	1,944,957
Staff Leave Provisions	83,536	44,300
Superannuation	187,758	179,422
Workcover	50,074	47,816
Leave Loading	21,619	20,075
Other Employer Expenses	10,000	–
	2,362,948	2,236,570
Operating Expenses		
Audit Fees	6,065	5,599
Advertising & Promotion	18,134	13,844
Bank Charges	1,140	1,337
Client Expenses	52,847	40,569
Consultants/Facilitators	20,770	69,920
EIPP expenses	226,969	189,885
Insurance	11,756	10,894
Motor Vehicle Expenses	33,519	31,990
Office Furniture & Equipment	14,509	5,525
Postage & Courier	12,387	12,560
Recruitment	7,213	11,442
Rent & Occupancy Costs	117,517	243,123
Telephone/Fax/Internet	57,556	50,379
Training & Professional Development	24,555	21,601
CLE Expenses	17,241	26,117
IT Support	38,382	33,698
Library & Resources	6,418	8,323
Meetings & Conferences	31,002	41,459
Memberships & Subscriptions	16,442	11,070
Office Supplies	18,176	15,858
Practising Certificates	5,310	4,186
Printing & Copying	9,124	11,476
Project Expenses	329,681	232,733
R & M Equipment/Replacement	2,353	1,841
Relocation Expenses	–	50,623
Staff Costs	24,934	18,642
Travel Expenses	130,073	134,633
	1,234,073	1,299,327
Depreciation		
Depreciation – Buildings	50,385	13,351
Depreciation – Office Furniture Equipment	7,677	21,223
Depreciation – Motor Vehicles	17,631	23,507
	75,693	58,081
Total Expenses	3,672,714	3,593,978
Surplus from Ordinary Activities before income tax	40,671	(116,837)

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2016

	2016	2015
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash assets	2,448,031	1,600,888
Receivables	118,159	239,709
Other	18,091	79,950
Total Current Assets	2,584,281	1,920,547
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	1,976,800	2,039,213
Total Non-Current Assets	1,976,800	2,039,213
Total Assets	4,561,081	3,959,760
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Payables	172,070	287,649
Financial liabilities	19,581	15,537
Current tax liabilities	162,239	76,795
Provisions	298,292	214,756
Other	1,563,683	1,060,478
Total Current Liabilities	2,215,865	1,655,215
Total Liabilities	2,215,865	1,655,215
Net Assets	2,345,216	2,304,545
Equity		
Retained profits	2,345,216	2,304,545
Total Equity	2,345,216	2,304,545

Statement of Cash Flow for the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016	2015
Cash Flow From Operating Activities		
Receipts from grants and others	3,817,479	3,311,265
Payments to suppliers and employees	(3,015,839)	(3,285,295)
Interest received	17,456	40,273
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	819,096	66,243
Cash Flow From Non Recurring Income		
Net cash provided by (used in) Capital grant received	–	1,586,000
Cash Flow From Investing Activities		
Payment for:		
Other Assets	37,283	901
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(13,280)	(1,994,197)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	24,003	(1,993,296)
Cash Flow From Financing Activities		
Proceeds of borrowings	4,044	–
Repayment of borrowings	–	(911)
Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities	4,044	(911)
Net increase (decrease) in cash held	847,143	(341,964)
Cash at the beginning of the year	1,600,888	1,942,852
Cash at the end of the year (note 1)	2,448,031	1,600,888
Reconciliation Of Net Cash Provided By/Used In Operating Activities To Net Surplus		
Operating surplus (loss) after tax	40,671	(116,837)
Depreciation	75,693	58,081
Changes in assets and liabilities net of effects of purchases and disposals of controlled entities:		
(Increase) decrease in trade and term debtors	121,550	(125,603)
(Increase) decrease in prepayments	24,576	(27,659)
Increase (decrease) in trade creditors and accruals	(118,856)	92,355
Increase (decrease) in other creditors	506,482	138,063
Increase (decrease) in employee entitlements	83,536	44,300
Increase (decrease) in sundry provisions	85,444	3,543
Net cash provided by operating activities	819,096	66,243
Reconciliation Of Net Cash Provided By (Used In) Non Recurring Income After Income Tax		
Capital grant received	–	1,586,000
Increase (decrease) in income tax payable	–	–
Net cash provided by (used in) non recurring items	–	1,586,000

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 30 June 2016

Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

The financial report is a general purpose financial report that has been prepared in accordance with Accounting Standards and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* and where appropriate applied provisions of the *Corporations Act 2001*. The financial report covers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria) as an individual entity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria) is a corporation incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*. The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where stated, current valuations of non-current assets. Cost is based on the fair values of the consideration given in exchange for assets. The following is a summary of the material accounting policies adopted by the economic entity in the preparation of the financial report. The accounting policies have been consistently applied, unless otherwise stated.

Income tax

The Corporation is a Public Benevolent Institution and is exempt from Australian Income Tax and has an FBT and GST Concession. It is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient under section 30-15 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*. Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

Property, Plant and Equipment

Each class of property, plant and equipment is carried at cost or fair value less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

- a) **Property – Freehold land and buildings are measured on the fair value basis, being the amount for which an asset could be exchanged between knowledgeable willing parties in an arm's length transaction. It is a policy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria) to have an independent valuation every three years, with annual appraisals being made by the directors. The revaluation of freehold land and buildings has not taken account of the potential capital gains tax on assets acquired after the introduction of capital gains tax.**
- b) **Plant and equipment – The carrying amount of plant and equipment is reviewed annually to ensure it is not in excess of the recoverable amount from those assets. The recoverable amount is assessed on the basis of the expected net cash flows that will be received from the assets employment and subsequent disposal. The expected net cash flows have not been discounted to present values in determining the recoverable amounts. The cost of fixed assets constructed within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria) includes the cost of materials, direct labour, borrowing costs and an appropriate proportion of fixed and variable overheads.**

- c) **Depreciation – The depreciable amount of all fixed assets including buildings and capitalised leased assets, but excluding freehold land, is depreciated on a straight line basis over their useful lives to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria) commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use. Properties held for investment purposes are not subject to a depreciation charge. Leasehold improvements are depreciated over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful lives of the improvements. The depreciation rates used for each class of depreciable asset are:**

Class of Asset	Depreciation Rate %
Buildings	2%
Other plant and equipment	13.1%
Motor vehicles	20%
Other	20%

Employee entitlements

Provision is made for the liability for employee entitlements arising from services rendered by employees to balance date. Employee entitlements expected to be settled within one year together with entitlements arising from wages and salaries, annual leave and sick leave which will be settled after one year, have been measured at their nominal amount. Other employee entitlements payable later than one year have been measured at the present value of the estimated future cash out flows to be made for those entitlements. Contributions are made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria) to an employee superannuation fund and are charged as expenses when incurred.

Cash

For the purpose of the statement of cash flows, cash includes cash on hand and in all call deposits with banks or financial institutions, investments in money market instruments maturing within less than two months, net of bank overdrafts.

Comparative Figures

Where required by Accounting Standards comparative figures have been adjusted to conform with changes in presentation for the current financial year.

Revenue

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).

Contingent Liabilities

	2016	2015
Indigenous Land Corporation	1,917,792	1,960,328
	1,917,792	1,960,328

The Indigenous Land Corporation provided a Capital Grant of \$1,586,000 to assist with the purchase and refurbishment of 292 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford, Victoria, in 2015. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Victoria) provided the balance of the funds to acquire and refurbish the property. The Indigenous Land Corporation holds a Caveat over 292 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford, Victoria, to ensure the property remains under Aboriginal Control.

Independent Auditor's Report

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria) (the company), which comprises the Directors' Declaration, the Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income, the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Cash Flows, Statement of Changes In Equity, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes for the financial year ended 30 June 2016..

Directors' Responsibility for the Financial Report

The directors of the company are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* and applied provisions of the *Corporations Act 2001* and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In Note 1, the directors also state, in accordance with Accounting Standard AASB 101: Presentation of Financial Statements, that the financial statements comply with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the directors, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* and applied provisions of the

Corporations Act 2001. We confirm that the independence declaration required by the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* and the appropriate applied provisions of the *Corporations Act 2001*, provided to the directors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria) on 30 June 2016 would be in the same terms if provided to the directors as at the time of this auditor's report..

Opinion

In our opinion:

- a. **the financial report of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria) is in accordance with the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* and applied provisions of the *Corporations Act 2001*, including:**
 - (i) **giving a true and fair view of the company's financial position as at 30 June 2016 and of its performance for the year ended on that date; and**
 - (ii) **complying with Australian Accounting Standards (including Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the *Corporations Regulations 2001*;**
- b. **The financial report also complies with International Financial Reporting Standards as disclosed in Note 1.**

ASSUR PTY LTD

ASSUR PTY LTD

(Formerly TST Audit & Assurance Pty Ltd Authorised Auditor
Company Number: 453122)

Anthony Robert Ager

Anthony Robert Ager

Director – Audit & Assurance Chartered Accountant

Dated this 3rd day of October 2016

Auditor's Independence Declaration

UNDER SECTION 339–50 OF THE CORPORATIONS (ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER) ACT 2006

To THE DIRECTORS OF: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (Victoria)

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 30 June 2016 there have been :

- (i) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* and applied provisions of the *Corporations Act 2001* in relation to the audit; and
- (ii) no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit

ASSUR PTY LTD

ASSUR PTY LTD

(Formerly TST Audit & Assurance Pty Ltd)

Authorised Auditor Company Number: 453122 Chartered Accountants

Anthony Robert Ager

Anthony Robert Ager

Director – Audit & Assurance

Chartered Accountant

Dated this 3rd day of October 2016





Aboriginal Family
Violence Prevention
& Legal Service Victoria
**Standing Firm Against
Family Violence**

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