



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

Annual Report 2016-17

*15 years
of service*

Chairperson and CEO Report

In the 2016-17 financial year, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria celebrates a significant milestone of 15 years standing firm against family violence.



Marion Hansen

Since we first began operations in October 2002 we have supported thousands of Aboriginal women, men and children to live free of family violence. The journey to this point has had many challenges, but we are proud to say that due to the determination of our Chairperson, Board, CEO and staff, FVPLS Victoria is still a force to be reckoned with 15 years on!

During this time we have worked tirelessly to amplify the voices of Aboriginal women, as they entrust us to share their stories to influence systemic change. In the 2016-17 financial year this advocacy, which contributed to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, was validated with the unprecedented \$1.9 billion state government investment in addressing family violence announced in May - which included vital increased resourcing for FVPLS Victoria's frontline work.

Through this backing from the Victorian State Government, funding is secured for the next four years for FVPLS Victoria's operations includes our early intervention and prevention programs Sisters Day Out®, Dilly Bag and Young Luv®. The funding also enables the expansion of our holistic legal services to address unmet need across the state. With funding certainty, our culturally safe services can continue to make inroads into the shocking family violence situation and build Aboriginal women's resilience, leadership and healing.

Aboriginal women in Australia remain 32 times more likely to be hospitalised because of family violence than other women and 10 times more likely to die from assault than other women. Our organisation is now in a position to take real action and end family violence.

As well as this crucial funding, we have many achievements to highlight from this financial year, including the further development of our Koori Women's Place. During NAIDOC Week our supporters joined us to celebrate the announcement of the cultural name 'Djirra' which designates our Koori Women's Place. The Attorney-General Martin Pakula spoke of the two-year pilot funding for culturally safe activities to take place in the Koori Women's Place which is now an active and thriving space watched over by a beautiful bespoke weaving piece completed by Aunty Dawn Mongta.

This year we became the state-wide provider of Flexible Support Packages for Aboriginal victims/survivors, rolling out over \$285,000 in vital and immediate support to 84 Aboriginal women escaping family violence. This essential support ensures our women's safety while promoting their recovery and re-engagement in the community, education and employment.

We have also significantly increased our legal outreach service to our women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, enabling vital legal and non-legal wrap-around support for Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence behind bars. In addition, our Community Engagement team has delivered a 'Sisters Day In' and two Dilly Bag workshops at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

We continue to innovate to engage our young women. In May we launched a social media campaign for Koori youth called "Deadly Duos". The campaign was enthusiastically received with 10,000 views in the first 10 days. The campaign went on to be viewed over 33,000 times and had national coverage through the NITV News.

Young Luv has continued to strengthen this financial year, with 18 workshops delivered to 172 young women, reaching 110 more young women than the previous financial year. With support from VicHealth we undertook an evaluation of the program, capturing within the report the importance of culturally appropriate early intervention programs for Aboriginal girls and young women.

A Note from the Chairperson

The relentless work of our committed CEO, Antoinette Braybrook, continued at a national level with Antoinette re-elected as the Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum and her appointment as Co-Chair of the Change the Record Coalition. Antoinette presented at 18 conferences and public speaking engagements across Victoria and Australia, providing a strong voice on the prevention of violence against Aboriginal women and children.

In closing, we acknowledge the work of our dedicated and passionate staff and the commitment of our Board members. Each year is indeed more demanding than the last; we are proud of your efforts and the outcomes reached on behalf of our women.

And to the courageous women we work with - your strength and resilience, and that of your children, continues to fuel our drive to end family violence.

Marion Hansen
Chairperson

Antoinette Braybrook
Chief Executive Officer

Acknowledgment

The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria), its directors and staff would like to thank 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 past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our boundaries from all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations.



Antoinette Braybrook

About FVPLS Victoria

Established 15 years ago, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation that provides culturally safe, holistic assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors of family violence and sexual assault. Our services include frontline legal assistance and a suite of early intervention and prevention programs which are endorsed as best practice.

FVPLS Victoria is a non-gender specific organisation, however 93% of our clients are Aboriginal women. We also provide assistance to non-Aboriginal carers of Aboriginal children who are victims/survivors of family violence.

With support from philanthropic sources, we advocate for policy and law reform to address systemic issues with the aim of strengthened law and justice outcomes for Aboriginal victims and survivors of family violence and sexual assault. We also work tirelessly to increase the visibility of Aboriginal women to policy makers.

Our holistic legal services are client centric, with each client assisted by a lawyer and paralegal support worker to address the interrelated legal and non-legal concerns our clients face. Our clients are supported to make links with culturally safe counselling and other support services to address the underlying social issues giving rise to the client's experience with family violence. This may include assistance with housing, mental health, parenting, financial and other supports.

Our 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.

As an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, FVPLS Victoria is governed by an Aboriginal Board and has a range of processes 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 the Co-Chair of the Change the Record Coalition. FVPLS Victoria hosts the Secretariat for both forums.

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.

Highlights

In our 15th year we have:

Stood firm for our sisters by contributing to new practices designed to radically improve the way Victoria Police and Child Protection authorities support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors, and our CEO and other staff were called as expert witnesses at a parliamentary inquiry into creating a better family law system for people affected by family violence.

Engaged the next generation of Koori women by creating 'Deadly Duos', an innovative social media prevention campaign for Koori youth which attracted 10,000 views in its first 10 days.

Expanded our reach by establishing a culturally safe, duty lawyer service at the Marram-Ngala Ganbu Koori Children's Court in Broadmeadows.

Increased significantly our legal outreach work at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, enabling vital legal and non-legal wrap-around support for Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence behind bars.

Built a strong Aboriginal workforce with the introduction of a new role of Cultural Adviser.

Influenced systemic change through the production of 10 submissions to Victorian policy and law reform inquiries and supported the National FVPLS Forum to produce 8 submissions of national importance.

Hosted the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and facilitated a roundtable discussion on violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Continued to ensure Aboriginal women's needs are front and centre by engaging with key reforms that will profoundly impact upon the rights of Aboriginal women in Victoria and participated in more than 14 forums and advisory networks to influence law and policy development across family violence, child protection, access to justice, sector reform and Aboriginal self-determination.

Amplified our national voice with our CEO appointed Co-Chair of the Change the Record Coalition which drives advocacy to change the record on the disproportionate imprisonment rates, and rates of violence, experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We also contributed to advancing the Redfern Statement coalition's blueprint for action on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' disadvantage and inequality.

FVPLS Victoria Service Snapshot

Between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2017:



We delivered
1265
legal services to 561
individual clients
across Victoria.

We also delivered
515 non-legal support
services to Aboriginal women
escaping family violence,
supporting our women's
safety while promoting
recovery and re-engagement
in community.

“Koori girls are the best.
You don't have to explain –
everyone just gets it. That's
why I like going to
Young Luv.”

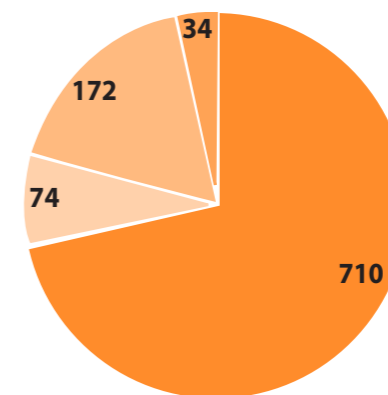
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander women are
32x
more likely to be
hospitalised because of family
violence than other women and
10x
more likely to die from violence
assault than other women.



Our Early Intervention &
Prevention
programs reached

990

women in 2016-17



Sisters Day Out **710**
Dilly Bag **74**
Young Luv **172**
Sisters Inside **34**

“Being at *Young Luv* made
me realise how little I know about
our culture. I want to ask my Nan
and Mum about where they grew
up and how it was for
them growing up then.”

Since 2007,
we have conducted **111**
Sisters Day Out workshops
with a total of
9,755
participants!

“*Young Luv* makes you feel
proud and strong.
There's no shame,
you should love
who you are.”

Our CEO presented at
18
conferences and public
speaking engagements across
Victoria and Australia –
providing a strong voice on the
prevention of violence against
Aboriginal women and children.



We provided
\$285,000
in immediate financial support to
84 Aboriginal women
escaping family violence through
Flexible Support Packages.

Client Story

The case study below provides an insight into the lived experience of the women we work with. This case study has been selected as it demonstrates the holistic services offered by FVPLS Victoria. All identifying details have been removed to ensure privacy.

Rosemary, a victim of family violence, initially sought legal advice from FVPLS Victoria eight years ago after she attended a Sisters Day Out. Our legal and non-legal advice and support, provided periodically over the subsequent years, served to protect her and her much loved son Travis, from serious violence perpetrated by her partner.

Earlier this year Rosemary made contact again as unforeseen events in her life left her feeling depressed and unable to cope. Her violent partner died unexpectedly, Travis, now a teenager, started disengaging from school attracting the attention of Child Protection, while mounting unpaid bills and unexpected costs for car repairs heightened her anxiety. The underlying historical fact of the sexual abuse she suffered as a ward of the state re-surfaced putting further pressure on her social and emotional health.

Concentrating their efforts in a holistic manner, Rosemary's lawyer and paralegal support worker undertook a targeted and sustained effort to stabilise her world. We supported Rosemary to engage with culturally safe and trauma informed counseling; made VOCAT applications for critical acknowledgment and compensation for Rosemary and Travis; provided a Flexible Support Package to assist with the bills; connected Rosemary with the local Aboriginal Cooperative who offered physical, social and emotional support; and assisted Rosemary to engage with Knowmore Legal Service, who assisted her to read her wardship file in a trauma informed manner.

Rosemary approaches the end of this year in a better and more positive position. Child Protection has closed their file on Travis, the psychological support continues with the benefit of some clarity about her past, and she is hopeful that a successful VOCAT outcome may enable her and Travis to take a holiday and then start exploring tertiary education opportunities for him, an option denied Rosemary in her youth.

Financial Snapshot

FVPLS Victoria achieved a small operating surplus for the 2016-17 financial year, and remains in a strong financial position.

A full copy of the financial report and auditor's report is available on our website, search 'Annual Report' at www.fvpls.org

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2017		
	\$ 2017	\$ 2016
Operating revenue	4,589,807	3,713,385
Operating surplus	66,697	40,671
Accumulated surplus / beginning of financial year	2,345,216	2,304,545
Accumulated surplus / end of financial year	2,411,913	2,345,216

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2017		
Current Assets	\$ 2017	\$ 2016
Cash assets	2,645,710	2,448,031
Receivables	132,761	118,159
Other	38,417	18,091
Total current assets	2,816,888	2,584,281

Non-Current Assets	\$ 2017	\$ 2016
Plant, property & equipment	2,126,655	1,976,800
Total non-current assets	2,126,655	1,976,800
Total assets	4,943,543	4,561,081

Current Liabilities	\$ 2017	\$ 2016
Payables	215,569	172,070
Financial liabilities	23,526	19,581
Current tax liabilities	161,405	162,239
Provisions	355,035	298,292
Other	1,776,095	1,563,683
Total current liabilities	2,531,630	2,215,865
Total liabilities	2,531,630	2,215,865
Net assets	2,411,913	2,345,216
Retained surplus	2,411,913	2,345,216

Board of Directors

Chairperson
Marion Hansen

Deputy Chairperson
Karen Bryant (resigned November 2016)

Secretary
Damien Goodall

Board members
Bernice Clarke
Jaynaya Williams
Darlene Thomas

Staff

2016-17 Current Staff

Antoinette Braybrook, Nick Toonen, Wanda Bargo, Simone Elias, Kelly Faldon, Maggie Barford, Laura Vines, Sue Sharma, Dale Gerner, Anne Lenton, Kate Stowell, Barbara Shalit, Kehndra Hooker, Eulia Armatolos, Kim Avers, Janelle Cooper, Geerthana Narendren, Deb Edsall, Shelley Burns-Williamson, Natalie Larsek, Chloe Kenny, Liza Harwood, Melanie Ashman, Kirsten Sullivan, Linnea Burdon-Smith, Falea'i Fesili, Meriki Onus, Casey Williams, Tahnee Edwards, Anne Bambrook, Margaret Portelli, Jenna Davey-Burns, Nidhi Sirohi, Echo Yu, Amy Greer and Ruth Milne.

Volunteers
Pat Brown and Mary Smith.

2016-17 Former Staff

Amy Sherman, Onur Ali, Lauren Avery, Elva Bamblett, Alice Bewley, Kaitlin Boyd, Narelle Bragg, John Burke, Joanna Colautti, Vanessa Day, Andrew Gargett, Shari Handy, Lucy Hodson, Avital Kamil, Jamie McConnachie, Rose McGowan, Amy Moore, Alisoun Neville, Sam Nixon, Jill Prior, Gabriella Raetz, Jacinta Rose, Justine Russell, Codie Schaefer, Jo Staunton, Paula Stewart, Petra Theilhaber and Vivienne Topp.

Supporters

We express our appreciation to the following:

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Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Victorian State Government Funding
Department of Health & Human Services
Department of Justice and Regulation
Victoria Legal Aid
Department of Premier and Cabinet

Non-Government Funding

Australian Communities Foundation
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Gandel Foundation
Melbourne Women's Fund
VicHealth
The R E Ross Trust
City of Darebin
City of Whittlesea
City of Melton

Pro bono and other supporters

Lander & Rogers Lawyers
Telstra Corporation, Phone Card and Recharge Assistance Programs





Servicing Victoria with offices in:

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- Warrnambool
- Bairnsdale
- Mildura

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