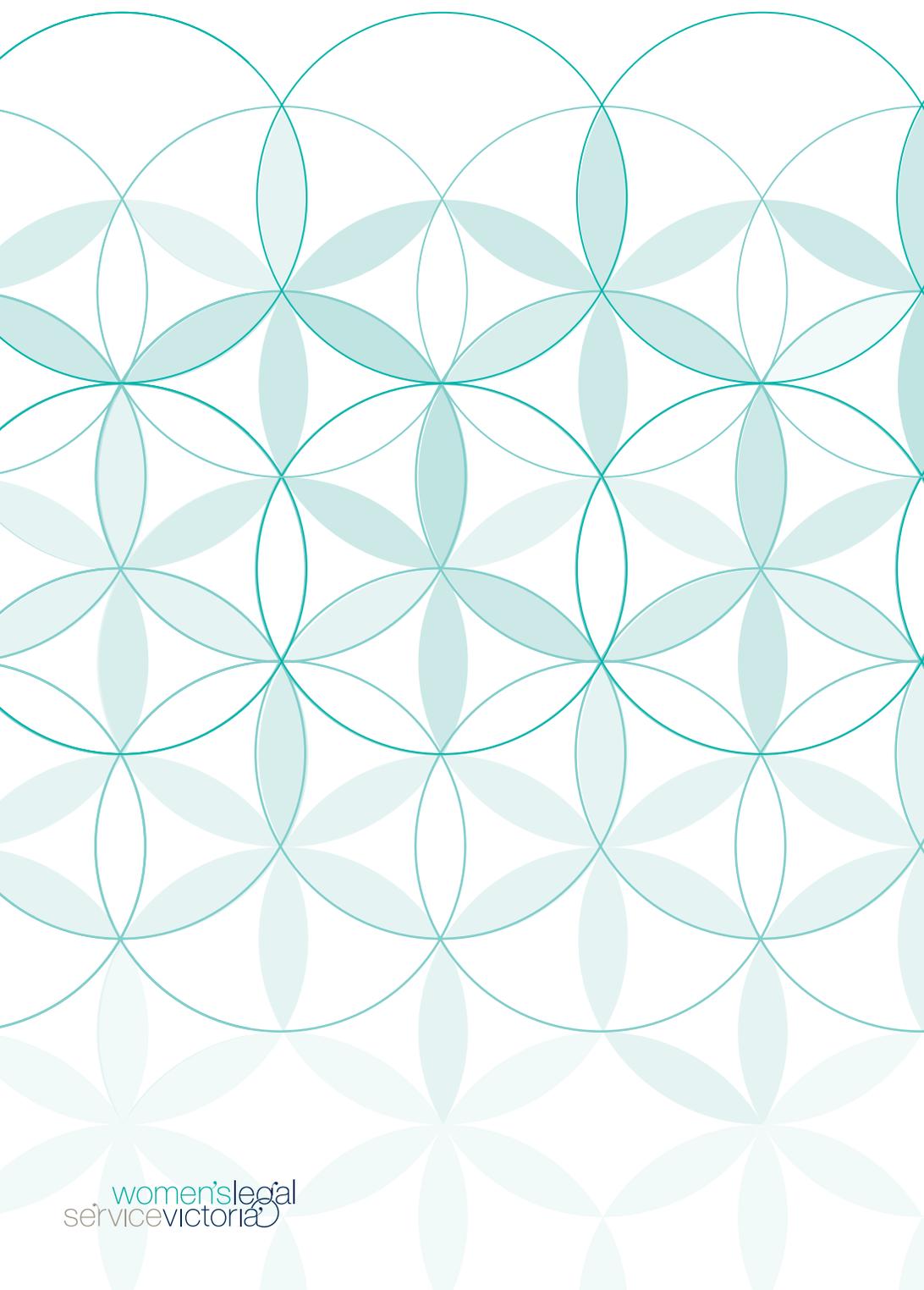


WOMEN'S
LEGAL
SERVICE
VICTORIA
ANNUAL
REPORT
2008



WLSV STAFF

01	Gillian Dallwitz	Executive Officer
02	Leanne Sinclair	Principal Lawyer
03	Gwen Yeoh	Lawyer
04	Carol Mellords	Lawyer
05	Kate Langham	Lawyer
06	Allyson Foster	Legal Educator
07	Penny Drysdale	Law Reform and Policy Lawyer
08	Danielle Wisniak	Legal Advice Line Supervisor/Lawyer
09	Eila Pourasgheri	Lawyer – Law Reform, Education and Practice
10	Ilana Faivel	Legal Educator/Lawyer
11	Mary Louise Hatch	Legal Educator/Lawyer
12	Sue De Silva	Finance Officer
13	Rebecca Carbone	Office Administrator
14	Angela Borg	Administrative Assistant



BOARD MEMBERS

01	Jennifer Dillon	Chair
02	Gesualda Li Rosi	Deputy Chair
03	Leanne Miller	Secretary
04	Jo Hastings	Treasurer
05	Lorna Gelbert	Public Officer
06	Dorothy Gibbs	Member
07	Anne Lyon	Member
08	Libby Maynard	Member
09	Tali Bernard	Member

In his well-crafted and thoughtful final plenary address to the National Association of CLC's at Darwin in August 2008, VLA's Managing Director Tony Parsons contemplated the axiom "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations". Tony implored the community legal sector to seize their opportunities to direct the urgent reconstruction of the legal aid system and cement their position within it. Tony also drew a template for the strategic planners of an organisation such as ours, one that we will have a mind to as we move forward. It's a fine speech and well worth reading. As Tony steps down and moves on to another very different career in the law, we know that we will miss him and we thank him for his vision and his support.

However, given the parlous economic times and the difficult funding decisions to be faced, perhaps we would do well to also take our line from the White Queen in *Through the Looking Glass* when she mused "Why, sometimes, I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast"!

Here's six of the near impossible things the Board of Women's Legal Service Victoria has had to believe this year:

- **that a change of government and a new AG will bring security and adequacy of funding to organisations such as ours!** Early in the year we became aware of the extent of the funding crisis experienced by Victoria Legal Aid and the inevitable effect that would have on the provision of a wide range of family law services. WLSV Board has fought to keep our profile, our needs and our important services before the decision makers, no doubt with some success this year, but it is a battle and we know that ensuring a sustainable future is our most important ongoing task.
- **that we will have the wisdom to appoint a new Principal Lawyer with the expertise, the skills, the loyalty and the tenacity of our friend Sarah Vessali!** Sarah moved on this year after seven fantastic years with Women's. Goodbye Sarah (not that you'll be too far away, I suspect) and good luck. Her move has sparked an enormous search for her replacement. Gill and I have quizzed, examined and probed many wonderful women and the one constant that has come through is just how well-regarded and respected our organisation is and how many well-qualified people want to join us. That's thrilling and mercifully, it's not an impossible task – we think we've found a good fit and I look forward to seeing her put her own stamp on the job.
- **that strategic and succession planning for Women's Legal Service Victoria will be an easy and quick process!** No way OK... We know we're an important player in the provision of legal services for women in Victoria. We know we are faced with a significant task. We must seriously contemplate our history and our heritage whilst embracing our future. It is a big job and we'll do it until we get it right and we'll keep the smiles on our faces all the while...
- **that our training arm will continue to thrive and prosper in the way it has this year!** Training, education and policy are things that our organisation does so well. The guiding hands and mind of Legal Educator Allyson Foster will however take a little break at the end of the year. We're thrilled to bits for you Allyson and have already prepared the bottom drawer for when our newest junior member comes back to work with you. We hope that for Allyson and for Brenna and their partners the births are joyful, healthy and fulfilling occasions. We were also very happy to welcome our new Law Reform and Policy Lawyer Penny Drysdale on board this year. She has filled big shoes – and we were happy to see Joanna back for a while this year on a project – but we have no doubt Penny is a fantastic acquisition for our organisation. Of course, both Allyson and Penny and our new Principal Lawyer have the support of the wonderful staff of Women's Legal Service Victoria – they go on doing such a terrific job and achieving such good outcomes. Thank you all so much.
- **that our Board members can continue to find the time, the health and the goodwill to serve our organisation!** I have said in the past that I marvel at the commitment and expertise of the women on the Board. It is never an easy task to manage the professional and personal lives they lead, but this year I have seen such genuine resilience from several Board members when they

have faced their own individual predicaments. Thank you as always, my friends and colleagues. The organisation and I value you so much.

- **that Gillian Dallwitz will stay as CEO forever!** You see the problem will be finding someone who doesn't seem to draw a line between her own time and the organisation's, who manages to manage in such a good and professional way, who is caring, cheerful and positive almost ALL the time, who keeps all the balls in the air and provides such a competent and efficient face of the organisation and really is such a joy for me to work with.

Here's to 2009 and to the continuing and valuable work of Women's Legal Service Victoria.

GILLIAN DALLWITZ CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

2008 has been a big year for managing significant staff changes at WLSV.

Sarah Vessali resigned after seven years in the Principal Lawyer position. During that time her dedication and commitment to WLSV has been outstanding. The organisation benefited greatly from Sarah's expertise and her wonderful ability to step in and sort a problem in order to create a better outcome. All at WLSV wish Sarah every success in her new business venture.

Law Reform and Policy Lawyer Joanna Fletcher also resigned after seven years at WLSV. Using her expertise and knowledge, Joanna really shaped WLSV's law reform agenda. She worked very effectively to ensure that a wide range of decision makers consider the implications of their actions on our clients. We wish Joanna all the best with her career.

Penny Drysdale is our new Law Reform and Policy Lawyer. Penny comes to WLSV as a highly skilled specialist in law reform and policy. Since her appointment in May 2008, Penny has quickly proved to be a great addition and everyone is responding very positively to her collaborative style and innovative and creative thinking. Penny also practices at the Courts as a Lawyer.

I am very pleased and energised by the appointment of Leanne Sinclair to the Principal Lawyer position. Leanne has an excellent knowledge of family law and WLSV. This appointment recognises Leanne's achievements and dedication to the organisation over several years. Leanne is well placed to take up this new challenge and I am certain she will bring skills, enthusiasm and a new vigor to the role.

In addition, I have also been recruiting for staff to replace a number of other positions. This includes WLSV's Legal Educator Allyson Foster (starting maternity leave in January 2009) and Family Law Legal Service Lawyers, Brenna Powney (also on maternity leave starting December 2008) and Angela Altavilla.

Although reviewing and upgrading WLSV's human resource functions and replacing so many wonderful staff members was not part of my best-laid plans for 2008, it has been beneficial to review the roles and take some time to think about the 'fit and mix'.

Our lawyers and administration staff have been wonderful dealing with all the changes. They have all worked so well together, supporting each other in true collaborative spirit. Very impressive!

Thank you to WLSV's Chair Jennifer Dillon and her partner Geoff Dillon (in law and life) for their tireless support during this time. They have both helped greatly to sort a range of issues whilst we have been without a Principal Lawyer. They are truly 'The Super Good Guys!'

On a different note, WLSV's legal education program has been rocketing ahead, gaining momentum each year, with 2008 being WLSV's biggest year of activity to date. Several major training contracts have been secured and we have received excellent evaluations on all the legal education training work undertaken. Plus, we have some important new contracts lined up for 2009. Thank you to Legal Educator Allyson Foster, she is one in a trillion and needs to be cloned!

Funding is always an issue but we are very good at 'saving string' in order to hold it all together. Thankfully WLSV's wonderful Finance Officer Sue De Silva is on the job. Thank you Sue!

With so many great new staff members at WLSV, 2009 promises to be exciting and dynamic year! I am really looking forward to it!

SARAH
VESSALI
FAREWELL
MESSAGE
FROM
PRINCIPAL
LAWYER

I wish WLSV every success, may the organisation continue to thrive and prosper whilst providing the same excellent service to women throughout Victoria that it has over the past 26 plus years.

Since leaving to work in my own legal practice I do miss the close teamwork and camaraderie I shared with the staff and volunteers at WLSV over seven years. I especially think about the many times we all debriefed together and had a joke at the end of a long and stressful day.

Thank you to all the staff and board members for their wonderful support during my employment. I feel very privileged to have worked with everyone at WLSV for the past seven years.

PS I plan to drop in at WLSV regularly to do the famous WLSV lunch-time quiz!

PENNY
DRYSDALE
LAW
REFORM
AND POLICY
LAWYER

I started work at Women's Legal Service Victoria at the end of May 2008. It has certainly been a significant and busy time in my first five months in the job.

One of the highlights has been the introduction of the Family Violence Protection Bill into State Parliament. The Bill has now passed into law. The new Act is expected to commence before the end of the year so WLSV has been busy preparing for its implementation.

I worked with Allyson Foster on a proposal for WLSV to provide training on the new Family Violence Protection Act 2008 to court registrars and the various professionals who work in the Family Violence Division and Specialist Courts. Our proposal was successful and Allyson Foster and Joanna Fletcher are working hard to develop and deliver that training. I prepared a 'comparison table' and a 'quick find chart' to assist lawyers and registrars to navigate the new Act.

WLSV prepared a submission and appeared at the inquiry on vexatious litigation by the Parliament of Victoria Law Reform Committee. Our submission emphasised that in some cases vexatious litigation is obsessive conduct which arises from (or is a further manifestation of) family violence or stalking behavior. In other words vexatious litigants are using the legal system as a vehicle to continue to control, harass or maintain contact with the other party. We argued that this is extremely distressing to victims and made recommendations about how it could be handled more effectively.

At the Federal level there have also been significant developments. The Federal Government has formed a National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children which is in the process of developing a National Action Plan. WLSV provided a written submission to the Council to inform the development of the plan and we look forward to commenting on a draft plan in the near future.

I represent WLSV on the committee of Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA), and have contributed to national law reform and policy development activities. WLSA held a successful 'Network Day' in Darwin attended by women's legal services from around Australia. WLSA has received funding to hold a national workshop in Melbourne in March 2009 to compare and contrast legal approaches to protecting women's safety.

One exciting development is that WLSV received funding from the Legal Services Board to develop a Case Study Bank so that we can document case studies from our legal practice and use them to inform law reform and legal education activities. Experts on case study methodology, Dr Prakash Singh and Dr Martin Davies from the University of Melbourne, are assisting us with this project. We have held two staff workshops and all our staff are developing skills in writing case studies. In 2009 the project will focus on getting all the systems in place for the Case Study Bank, including the technology that we need to store, locate and retrieve relevant case studies.

“Just a simple note to say ‘thank you so much’ for all your help and advice during a rather traumatic phase of my life. Your kind wisdom and professional expertise did so much to allay my apprehension and fears.”

WLSV Client 2008

WLSV legal education program continues to respond to growing demand for legal education and training. In the past twelve months I have delivered over 70 legal education sessions. As in previous years, WLSV's legal education program was delivered to a wide range of audiences. Providing legal education to these audiences not only raises the standard of legal knowledge in the community but also raises the profile of WLSV and the work that we do.

WLSV'S AUDIENCES

In 07/08 we delivered legal education and professional development to; Centres Against Sexual Assault counsellor/advocates, refuge workers, maternal and child health nurses, university students, magistrates, statewide telephone support staff, lawyers, mediators, family dispute resolution practitioners, family counsellors, psychologists, survivors of domestic violence and police.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

This year has also seen an increase in the demand for specific project based 'fee for service' training and professional development. WLSV fulfilled requests for professional development from the Federation of Community Legal Centres and the Department of Justice. We anticipate an increase in project work in 2009, arising from the introduction of the Family Violence Protection Act.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR INTERVENTION ORDER COURT SUPPORT SERVICES

The Federation of Community Legal Centres approached WLSV to develop and deliver the Intervention Order Court Support Service Professional Development Program. The four day program was delivered to CLC Lawyers who work as Duty Lawyers in Magistrates' Courts throughout Victoria. This will be followed up with an additional program to be delivered in the upcoming year. The aim of the program is to support Duty Lawyers in their ongoing professional development.

RURAL TRAINING DELIVERY

WLSV has delivered training in rural Victoria to a range of service providers at locations including; Seymour, Shepparton, Wodonga and Ararat.

WLSV'S WORK IN SEYMOUR, SHEPPARTON & WODONGA

Late in 2007, WLSV and Women's Health in the North East teamed up to provide legal education to support workers in Shepparton, Seymour and Wodonga. The training sessions were really well attended and valued. Attendees expressed their appreciation for educational activities being conducted on a local level. Demand was so great that we have followed up with additional education sessions at Wodonga Family Relationship Centre and a commitment to return to the area in 2009.

WLSV's Delivery to Statewide Services in 2007/2008 included:

- Center for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- Department of Justice
- DHS – Child and Maternal Health Nurses
- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria
- Jewish Taskforce Against Violence
- Men's Referral Service
- Public Interest Law Clearing House
- Relationships Australia
- WIRE - Women's Information
- Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- RMIT
- Victoria University

Other Community Organisations trained by WLSV in 2007/2008 included:

- North Yarra Community Health "New Beginnings Group"
- North Yarra Community Health "African Women's Group"
- John Cage Unit Melbourne Hospital Women's Group
- Women's Health West
- Western Women's Domestic Violence Network
- Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach
- Sister of Mercy Refuge

VISION
JUSTICE
FOR
WOMEN

VALUES
EQUITABLE
RESPECTFUL
ACCESSIBLE
EFFICIENT
INCLUSIVE
EMPOWERING
CREATIVE

MISSION STATEMENT

Women's Legal Service Victoria is a statewide organisation that provides quality legal services that are diverse, appropriate and responsive to the needs of women.

Women's Legal Service Victoria empowers women by providing them with knowledge to better access the legal system.

Women's Legal Service Victoria advocates for change in the legal system to promote the rights of women.

WLSV SERVICES

OPTION 1 LEGAL ADVICE LINE

03 9642 0877
1800 133302 freecall
for country callers

Monday 10am - 1pm
Tuesday 6.30pm - 8.30pm
Wednesday 2pm - 5pm
Thursday 6.30pm - 8.30pm

Please Note: The Legal Advice Line is for women in Victoria who need legal advice, information or referral – irrespective of income or assets. Interpreter services are available. Women should telephone the Legal Advice Line before attending WLSV's Face to Face Advice because WLSV Lawyers may be able to provide the appropriate legal information, advice or referral over the telephone.

OPTION 2 FACE TO FACE LEGAL ADVICE

Level 3, 43 Hardware Lane
Melbourne 3000

Phone 03 9642 0877
Every Thursday
9.30am - 12pm

OPTION 3 ADVICE & REPRESENTATION AT MELBOURNE MAGISTRATES' COURT

Level 6, 233 William Street
Melbourne (cnr Lonsdale Street)

Phone 03 9642 0877
Monday to Friday
9.30am - 1pm

OPTION 4 CASEWORK SERVICES

WLSV takes on approximately 400 cases a year, focusing on issues arising from RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN and VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, including: family law, de facto relationships, family violence – intervention orders.

WLSV focuses on areas of law where women are or could potentially be disadvantaged (in family law, for example, where separation often reduces women's financial circumstances) and where women's access to justice and legal support is limited.

VOLUNTEERS LEGAL ADVICE LINE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers work on WLSV's Legal Advice Line service from 6.30 to 8.30pm every Tuesday & Thursday.

Farzeen Alam	Claire Lachal	Mary Sevdalis
Julie Andritsos	Celia Laragy	Lily Hardman
Leonie Bailey	Sarah Lean	Laura Hilly
Eleanor Bishop	Amanda Lee	Deborah Randa
Eve Bodsworth	Katherine Lockey	Isolde Lueckenhausen
Amanda Burns	Kirsty McIntyre	Susan Rawling
Ruth McClelland	Odelia Messer	Kerree McIvor
Sarah Cerche	Kirsten Morrison	Stephanie Reid
Nicola Collingwood	Andrea Motbey	Paula Leslie
Lauren Copeland	Dao Bui Nguyen	Felicity James
Dianne Donati	Silvana Prestia	Katie Pound
Louise Dorian	Deborah Polites	Janine Bye
Dove Elliot	Regan Richards	Simone Driscoll
Donna Farrell	Dianne Seneviratne	Gemma-Jane Cooper
Jeanne Gorman	Narelle Sullivan	Caitlin Tierney
Elizabeth Hall	Lucy Terracall	Louise Martin
Hannah Hodges	Betty Trimcevski	Annette Esposito
Jana Homatopoulos	Sarah Vorweg	Ilana Rochwerger
Rae Kaspiew	Carolyn Welsh	Nerida Mulvey
Sabah Khan	Christine Willshire	Fiona Batten
Pamela Khoo	Jillian Williams	Diana Hogan
Suzanne Kneen	Marita Wilson	Amelia Beech
Lisa Koleski	Stephanie Doyle	Sarah Wainwright
Maria Kyriacou	Amy Cadusch	Keleigh Robinson



SPECIAL THANK YOU TO AN AMAZING WLSV VOLUNTEER!

Board and staff at WLSV would like to pay a special tribute to volunteer Julie Andritsos. Julie has been volunteering at WLSV for 25 years. She is a person who quietly gets on with tasks and seeks no special attention. All at WLSV think she is truly amazing. Thank you Julie, WLSV's and our clients have benefited greatly!



LEGAL VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers assist WLSV lawyers between 9am & 5pm weekdays.

Jessica Chen	Kerry Wolke	Student Placements
Melinda Verlin	Joni Burns	Linda Roberts
Jenny Finn	Emma Reilly	Rachael McLaughlin
Genna Riggs	Meredith Kennedy	Jessica Willard
Jenna Donsky	Rachael Hopkins	Romy Weinstein
Priyanka Vohra		Sarah Edmonds
Hayley Miller-Grinter	Administrative Volunteers	Sabrina Saliba
Catharina Weigold	Kathy Fawcett	Hannah Levy
Naomi Pfitzner		Belinda Company
Hannah Levy		Rachael Han
Denise Xin Jie Lam		Rebecca Keller

NUMBERS

TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS ASSISTED

(not counting multiple contacts)

2848

TOP FIVE TYPES OF LEGAL WORK UNDERTAKEN

Advice activities	3491
Information activities	3357
Cases with court representation	1333
Cases completed	1088
Legal education & law reform projects	102

TOP TEN OCCURRENCES OF PROBLEM TYPES

Family or domestic violence	951
Child contacts or contact orders	488
Property (in marriage)	437
Intervention orders – stalking	156
Property (de facto)	138
Divorce	129
Child residency	109
Separation	77
Family law – other	62
Injuries compensation	45

TOP TEN OCCURRENCES OF COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Australia	1296
England	72
China	61
India	48
New Zealand	35
Vietnam	34
Philippines	22
Russia	22
Turkey	21
Lebanon	19

THANK YOU
LEGAL ASSISTANCE
& OTHER ASSISTANCE

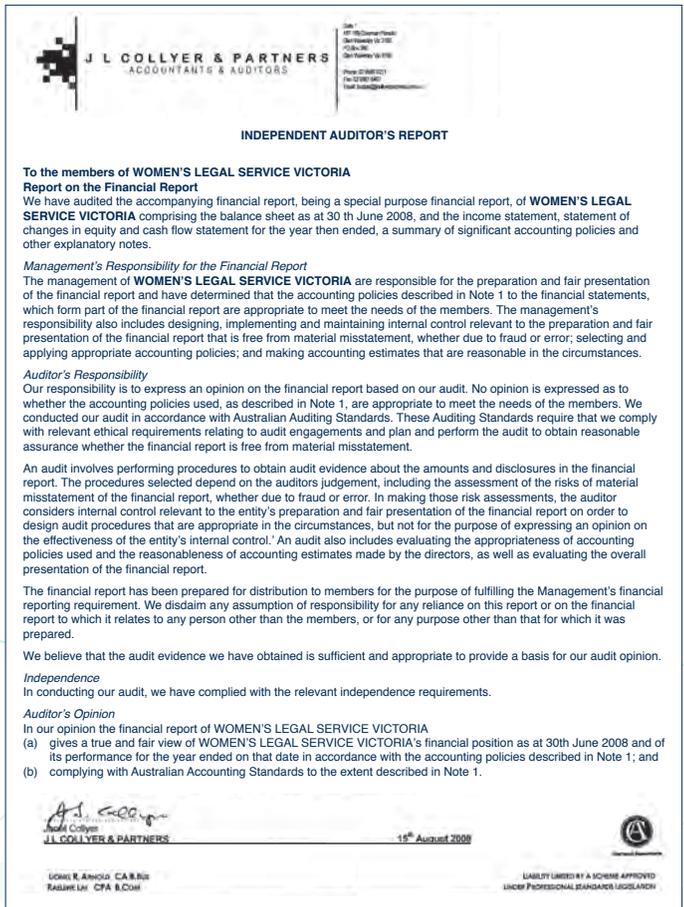
Thank you to the following organisations or people who have so generously assisted WLSV's clients, and WLSV, in the past twelve months.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Robert Allen	Paul Ehrlich	Kathy Raccanello
Irene Bolger	Susan Einsiedel	Kim Southey
Vince Caltabiano	Leonie Englefield	Michael Stanton
Kylea Campana	David Faran	Vass Theodoropoulou
Mario Cenacchi	Zoltan Friedman	Tim Tyler
Georgina Coghlan	Tom Hutching	Sarah Vessali
Neil Collins	Esther James	Natalie Vogel
Caroline Counsel	Neale James	Minal Vohra
Angela Cranenburgh	Bruno Kiernan	Tony Friends
Helen Dellidis	Colin King	Robyn Wheeler
Kath Devine	David Laidlaw	Amanda Wynne
Geoff Dillon	Kaye McNaught	
Rebecca Dunlop	Roona Nida	

OTHER ASSISTANCE

Helen Bartley – Bartley Consulting
Dr Prakash Singh – University of Melbourne
Dr Martin Davies – University of Melbourne
DLA Phillips Fox
Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service
Public Interest Legal Clearing House



BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
EQUITY		
Capital Replacement Reserve	90,000	90,000
Retained Earnings	211,571	78,664
TOTAL EQUITY & RESERVES	301,571	168,664
Represented by:		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Petty Cash	314	264
Cash at Bank - Cheque A/C	111,371	39,047
Cash at Bank - Cash Management	178,868	135,006
Cash at Bank - Term Deposits	178,409	130,466
Cash at Bank - Payroll Security A/C	25,000	25,000
	493,962	329,783
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Computer Equipment	1,600	1,600
	1,600	1,600
Office Furniture & Equipment	143,658	133,119
Less Accumulated Depreciation	102,060	95,532
	41,598	37,587
	43,198	39,187
TOTAL ASSETS	537,160	368,970
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Other Creditors	22,907	21,732
Provision for 'to make good' premises	12,000	12,000
Provision for Staff Entitlements	78,502	92,990
GST Payable	21,700	17,013
Future Contingency Fund	25,000	25,000
Income in Advance	75,480	31,571
	235,589	200,306
TOTAL LIABILITIES	235,589	200,306
NET ASSETS	301,571	168,664

INCOME
STATEMENT
FOR THE
YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2008

2007

INCOME	\$	\$
Interest Received	20,284	17,116
Costs Recovered & Retained	5,904	
Reimbursement - Wages	94,040	107,369
Reimbursement - Rent	24,000	24,000
Community Legal Education	30,710	14,960
Donations	1,765	
Membership Fees	41	
CLC Recurrent Grant	720,407	660,607
Other VLA Grant	2,966	2,699
	900,076	826,792

EXPENDITURE

Audit Fees	3,098	3,080
Bank Charges	307	358
Cleaning	4,384	3,751
Conferences & Seminar Costs	7,230	2,806
Depreciation	6,529	6,239
Disbursements	145	83
Filing Fees	39	100
Future Contingencies	-	25,000
Holiday Pay	(23,635)	19,785
Insurance	2,491	3,148
Leasing Charges	1,008	811
Library	7,499	7,138
Light & Power	3,146	3,210
Long Service Leave	9,147	8,463
Memberships	3,626	3,288
Planning & Programming	(536)	
Practising Certificates	2,276	1,426
Postage	2,411	1,322
Printing & Stationery	8,750	8,431
Publicity	4,945	14,578
Premises - to make good	-	6,000
Rent	56,724	54,806
Repairs & Maintenance - Capital Equipment	2,370	68
Salaries	573,133	561,251
Security Costs	364,539	
Staff Recruitment	5,434	300
Staff Amenities	8,129	7,213
Structural Maintenance	500	655
Sundry Expenses	2,873	3,786
Superannuation Contributions	49,846	49,604
Telephone	13,864	12,390
Training	4,945	9,385
Travel & Accomodation	3,711	1,644
Workcover	2,416	2,391
	767,169	823,049
OPERATING PROFIT	132,907	3,743

“ Dear CEO, This is just a quick line to inform you that I have nothing but complements for your staff. They looked after me so well. They could not have done anything better. [The lawyer] was fantastic, she was absolutely outstanding. Can't thank WLSV enough for stepping in and handling my case.” WLSV Client 2008

CASE STUDY

Legal advice and representation can often help parties negotiate good outcomes in their cases without the need for a contested hearing.

Karlina, originally from Burma, moved first to Canada and then to Australia. In Australia she married and had one child. When Women's Legal Service Victoria (WLSV) first saw her she had been in Australia for three years and her child was four and a half months old. She was referred to WLSV by a Maternal and Child Health Nurse. Karlina needed the assistance of an interpreter.

Karlina's husband physically and emotionally abused her, starting when she became pregnant and continuing after the child was born. He once tried to strangle her while she was breast feeding the baby. He continually called her a "village girl", a "prostitute" and "garbage". He controlled all the finances.

Karlina had children still living in Canada from a previous relationship and her husband would not allow her to telephone or contact them. When she tried to contact them he became very angry. Eventually he cut off the telephone and the internet to prevent her from communicating with them. Karlina was distressed by this and became very isolated. She had originally expected her older children to join them in Australia.

Karlina left her husband because of the abuse she had suffered and went to a women's refuge. However, her husband then refused to sponsor her visa so she became an illegal immigrant (she eventually obtained a bridging visa). Her husband also put Karlina and the child on the airport watch list to prevent them from leaving Australia.

Karlina wanted to relocate back to Canada with the child so she could be reunited with her other children. She also had friends to support her in Canada. However, her husband wanted to prevent this. He proposed that the child live with him and that Karlina should go back to Canada alone.

When Karlina came to WLSV for assistance she was distraught and felt she had no option but to agree with what her husband proposed. She was afraid of him and felt unable to negotiate with him or his lawyers. Her husband had an income of \$85,000pa and had engaged lawyers to represent him.

WLSV was able to provide free legal advice and information to Karlina so she was aware of all her options. WLSV agreed to take on the case and briefed counsel to negotiate with Karlina's husband.

After a number of false starts, eventually an agreement was reached so that Karlina could return to Canada with her child. The parties both retained joint responsibility for the long term care of the child. Karlina agreed to facilitate time between the child and its father where possible, for example, when her husband travelled to Canada. Karlina and the child's names were removed from the airport watch list so they could return to Canada.

WLSV drafted consent orders to reflect this agreement and filed them with the court so that they became binding orders.

FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Women's Legal Service Victoria is funded by the Indigenous Justice and Legal Assistance Division of the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department – and Victoria Legal Aid.

women's legal
service victoria

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