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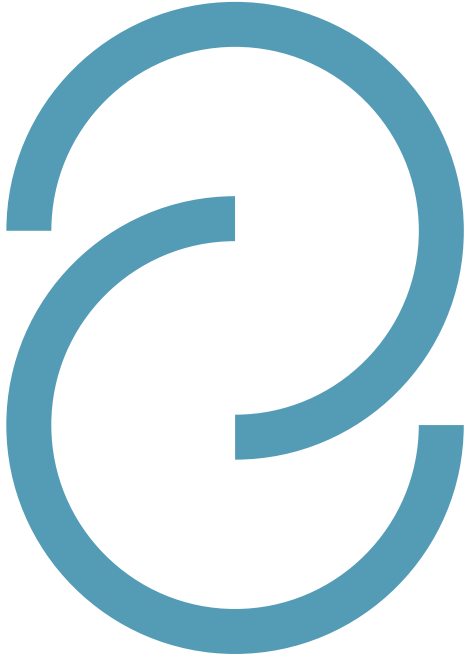
West Heidelberg Community Legal

Strategic Plan

2020/2025



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Acknowledgement of Country

West Heidelberg Community Legal Service acknowledges that our office and catchment are located on Wurundjeri land. We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional owners and spiritual custodians of land and pay our deepest respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Established in 1975, we are part of one of Australia's longest running health justice partnerships. For our first 40 years we were co-located with Banyule Community Health. In 2014, we formally merged with and became a program of Banyule Community Health.

The merger of the two organisations reflects our shared belief that community need is best met by a holistic and seamless service response. Today, working within our unique integrated service model, our dedicated team provides free legal services to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised residents of Banyule.

This strategic plan positions WHCL to continue its critical work in advocating for justice and providing legal services to the community's most marginalised members while navigating sector changes and evolving community needs.





Alignment to Banyule Community Health's Strategic Plan

As an integrated program of Banyule Community Health, we share our Purpose and Values. Our strategic priorities align with those of Banyule Community Health and we are motivated by an intention to strengthen our uniquely integrated model while exploring broader partnership and growth opportunities that extend and improve services for our community.

Our Purpose

Address inequity. Building healthy, inclusive and just communities.

Our Values

Dignity in everything that we do.

- Welcoming, friendly, open and honest
- Person-centred, strength-based and supportive
- Respectful and just. Valuing difference and diversity

Quality matters.

- Being committed to excellence
- Learning and adapting to new environments.
Being inquisitive and asking “how can we...”
- Being accountable and driven by best practice

It takes **Passion**.

- Building health, equity and justice with our communities
- Fostering high performing teams
- Being collaborative in finding solutions to complex problems
- Engaging new communities with authenticity



Our Vision

Justice for the most socially, economically and culturally marginalised members of the local community.

Our Mission

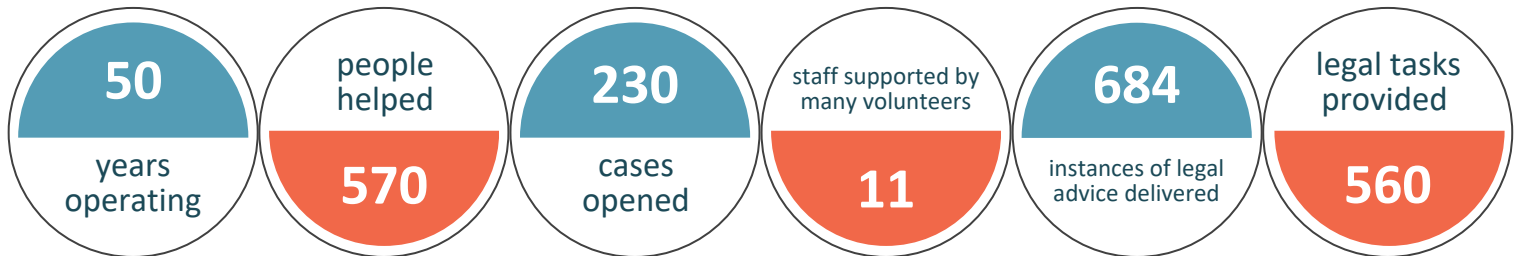
We recognise the link between the legal and health needs of the community. Our integrated approach ensures we reach community members most in need and with the least access to justice.

We work to amplify the voice of our community. We advocate for just laws and change where necessary to secure rights and fair access to social and economic resources for marginalised community members.



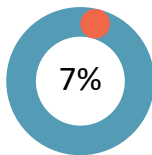
Our Impact

In 2023 – 2024 we achieved:

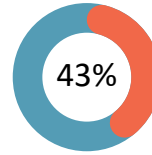


Supporting our community

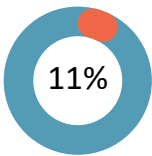
A snapshot of people we have helped from June 2023 - 2024



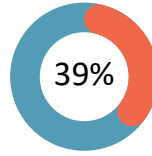
7% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



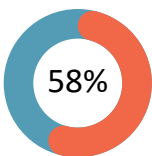
43% were living with a disability



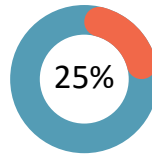
11% were Somali-Australian



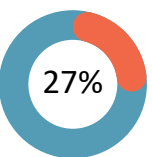
39% were affected by family violence



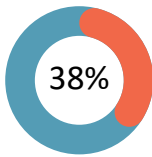
58% were experiencing poor mental health



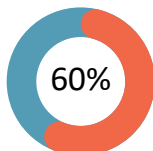
25% were experiencing addiction



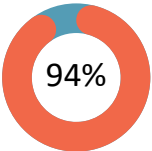
27% were experiencing or at risk of homelessness



38% were connected with at least 1 other service at Banyule Community Health



60% were women



94% were experiencing financial disadvantage



149 referrals received from **19** Banyule Community Health teams

332 referrals received from **35** community partner agencies

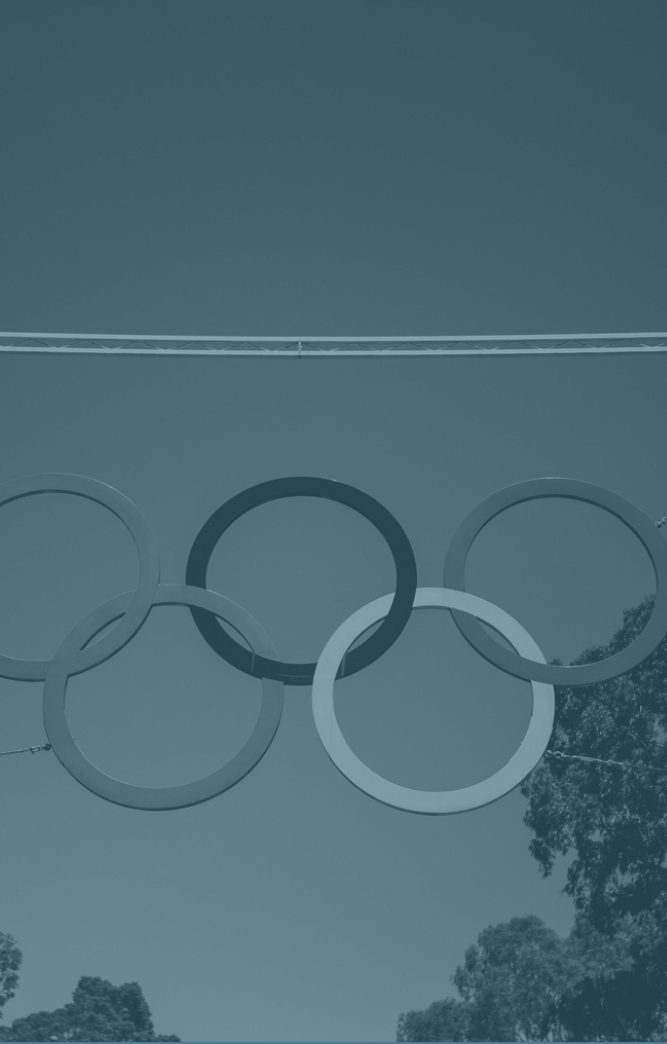
139 secondary consultations delivered to other professionals

[My lawyer] has not only helped me within the legal issues in my life but also has continually provided me with the support I needed in other areas of my life where I was struggling. Not to be over the top, but without [my lawyer] and the services across the board at BCH, I have no clue where I would be

– Client

It's the collaboration, where they're the experts in one area, I'm expert in another and we talk to each other. We provide a better service that way because people don't fall through the cracks."

– Maternal Child Health Nurse



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 1 Access to justice for marginalised communities
- 2 Capacity building, advocacy, and sector leadership
- 3 Capacity building through internships, volunteering, and staff development
- 4 Governance, organisational sustainability and integrated services



1

Access to justice for marginalised communities

- 1.1** Ensure that people experiencing disadvantage can access timely legal assistance.
- 1.2** Enhance community understanding of legal issues to empower informed decisions.
- 1.3** Strengthen the capability of communities and individuals to respond to legal issues effectively.
- 1.4** Deliver targeted legal services to clients experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation, focusing on:
 - Public and community housing tenants
 - Clients identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
 - People experiencing poor mental health and/or addiction
 - People experiencing family violence
 - Somali Australian community





2

Capacity building, advocacy, and sector leadership

- 2.1** Equip internal and external service providers with the skills to identify legal issues and connect clients to appropriate legal assistance.
- 2.2** Contribute to sector best practice and knowledge sharing about health-justice practice.
- 2.3** Engage in advocacy, law reform, and sector practice-based networks to advance the rights of marginalised communities.
- 2.4** Influence decision-makers to drive improvements in laws, policies, and legal processes that benefit marginalised communities.
- 2.5** Strengthen WHCL's role as a leader in providing integrated legal support to public and community renters, advocating for fair, consistent and transparent standards, and addressing systemic housing-related injustices.



3

Capacity building through internships, volunteering, and staff development

- 3.1 Leverage the Deakin Legal Internship Program and La Trobe University Legal Internship Program to enhance service delivery capacity.
- 3.2 Continue the Volunteer Law Clerk Program to improve intake processes and access for clients.
- 3.3 Invest in staff and volunteer training, engagement, and well-being to maintain a high level of service delivery and job satisfaction.

4

Governance, organisational sustainability and integrated services

- 4.1 Ensure WHCL is effectively governed and managed to maintain and enhance the integrated practice model across Banyule Community Health.
- 4.2 Build strong linkages with neighbouring Community Legal Centres (CLCs) associated with the service areas of Merri Health, the merging health service.





LOCATIONS



MAIN OFFICE:

21 Alamein Road, West
Heidelberg, VIC 3081

OUTREACH PARTNERSHIPS:

La Trobe University - Bundoora campus.

Curran Place – 164 Banksia Street, Ivanhoe

Odyssey House – Bonds Road, Lower Plenty

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal – Bundoora

Barbunnin Beek – Catalina Street, West Heidelberg