



Annual Report 2015 2016



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Working towards a world where all people are able to receive a guaranteed adequate income in order to enjoy a decent standard of living.

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About SSRV

Social Security Rights Victoria (SSRV) is a not-for-profit community legal centre that promotes access to justice and the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged members of the community. It does this by providing free and accessible legal assistance, education and policy advocacy in the area of social security law.

The service specialises in assisting the most disadvantaged and socially excluded members of the community with their social security issues. SSRV's principal activities are:

- The provision of legal information, advice, casework assistance and representation to Victorians in the area of social security law
- The prevention of and early intervention into legal problems through a community legal education program
- The design and implementation of legal projects and policy initiatives to address specific areas of need in its community; for example, employment services for unemployed persons
- Law reform activities to address systemic unfairness in the legal system

VISION

All people in Australia are able to receive a guaranteed adequate income in order to enjoy a decent standard of living.

MISSION

SSRV works to secure the right to equitable social security entitlements for all Victorians. SSRV does this by:

- Acting as a watchdog and advocate for social change
- Providing leadership and a public voice
- Providing community education
- Providing professional legal advocacy services

VALUES

- Social justice – promoting and respecting the dignity of each person in the community, especially their rights to natural justice and procedural fairness
- Quality – we go beyond to assist each person accessing our service
- Responsibility – we support each other to be accountable to those we assist and to our stakeholders
- Integrity – we openly match what we say with what we do.

About SSRV continued...

FUNDING

Social Security Rights Victoria is funded by the Federal Attorney General's Department and the Victorian Government (via Victoria Legal Aid) to provide core services described on page 9, as well as to undertake law reform and legal education work. The funding includes:

- \$234,384 from the Federal Attorney General's Department
- \$40,756 from the Victorian Government

In 2015–2016, SSRV also received funding from:

- The Ian Potter Foundation for the JobVoice project
- Deakin University to manage and run the clinical legal education program
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust for a service model re-design project
- Victorian Law Foundation to develop 5 web-based fact sheets

SSRV Board & Staff

SSRV Board Members

Nina Boughey
President

Martin Pike
Vice President

Paul Garry
Treasurer

Kirsty Gregory
Membership Officer

Marianne De Leo
Member

Ben Zika
Member
(till Nov 2015)

Agata Wierzbowski
Member

Elaine Cruise
Member

SSRV Staff

Deborah Itzkowic
Director/Principal solicitor
(till Nov 2015)

Ben Zika
Director

Graham Wells
Principal Solicitor/ Clinical Supervisor

Peter Horbury
Manager, Operations & Information Services

Karen Betts
Project Manager – Marketing & Communications

Kate O'Hara
Social Media & Online Content Administrator

President's Report

2016 has been a productive and exciting year at SSRV. Much of our energy has been devoted to investigating how our organisation can respond to the funding challenges and uncertainties currently facing us, as well as the entire community legal sector. We have undertaken several projects in the past year which explore how SSRV can best use our (very) limited resources to help the most vulnerable members of society. While, at the time of writing, these projects are still ongoing, it's already clear that SSRV will need to think strategically and creatively, to ensure that we are having the greatest impact we possibly can, as well as to ensure the long-term survival of an organisation which has specialist skills in social security law in Victoria.

While all of this strategic thinking has been going on, SSRV has not lost sight of its more immediate obligations to assist those with social security problems. Quite the opposite: in 2015-16 we once again exceeded all of our quantitative targets for providing advice and assistance to those struggling in the maze of Australia's social security system. Not only that, but the quality of the advice we provide is clearly outstanding, as evidenced by the many excellent outcomes Graham, Peter, Ben, and their team of students and volunteers have achieved for our clients. Some of these stories are detailed in this Annual Report. We could not do this crucial community

work without our many volunteers, who are ably supervised by the knowledgeable and committed Peter Horbury.

The JobVoice project has now entered its final phase. The forum is up and running, and has proved to be a very valuable resource for Victorian job seekers. SSRV has met all of our targets for the project, and our stakeholders have said that they are very pleased with the outcomes of the project.

Our Clinical Legal Program, led by Graham Wells, has continued to expand. We are now the biggest host for students from Deakin Law School, and have received consistently positive feedback from students and clients on the program. The program develops the practical skills of young lawyers and, more importantly, instils in them a sense of social justice, gives students an appreciation of the challenges that the most vulnerable members of our community face, and teaches them about the challenges and rewards of community lawyering.

SSRV has been very fortunate to have Ben Zika at its helm over the past year. Ben is incredibly energetic, passionate about social justice, and has a brilliant strategic mind. SSRV is in a far stronger position as a result of Ben's leadership. Sadly, we will farewell Ben at the end of 2016, and wish him all the best in his new role as Director of Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre.

President's Report continued...

On the sad topic of farewells, we are also farewelling our permanent Director, Deb Itzkowic, who will not be returning to SSRV after her maternity leave. Deb has been a very strong, smart and passionate leader of SSRV since 2013. We are sorry to see her go, but wish her and her family the very best in their new endeavours.

At the time of writing we are looking to appoint a new Director who can fill the rather large shoes of Ben and Deb.

I'd like to express my enormous gratitude to the staff of SSRV, all of our volunteers, students and Board for their passion and commitment to the organisation and its mission. I think we can all be very proud of what SSRV has achieved over the past year, and will achieve in years to come, and for our role in creating a fairer and more equitable society.

Nina Boughey

Director's Report

2015/16 has been an interesting year for SSRV, starting with the organisation making several changes amongst the staff and ending with us reflecting on what sort of changes the organisation will need to make in the future.

Throughout, we have continued to provide essential front-line legal and information assistance to some of Victoria's most vulnerable, and in increasing volumes.

New Faces and Roles

In August 2015, our Director and Principal Solicitor Deborah Itzkowic announced she was taking a year away from the organisation on

parental leave. Along with this decision, came the decision to separate the role of Director from that of Principal Solicitor. Senior Solicitor and Clinical Supervisor Graham Wells came into the role of Principal and has steered the ship admirably. Under his guidance our advice and casework statistics have raised significantly. We have also taken in more students from Deakin University than any other year. Graham has managed to balance the often strict risk management requirements that come with managing a legal practice with a caring client focus that is the speciality of Community Legal Centres.

I came into the role in December 2015 and found an organisation full

Director's Report continued...

of hard working staff and volunteers that were ready to go the extra mile for our vulnerable clients. The focus for me, set out clearly by Deb and the SSRV Board, was to find ways for SSRV to increase our impact, better address unmet legal need and prioritise our 'value add' within the legal assistance sector. To do this, we needed first to reflect on where our organisation sat within the sector and find ways for us to continuously improve.

Looking to the Future

Early in 2016, we began a process of looking at our service mix and business model and considering whether we could be more efficient and more centred towards the needs of our clients and other stakeholders. With the assistance of the Lord Mayors Charitable Trust, we engaged consultants Thinkplace to help us redesign our legal service. That work is only part completed. At the end of 2015/16, Thinkplace had interviewed a group of our clients, other solicitors who work with vulnerable Victorians, financial counsellors and other community workers as well as the SSRV staff and volunteers. Their insights will help us to re-consider how SSRV can better achieve our mission.

SSRV is also looking to become better at monitoring and evaluating its impact. In April 2016, we were named as one of the pilot centres in

the Federation of Community Legal Centres, Evaluation Capacity Building Project. Through this Project, SSRV has been assigned a specialist to work intensively with our staff to increase the organisations capacity to evaluate our work and improve accordingly. In the future, we hope to be able to better consider the outcomes for our clients, amongst the signifiers of our success, not just the 'outputs' of advices given and casefiles open.

SSRV will continue to provide essential legal assistance to the community in social security law. The feedback we have received through our work with the community, and the projects outlined above, is that the community sector needs a specialist social security law service. How we best address the needs of the community and how we can best make a difference for vulnerable Victorians reliant on social security entitlements is something on which we'll continue to reflect.

Ben Zika

SSRV Services

SSRV provides legal information, advice, casework assistance and representation to Victorians in relation to social security matters.

Telephone and Email Information and Advice Service

The SSRV telephone and email information and advice service is available to people in Victoria who need legal information, advice or referral about social security (Centrelink) issues. Interpreter services are available.

Telephone service: (03) 9481 0355 and 1800 094 164 (free for rural callers)
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9.30am–12.30pm (except for Victorian public holidays and between Christmas and New Year)
Email: info@ssrv.org.au

In 2015–2016, SSRV provided 2310 telephone and email information services and advices. This represents an increase of more than 19% since 2014–2015.

SSRV Legal Practice

SSRV continues to provide ongoing casework assistance and representation on social security issues.

SSRV provided assistance to 1592 individual clients in 2015–2016, up 11% on 2014–2015.

The service opened 210 cases in 2015–2016, representing a 24% increase in casework files during the reporting period for matters requiring more intensive casework assistance. Of the 170 cases closed during the period, 107 involved up to five hours of work, 40 involved six to 20 hours of work, and 23 involved more than 20 hours of work. There were 33

cases involving representation for clients at the Social Security & Child Support Division or General Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This represents a 43% increase in our tribunal advocacy and representation in 2015–16.

Case Studies

The following case studies demonstrate the significant assistance that SSRV provides to vulnerable Victorians.

Please note: SSRV obtained clients' permission to tell these stories. Names have been changed.



Abdul's Story: Aged Pension

Abdul was a gentleman in his 80s who came to us via the Elder Abuse clinic. His family had forced him out of his home and he couldn't pay his Aged Care fees. Centrelink was treating the family home as a gifted asset rather than him being the victim of abuse as it actually was. SSRV's complex assessment expert worked on getting his pension reinstated and the resultant debt waived. In the end the Centrelink legal staff accepted what had happened and Abdul's aged care fees are being paid.



Rachel's Story: Disability Support Pension

Rachel was a young student who had suffered from severe ADHD since early adolescence and had been in receipt of the Disability Support Pension since 2011. Growing up, Rachel was the victim of a number of distressing and traumatic

experiences which eventually caused her to leave home at the age of 17. Consequently, Rachel had a history of unstable housing, unemployment and self-harm. Nevertheless, Rachel was determined to complete her VCE and with the support of dedicated counsellors was able to make some progress.

Following a routine review by Centrelink, Rachel's Disability Support Pension (DSP) was cancelled. This was despite substantial evidence from supporting clinical psychologists and medical practitioners confirming the severe impact this disorder had on Rachel's ability to engage in social activities, manage independent living and concentrate on tasks.

SSRV assisted Rachel to appeal the Centrelink decision to cancel her DSP to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The Tribunal agreed with SSRV that Rachel's condition did in fact warrant an impairment rating of 20 points under the impairment tables and resulted in an inability to work 15 hours or more per week. The Tribunal also agreed that the Job Capacity Assessor was at error in determining Rachel's ability to work on the basis of her TAFE attendance, particularly as Rachel had withdrawn from full-time study.

Clinical Legal Education Program

In 2015/16, SSRV continued its partnership with Deakin Law School. 12 Deakin Law School students attend SSRV over a 12 week trimester and provide frontline legal assistance to SSRV clients as part of their university studies. The students receive 'hands on' exposure to legal practice; undertaking complex research, managing legal files and providing information directly to clients, under the supervision of the SSRV Principal Solicitor.

As the program has progressed, our expertise in providing clinical legal education has developed significantly. The program has undoubtedly assisted SSRV to increase the quantity and complexity of advices and cases we've provided.

Since early 2016, SSRV have expanded the program to include 3 'intensive' intakes between trimesters. Students attend SSRV each workday over a 3 week period, helping to clear casework backlog and keep our legal practice working. SSRV would like to warmly thank the staff at Deakin Law School for their careful planning and thoughtful implementation of the Clinical Legal Education program.

Clinical Student Experience By Tom Green

My time working at Social Security Rights Victoria has been extremely insightful and enjoyable. It has been rewarding to apply the skills learnt throughout my law degree in a practical and hands on manner. Graham, Ben and Peter are fantastic mentors and gave me and my fellow interns the opportunity to greatly enhance our legal skills. This was done by striking a great balance between providing constant support while at the same time allowing us the autonomy and independence to solve complex legal issues by ourselves. I have particularly enjoyed improving my ability to deal with clients who are disadvantaged or from low socio-economic backgrounds. My work at Social Security Rights Victoria has allowed me to fully

appreciate the importance of social security law as well as the importance of the work that Social Security Rights Victoria undertakes within the community.

Looking Forward

- SSRV is keen to continue its secondment program and to provide opportunities for other lawyers across the community legal sector to develop expertise in social security law. We welcome expressions of interest.

- SSRV continues to strengthen its relationships with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) and particularly the Social Security and Child Support Division. We appreciate the AAT's support of SSRV's Clinical Legal Education Program, whereby our legal students have opportunities to gain experience by attending hearings and, where appropriate, advocating for SSRV's clients.

Clinical Supervisor's Report

During the year I had the chance to present a workshop on some of the questions facing clinical programs at the National Community Legal Centre Conference (NACLC) in Perth. I used the following quotes from student's evaluations as a basis for much of what we discussed.

“ I valued the autonomy whilst being supervised. At times I felt like walking a tight-rope but with a safety net below me.

and

“ [my placement] changed my mind about law, its something I now look forward to pursuing as a career.

The first quote questions the pedagogy behind the learning environment that we immerse students in, ie that of a busy specialist legal practice. To bring their work up to speed quickly means providing a mix of consistent messages in the form of diagrams and precedents, as well as an 'open door' policy which allows students to come and ask why, to workshop ideas and then to write. So in one sense we are providing a learning environment to equip students to act as beginning lawyers with all the necessary skills to enable meaningful work.

This leads to the second quote, by learning through doing, albeit with a lens of objective empathy, students see the value and importance

helping SSRV to meet the legal needs facing our clients.

All of this leads to the question, does the clinical program benefit our clients, or could our resources be better used in other ways? I think for us, we are able to achieve both outcomes.

Anecdotally, after a placement, many students come back and volunteer. This gives us depth in our volunteers, which in turn help us answer legal needs. Based on our CLSIS data, we had significant increases in both our advice and case work. Having a pool of students and volunteers helps us meet those spikes in demand.

As in previous years, students are taking instructions from clients, liaising with doctors and medical experts, sifting through Tribunal documents, writing letters, writing submissions and fulfilling all of the roles expected of a junior lawyer. All of these practical skills are described in their evaluations as meeting their, and our expectations.

I also want to thank the Deakin Law School for their support, as well Ben and Peter for their flexibility and support in accommodating students.

Graham Wells

Principal Lawyer's Report

SSRV continues to provide a high volume and quality of legal assistance as reflected in both our advice and case work:

Reporting periods	New client Advices	Total advices	New cases	Total cases	Tribunal representation
2014 - 2015	1154	1431	145	177	25
2015 - 2016	1266	2324	157	214	32
increase /decrease	Up 10%	Up 62%	Up 8%	Up 21%	Up 28%

Whilst we have been able to respond to what has been an increased legal need, this is not sustainable. We need to consolidate on our work and consider strategies that maintain the quality of our workload, without burning out staff. One strategy already under consideration is focussing our efforts on those clients with the greatest needs, and where necessary triaging our assistance.

Despite the high legal needs we have addressed, our practice standards have remained very high when compared with other centres across the sector. As one of the state PII (professional indemnity insurance) representatives, I report back to the whole sector in relation to risk management, and I am confident our work standards continues to reflect best practice. This reflects the high work ethic and the teamwork amongst our staff.

When triaging clients for assistance, we consider:

- The presence of a cognitive impairment (brain injury)
- Mental illness
- Literacy issues
- Cultural and linguistic diverse (CALD) communities
- Those clients whose age affects their ability to understand and respond to social security issues
- Where there is a significant opportunity for law reform, ie identifying precedent cases

As well as referrals from our advice clinic, we continue to accept referrals from other Community Legal Centres, Victoria Legal Aid, the Ombudsman and other agencies.

Principal Lawyer's Report continued...

Much of our casework continues to reflect Centrelink debts and DSP applications or reviews. Examples include:

“ Tony's Story

Tony came to Australia from a remote war torn region as a refugee. He cannot read or write in any language, but possesses some numeracy skills. A friend of his who was much better educated, and who had previously helped some of Tony's family come to Australia asked Tony if he could put some money in his bank account. Tony trusted this man as he worked for the Government.

After a while Tony got a letter in the mail from Centrelink asking for his cooperation in an investigation. Tony's kids read it to him and a short time later found he had a \$30,000 debt. His 'friend' used to work for Centrelink and embezzled the money prior to fleeing the country, with the cash.

Tony came to us as a VLA referral and the matter was already listed for hearing in the General Division of the AAT (the second tier). As a result of our submissions and representation Centrelink withdrew and agreed to pay back the thousands of dollars garnished from Tony's tax returns.”

“ Rosa's Story

Rosa has MS. She once said, 'who would employ me, [as an ex hairdresser]... I can't even hold scissors.

She worked as long as she could and was married with a young family. Rosa applied for the DSP after being told she could not get Newstart. This was because her condition was permanent, and she could only get limited exemptions from her Newstart work activity test obligations.

Rosa's MS was at a serious stage and it was getting worse. Her husband washed and dressed her, and whilst she could do some things for herself, she needed to rest a lot afterwards. Because her husband worked, she knew she would not get much. A Centrelink Authorised Review Officer, and then a Member of the Social Service and Child Support Division of the AAT both stated that her MS was not fully treated and stabilised. On Rosa's behalf we appealed this matter to the General Division and after a compulsory conference, Centrelink granted Rosa the DSP.”

For Rosa this means some financial stability, which in turn gives her better outcomes with her MS and better quality of her family life. Without our assistance, both Tony and Rosa would have received more

Principal Lawyer's Report continued...

knock backs. They received excellent advice and representation when no one else was willing to assist them.

With our students and our volunteers (including highly experienced practitioners), we are able to continue to respond to what is a significant unmet legal need. We can't do everything, but what we can do makes a considerable difference for our clients.

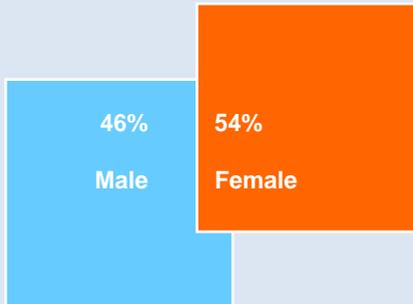
Graham Wells

Legal Services At A Glance

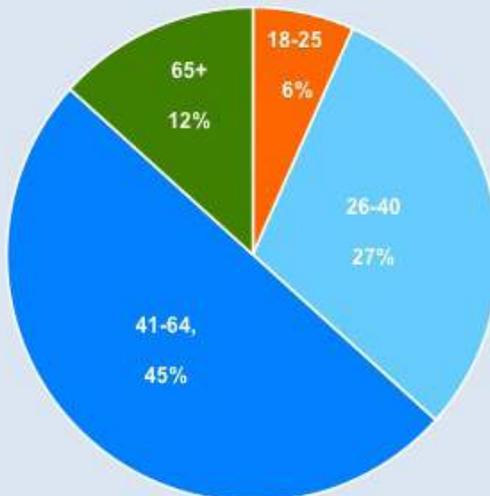
Advice Statistics 2015 - 2016

SSRV provided 2310 advices in 2015 - 16 (1939 in 2014 - 15)

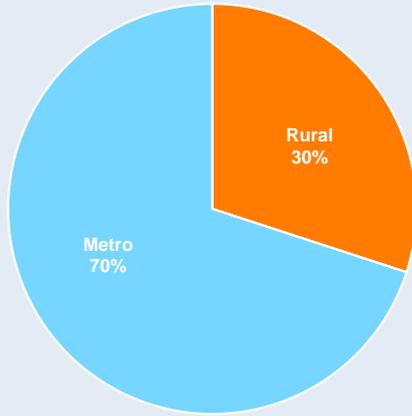
Client Gender



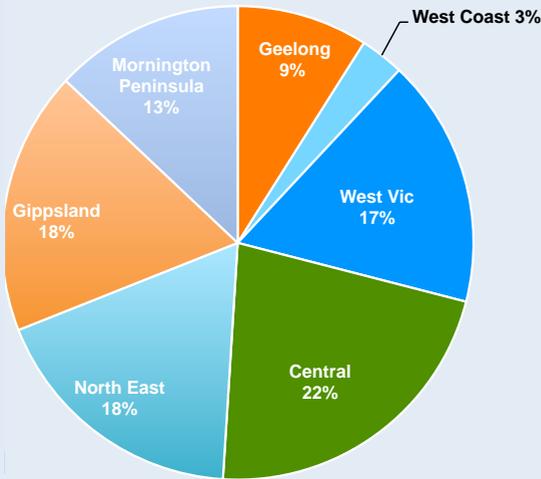
Client Age Range



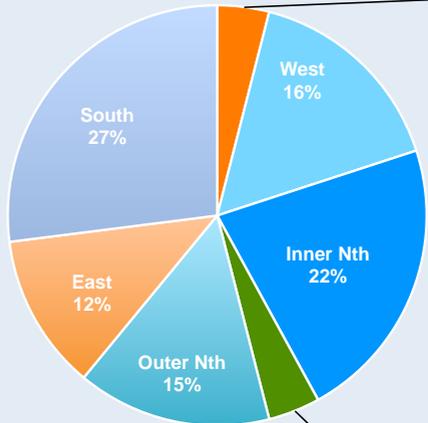
Client Locations



Rural Clients by Region



Inner 4%

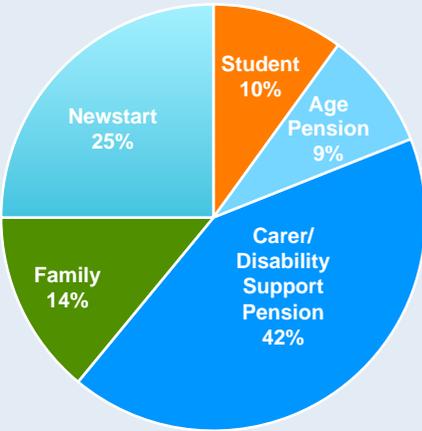


Inner East 4%

Metro Clientele

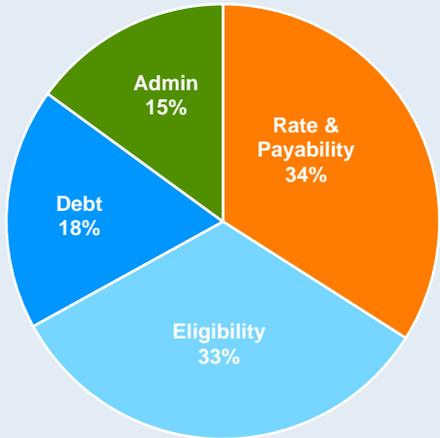
Payment Eligibility Types

This graph represents the Centrelink payment type that clients are seeking information and advice about. Note that payments have been folded into five major areas (i.e. family includes Family Tax Benefit A and B, Parenting Payment and Baby Bonus).



Presenting Issues of clients

The following graph displays the type of issues that clients are seeking assistance about.



The following graphs are a subset of the “presenting issues” graph.

**Please note that in the following graphs only the top five issues raised are represented with similar issues rolled into one category.*

Rate & Payability Issues

The Rate/Pay graph explains the types of issues that arise in relation to the calculation of payments and when they are to be paid.

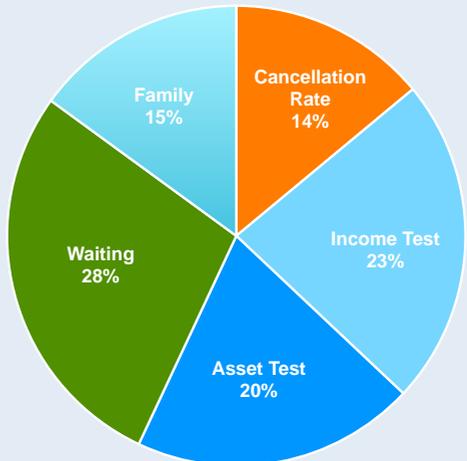
Waiting = Waiting period - how long must a person wait before a payment may commence.

Compensation Preclusion Period effect and calculation

Single/Couple = The difference in rate between singles and couples

Income Test = Income test issues

Asset Test = Asset test issues



Eligibility Issues

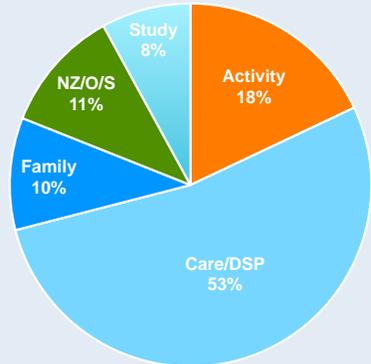
Care/DSP = Issues about being granted DSP or Carer payments

Family = Issues where Centrelink has deemed someone to be a “member of a couple” and the client disputes this determination

Activity = Issues raised by people (usually on Newstart Allowance) relating to activity testing and activity participation

NZ/O/S = New Zealand citizens or eligibility for those outside Australia

Study = Student based issues including: length of study, enrolment and full-time status



Debts

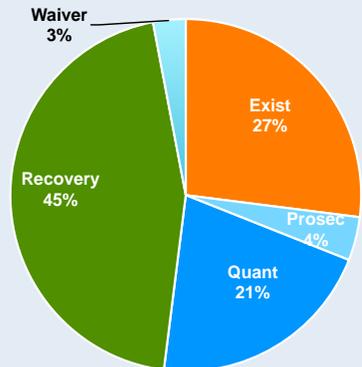
Recovery = Issues to do with the recovery of debts and negotiating repayment of debts with Centrelink

Waiver = Issues relating to clients request that their Centrelink debt not be recovered because recovery of the debt is not in the public interest (e.g. due to personal or special circumstances)

Exist = Where clients are challenging the existence of a debt

Prosec = Possible criminal prosecution of clients in relation to debt

Quant = Where clients are challenging the Quantity (amount) of the debt



Administrative Issues

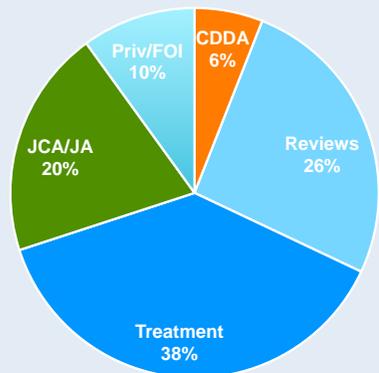
JCA/JA = Job capacity assessment for Newstart Allowance and Disability Support Pension applicants and issues to do with Job Active and Disability Employment Services.

Treatment = Callers who are dissatisfied with the level and type of service received from Centrelink.

Privacy/FOI = People who are seeking access to their information on Centrelink files through Freedom of Information, or people who are concerned that Centrelink has breached their privacy.

CDDA = Compensation for Detriment due to Defective Administration. This is for people whose situations can't be resolved through the usual appeals process, for example, they have received incorrect advice from Centrelink.

Reviews = Inquiries about appealing Centrelink decisions.



Community Legal Education

SSRV carries out community legal education to improve the knowledge and access of a variety of groups and individuals. Our program particularly targets professionals working in related areas such as financial counselling and community work. Community workers with an understanding of social security law and practice are able to empower their clients in ways that vastly improve overall client outcomes. A new issue in 2015 -2016 has been about the effect of compensation from payments in respect to childhood sexual abuse.

In 2015–2016, SSRV staff provided community legal education to organisations including:

- Banyule Community Health
- Brimbank Melton CLC
- Chinese government delegations attending seminars on Australia's social security system
- Co-Health
- Financial and Consumer Rights Council
- Knowmore Legal*
- Loddon Campaspe CLC
- St Vincent de Paul
- Wallis Legal

SSRV Newsletter - Red Tape

During 2015–2016, SSRV published five issues of its newsletter Red Tape, covering a variety of topics including changes to the SSAT, so-called 'welfare fraud', Permanent Portability for the DSP and the Newstart Allowance interns. Red Tape is distributed in both hard copy and electronic form. You can sign up to receive Red Tape and view archived versions on SSRV's website: www.ssrv.org.au.

*The legal service assisting the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse

Law Reform & Policy

JobVoice.com.au

In 2016 JobVoice reflected on 2015's initial launch and subsequent growth. Policy changes to the Jobactive program required changes to www.jobvoice.org.au and time was taken to undertake considered planning, researching and testing to deliver a more robust web platform that is agile to future program changes.

Highlights from the year include inclusion of Disability Employment Services providers, opening JobVoice to a wider audience. In addition to this we are implementing an Australia-wide roll out for JobVoice, which is currently being planned.

What Is JobVoice.org.au?

JobVoice.org.au is an innovative social platform that empowers unemployed jobseekers across Victoria by providing a website on which they can share their experiences of employment service providers. JobVoice, like TripAdvisor or Zomato provides transparent information that jobseekers can use to inform their choice of provider, to best suit their individual needs.

JobVoice has recently introduced the following new pages:

- **Articles:** has been developed to publish JobVoice or SSRV created content. Press releases or thought provoking content can be found in this section.

- **Community Forum:** is an informal environment for users to share ideas and chat to others in a similar situation. The forum is overseen and monitored by SSRV staff – users are able to write freely and in real time.

SSRV staff will monitor the forum and can remove content that is deemed inappropriate AFTER posts are made. Guidelines are published on the forum page to advise users of the right way to communicate. JobVoice was developed using a community co-design approach as a response to an evidenced need for a more robust complaints mechanism for jobseekers.

Why Was JobVoice developed?

The growing number of long-term unemployed people in Australia, coupled with high rates of teenage joblessness, is an ongoing concern. Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients are required to engage with job service providers and agree to an Employment Pathway Plan in order to receive their social security benefit. As unemployment has grown, so too have complaints about employment service providers, which have seen a significant increase over the past 12–18 months.

SSRV was unable to adequately address these problems via its traditional casework assistance service, and so developed JobVoice **continued...**

Law Reform & Policy continued...

to empower jobseekers to publicly share their stories, obtain knowledge about their rights and responsibilities, enjoy peer support, and ultimately effect systemic change.

Where to Now?

SSRV is grateful to the Ian Potter Foundation for continuing to support JobVoice in 2015–2016. In the upcoming year, JobVoice will continue to grow its online community and encourage more jobseekers to share their stories so that this fantastic resource can realise its full potential.

Media Appearances

SSRV staff and volunteers undertook various media activities for the year, the highlights being interviews with:

- ABC Radio AM Program on Centrelink service failures
- ABC Golburn Murray on Centrelink phone and IT failures
- 3CR on employment services
- ABC Local Radio on long term welfare recipients

National Welfare Rights Network

The NWRN (the peak body for welfare rights services across Australia) continues to undertake important work on behalf of its members. SSRV has contributed to NWRN's work in the areas of policy and law reform in various ways:

- Through hosting the annual NWRN National Conference in Melbourne in 2015
- A SSRV staff member sits on the NWRN Executive
- SSRV regularly provides statistics and case studies from its advice and casework practice for inclusion in NWRN reports and submissions.

SSRV Volunteers

Once again, SSRV has been greatly assisted in its work by a number of volunteers in the advice and casework area and in general administration. A significant number of volunteers are law students who originally came to SSRV from the Deakin University Clinical Program. Our thanks go especially to the volunteers who undertook at least five advice or other volunteer sessions in 2015–2016:

Advice Volunteers:

Victoria Byne
Emi Hidic
Eric O'Donnell
Micaela Dali
Grace Innes
Emily Lau
Sarah Ricketson
Melissa Passarelli
Kahsern Lin
Helen Papagergio
Olivia Liparota
Amorkor Amartey
Sarah Hodgson
Emma Berry

Stephanie Moncur
Sarah Ward
Christopher Clarke
Charlene Mangion
Georgia Macri
Stephanie O'Leary
Catherine Gloutnay

Subject Matter Expert and Casework Volunteers

James Joseph

Legal Volunteers

Tom Cobban
Max Koh

Administration Volunteers

Joan Thong
Meredith Ward



Volunteer Program Experience

By Melissa Passarelli

I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience at Social Security Rights Victoria over the last year and a half, as it has been both interesting and challenging. Initially I was looking forward to working at the organisation on a 6 month basis as a requirement of my university degree. However, I have enjoyed working at SSRV so much, that it has motivated me to stay on as a long-term volunteer.

Working with SSRV has improved my legal skills and increased my knowledge of social security law. The most rewarding aspect of volunteering at SSRV is the high level of client contact. I have had the opportunity to provide advice to a diverse range of clients on a large number of issues. This has allowed me to enhance my communication skills. Whilst I am improving my own skills, I am also able to impact on the client's quality of life and this is the reason that I love being a volunteer at SSRV.'

SSRV Financial Statements

Statement by Members of the Board of Management

The Board of Management has determined that the Association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 2 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Board of Management the financial report as set out on pages 1 to 10:

1. Presents fairly the financial position of Social Security Rights Victoria Inc as at 30 June 2016 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Social Security Rights Victoria Inc will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Management and is signed for and on behalf of the Board of Management by:

Statement of Profit or Loss For the Year Ended 30 June 2016

	2016 \$	2015 \$
Income		
Grant - Attorney General - Commonwealth	234,393	213,972
Grant - Attorney General - State	40,751	44,172
Project income	45,067	85,476
Interest received	1,263	3,090
	<u>321,474</u>	<u>346,710</u>
Expenditure		
Salaries	(218,400)	(214,324)
Superannuation contributions	(20,818)	(20,120)
Workcover	(2,616)	(2,687)
Annual leave expense	(677)	(6,565)
Long service leave	(2,533)	(1,279)
Staff related expenses	(2,661)	(7,448)
Premises	(51,705)	(42,841)
Office overheads	(9,337)	(16,570)
Communications	(9,306)	(10,190)
Finance & accounting	(10,164)	(12,178)
Insurance	(1,487)	(1,200)
Library & resources	(3,022)	(3,291)
Travel	(619)	(637)
Programme & planning	(3,468)	(44,095)
Depreciation	(1,073)	(2,899)
	<u>(337,886)</u>	<u>(386,324)</u>
Deficit for the year	<u>(16,412)</u>	<u>(39,614)</u>
Total comprehensive deficit for the year	<u>(16,412)</u>	<u>(39,614)</u>


Janina Dougherty - President


Paul Garry - Treasurer

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	Note	2016 \$	2015 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	189,047	157,148
Trade and other receivables	5	7,920	13,249
Prepayments		1,971	3,552
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		198,938	173,949
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment		1,617	1,016
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		1,617	1,016
TOTAL ASSETS		200,555	174,965
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	7	112,356	73,564
Employee benefits	8	52,463	49,253
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		164,819	122,817
TOTAL LIABILITIES		164,819	122,817
NET ASSETS		35,736	52,148
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
Retained surpluses		35,736	52,148
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS		35,736	52,148

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2016

	Retained Surpluses \$	Total \$
2016		
Balance at 1 July 2015	52,148	52,148
Deficit for the year	(16,412)	(16,412)
Balance at 30 June 2016	35,736	35,736
2015		
Balance at 1 July 2014	91,762	91,762
Deficit for the year	(39,614)	(39,614)
Balance at 30 June 2015	52,148	52,148

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 30 June 2016

The financial statements cover Social Security Rights Victoria Inc as an individual entity. Social Security Rights Victoria Inc is a not-for-profit Association incorporated in Victoria under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

The functional and presentation currency of Social Security Rights Victoria Inc is Australian dollars.

Comparatives are consistent with prior years, unless otherwise stated.

1. Basis of Preparation

In the opinion of the Board of Management, the Association is not a reporting entity since there are unlikely to exist users of the financial report who are not able to command the preparation of reports tailored so as to satisfy specifically all of their information needs. These special purpose financial statements have been prepared to meet the reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements of the Australian Accounting Standards and Accounting Interpretations, and the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 Presentation of Financial Statements, AASB 107 Statement of Cash Flows, AASB 108 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors and AASB 1054 Australian Additional Disclosures.

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

(a) Income Tax

The Association is exempt from income tax under Division 50 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

(b) Leases

Lease payments for operating leases, where substantially all of the risks and benefits remain with the lessor, are charged as expenses on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease term.

(c) Revenue and other income

Revenue is recognised when the amount of the revenue can be measured reliably, it is probable that economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the Association and specific criteria relating to the type of revenue as noted below, has been satisfied.

Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 30 June 2016

	Note	2016 \$	2015 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:			
Receipts from customers and funders		350,770	277,509
Payments to suppliers and employees		(318,460)	(372,486)
Interest received		1,263	3,090
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	4	33,573	(91,887)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(1,674)	(1,000)
Net cash used in investing activities		(1,674)	(1,000)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held		31,899	(92,887)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		157,148	250,035
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	3	189,047	157,148

Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 30 June 2016 (continued)

3. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash at bank and in hand	1,249	9,288
Short-term deposits	186,000	147,000
DGR Trust Account	1,798	860
	189,047	157,148

Reconciliation of cash

Cash and Cash equivalents reported in the statement of cash flows are reconciled to the equivalent items in the statement of financial position as follows:

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable and is presented net of returns, discounts and rebates.

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

Rendering of services

Revenue in relation to rendering of services is recognised depending on whether the outcome of the services can be estimated reliably. If the outcome can be estimated reliably then the stage of completion of the services is used to determine the appropriate level of revenue to be recognised in the period. If the outcome cannot be reliably estimated then revenue is recognised to the extent of expenses recognised that are recoverable.

(d) Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Tax Office. In these circumstances, the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of an item of the expense. Receivables and payables in the statement of financial position are shown inclusive of GST.

(e) Property, plant and equipment

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

Plant and equipment are measured using the cost model.

Property, plant and equipment, excluding freehold land, is depreciated on a straight-line basis over the assets useful life to the Association, commencing when the asset is ready for use.

(f) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprises cash on hand, demand deposits and short-term investments which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

(g) Employee benefits

Provision is made for the Association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee benefits that are expected to be wholly settled within one year have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled.

4. Cash Flow Information	2016 \$	2015 \$
Reconciliation of result for the year to cashflows from operating activities		
Reconciliation of deficit to net cash provided by operating activities:		
Deficit for the year		
Non-cash flows in deficit:	(16,412)	(39,614)
- depreciation	1,073	2,899
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
- (increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	5,329	(13,249)
- (increase)/decrease in prepayments	1,581	(1,919)
- increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	38,792	(47,848)
- increase/(decrease) in employee benefits	3,210	7,844
Cashflow from operating activities	<u>33,573</u>	<u>(91,887)</u>
5. Trade and Other Receivables		
CURRENT		
Trade receivables	7,920	13,200
	-	49
Other receivables	<u>7,920</u>	<u>13,249</u>
6. Property, plant and equipment		
PLANT AND EQUIPMENT		
Furniture, fixtures and fittings		
At cost	21,091	21,091
Accumulated depreciation	(21,091)	(21,091)
Total furniture, fixtures and fittings	-	-
Office equipment		
At cost	15,923	15,923
Accumulated depreciation	(15,319)	(14,907)
Total office equipment	<u>604</u>	<u>1,016</u>
Computer equipment		
At cost	13,459	11,786
Accumulated depreciation	(12,446)	(11,786)
Total computer equipment	<u>1,013</u>	<u>-</u>
Total plant and equipment	<u>1,617</u>	<u>1,016</u>
Total property, plant and equipment	<u>1,617</u>	<u>1,016</u>
7. Trade and Other Payables		
CURRENT		
Unsecured liabilities		
Grant funding unspent (VLA funded)	9,047	24,979
Grant funding unspent for specific projects (non VLA)	52,944	12,502
Other payables	50,365	36,083
	<u>112,356</u>	<u>73,564</u>

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable and is presented net of returns, discounts and rebates.

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

Rendering of services

Revenue in relation to rendering of services is recognised depending on whether the outcome of the services can be estimated reliably. If the outcome can be estimated reliably then the stage of completion of the services is used to determine the appropriate level of revenue to be recognised in the period. If the outcome cannot be reliably estimated then revenue is recognised to the extent of expenses recognised that are recoverable.

	2016	2015
	\$	\$
8. Employee Benefits		
Current liabilities		
Long service leave	29,254	24,979
Annual leave	23,209	12,502
	52,463	36,083

9. Capital and Leasing Commitments

Operating Leases

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases:

- not later than one year	1,718	31,052
- between one year and five years	72	3,436
- later than five years	-	-
	1,790	34,488

An operating lease had been taken out for the PABX phone system which commenced in July 2008 for a term of 60 months. In July 2013 a new lease was entered into for a new PABX system for a term of 60 months.

The lease of the office premises expired on 30 June 2016 and since then it has transitioned to a month-to-month arrangement.

10. Contingencies

In the opinion of the Board of Management, the Association did not have any contingencies at 30 June 2016 (30 June 2015: None).

11. Events after the end of the Reporting Period

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

12. Economic Dependency

The Association is primarily funded by the Federal and State Attorney Generals Departments Community Legal Service Program - 86% of this year and 75% last year. Without the continued support of the Departments, the Association would not be able to provide its services to the community.

The Association has a funding agreement in place with the Departments until 30 June 2017 and there are no indications that these arrangements will be discontinued thereafter.

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE MEMBERS OF
SOCIAL SECURITY RIGHTS VICTORIA INC.**

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Social Security Rights Victoria Inc. (the association), which comprises, the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2016, the statement of profit and loss and other comprehensive income, the statement in changes of members' funds and the statement of cash flows for the period then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the statement by members of board of management.

Board of Management's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The board of management of Social Security Rights Victoria Inc. is responsible for the preparation of the financial report, and has determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and is appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The board of management's responsibility also includes such internal control as the board determines is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We have 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 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 judgment, 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 association's preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view, 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 association's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the board of management, 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.

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (CONT.)
TO THE MEMBERS OF
SOCIAL SECURITY RIGHTS VICTORIA INC.**

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Social Security Rights Victoria Inc. as at 30 June 2016 and its financial performance for the period then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

Basis of Accounting

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. This financial report has been prepared to assist Social Security Rights Victoria Inc to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nexia".

**Nexia Melbourne Audit Pty Ltd
Melbourne**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrew Wehrens".

**Andrew Wehrens FCA
Director**

Dated this 8th day of November 2016

Notes

Social Security Rights Victoria (Inc) is a community legal centre specialising in social security advice and advocacy.

Find out more about Social Security Rights Victoria
www.ssrv.org.au

Subscribe to our bi-monthly e-newsletter, "Red Tape" at:
<http://www.ssrv.org.au/join-ssrv/>

Support our work by donating at:
<http://www.ssrv.org.au/donate/>

Donations of \$2 and over to SSRV are tax-deductible.
SSRV is a Deductible Gift Recipient as a 'Public Benevolent Institution' (PBI)
Please give generously so that SSRV can continue to serve vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians.

Become a member of SSRV at:
<http://www.ssrv.org.au/join-ssrv/>



<https://www.facebook.com/Social-Security-Rights-Victoria-484174691661395/>



https://twitter.com/ssrights_vic

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Incorporation Number: A0015461X



**Social
Security
Rights
Victoria Inc.**