



Annual Report 2014 2015



**Social
Security
Rights
Victoria Inc.**

A0015471X

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:

- \$213,976 from the Federal Attorney General's Department
- \$44,168 from the Victorian Government

In 2014–2015, SSRV also received funding from:

- The Ian Potter Foundation, the R E Ross Trust and the Victorian Legal Services Board to implement the JobVoice project
- Deakin University to manage and run the clinical legal education program
- The R E Ross Trust to assist SSRV with an IT upgrade including a new server and new computers.

SSRV Patron, Board & Staff

SSRV Patron - Brian Howe AO

Brian Howe AO is a Professorial Associate at the Centre for Public Policy at the University of Melbourne, where he teaches and researches social policy. He was a minister in each of the Hawke and Keating governments (1983–1996), occupying mainly social policy-related portfolios. Mr Howe was the Minister for Social Security 1984–1990 and Deputy Prime Minister 1991–1995. He chaired the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work commissioned by the ACTU; the inquiry's report, *Lives on Hold: Unlocking the Potential of Australia's Workforce*, was published in 2012. Mr Howe is the chair of the Advisory Council of the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

SSRV Board Members

Nina Boughey
President (Vice President until April 2015)

Martin Pike
Vice President (President until April 2015)

Paul Garry
Treasurer

Kirsty Gregory
Membership Officer (from April 2015)

Merrilee Cox
Membership Officer (resigned April 2015)

Kerry Arch
Member

Marianne De Leo
Member (joined June 2015)

Ben Zika
Member (joined June 2015)

SSRV Staff

Deborah Itzkowic
Director/Principal Solicitor (from March 2015)

Monica van Reyk
Director/Principal Solicitor (until March 2015)

Peter Horbury
Manager, Operations and Information Services

Graham Wells
Senior Solicitor and Clinical Supervisor

President's Report

The past 12 months at SSRV have been characterised by significant changes, as well as tremendous achievements. The roles of President and Director both changed hands early in 2015. Marty Pike stepped down as President in April and I was honoured to be elected by the Board to replace him. I have been a member of the SSRV Board since 2011 and strongly believe in the value of its work in assisting some of the most disadvantaged members of our community and helping to create a fairer society. Marty did a fantastic job of leading the Board during 2013–2014 and we are very lucky to have retained his skills and expertise as Vice President of SSRV.

During the year the SSRV Board farewelled Merrilee Cox, its longest-serving member. Merrilee brought enormously valuable skills to the Board and is very much missed. I would like to thank Merrilee for the significant contribution she has made to SSRV over many years. We were also very fortunate to recruit two new board members, Marianne De Leo and Ben Zika, in June 2015. Both Marianne and Ben bring unique and important knowledge and skills to the Board.

In March, SSRV welcomed back Deb Itzkowic, our energetic and brilliant Director, from parental leave. Sadly, this meant farewelling Monica van Reyk, who did an excellent job of leading SSRV in Deb's absence. Of particular note is Monica's work on JobVoice, which was instrumental to the project's success.

Despite the leadership changes, SSRV has again managed to achieve amazing things over the past 12 months. The jewel in the crown was the launch of JobVoice in February, a project which has been in development for close to four years. The importance and success of JobVoice was formally recognised when it won the National Rural Law and Justice Alliance Innovation Award 2015 for "transformative use of technology in the law". JobVoice provides unemployed jobseekers with a voice and a transparent choice about employment service providers for the first time. The idea for the JobVoice project came from a past SSRV President, Antony McMullen, and was generously funded by the R E Ross Trust, the Ian Potter Foundation and the Victorian Legal Services Board. In addition to our philanthropic funders I would especially like to thank Tanja Kovac, Joan Thong, Monica van Reyk, Deb Itzkowic, Ben Zika and the JobVoice Advisory Board for their contributions to the project.

SSRV's Clinical Legal Education Program, led by Graham Wells, has gone from strength to strength. We have forged a new partnership with Deakin University and consistently received positive feedback about the program from students and clients. The program develops the practical skills of our next generation of lawyers and provides them with practical experience of social justice and the challenges and rewards of community legal work. The program also enables students to develop a greater appreciation of the challenges faced by the most vulnerable members of our community.

President's Report continued...

SSRV has continued providing its highly valued core service of advising and assisting people who are struggling in the maze that is our social security system. Indeed, SSRV has increased the number of people we've helped, providing 27% more advices and opening 41% more cases than in 2013–2014. This is an incredible achievement, particularly in an environment in which resources are ever shrinking. We could not do this crucial community work without our many volunteers, who are ably supervised by the knowledgeable and committed Peter Horbury.

I'd like to express my gratitude to the staff of SSRV, all of our volunteers, our students and the SSRV Board for their incredible 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 of our role in creating a fairer and more equitable society.

Nina Boughey

Director/Principal Solicitor's Report

Over the past year SSRV has continued to provide much-needed support and assistance to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians. While many people take financial security for granted, most of our clients struggle with day-to-day living expenses, and changes to their income cause significant hardship and increased stress. Feedback from clients continues to demonstrate that while the practical assistance SSRV provides – for example, in having a debt waived – is extremely valuable, it is the emotional support of having someone believe them and support them that provides clients with the confidence to challenge Centrelink decisions and make other positive changes in their lives. These outcomes for our clients would not be possible without the hard-working and dedicated staff and volunteers who are passionate about working for social good.

I would like to thank the SSRV staff and the SSRV Board for their support on my return from parental leave which assisted with the smooth transition back into the workplace. I would also like to thank Monica van Reyk for all her hard work over the past year, especially her work in implementing the JobVoice initiative. JobVoice aims to empower unemployed jobseekers across Victoria by providing a website on which they can share their experiences of employment service providers and Centrelink. I would like to congratulate Monica and the JobVoice team for the successful launch of JobVoice in February 2015.

continued...

Director/Principal Solicitor's Report continued...

SSRV's legal practice has gone from strength to strength thanks to Graham Wells' passion and dedication to our clients. Overseeing our joint Clinical Legal Education Program with Deakin University, Graham successfully trains and mentors student lawyers and provides them with valuable hands-on community legal practice experience, with great outcomes for our clients. We all enjoy the energy and enthusiasm that the law students bring to our office.

SSRV's volunteer program continues to attract long-term volunteers thanks to Peter Horbury's stellar efforts in ensuring that they are well supported. SSRV continues to educate the community about changes and updates to social security law and policy through our bi-monthly newsletter, Red Tape, and through various workshops and seminars throughout the year.

I would like to highlight a number of SSRV's significant achievements of the past year:

Highlights for 2014–2015

- SSRV legal practice has increased the number of new cases opened by 41%, and the telephone information and advice service has increased the number of advices provided by 27%.
- SSRV launched JobVoice in February 2015. We are proud to report that JobVoice won the National Rural Law and Justice Innovation Award 2015 for "transformative use of technology in the law".
- SSRV ran a successful secondment project partnering with Western Suburbs Legal Service. This project led to a successful collaboration between the two centres to run a community education program addressing a significant problem

in a western suburbs migrant community identified during the program.

- Commencement of a Clinical Legal Education Program in partnership with Deakin University.

Looking Forward

- We look forward to continuing to grow our relationship with Deakin University and build on the success of our joint Clinical Legal Education Program.
- SSRV is exploring ways to provide a more holistic and integrated service by working collaboratively with doctors, psychologists and allied health professionals to better assist the high percentage of SSRV clients with Disability Support Pension issues.
- On our law reform agenda we are working with partner organisations such as Homeless Law to explore how we can better assist women experiencing family violence, including advocating for implementation of the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission's 2012 report *Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws—Improving Legal Frameworks*.
- Thanks to the ongoing support of the Ian Potter Foundation, SSRV is able to continue to develop and grow JobVoice to have a wider reach and support unemployed jobseekers at a time when they are particularly vulnerable.

We look forward to another successful year providing invaluable support to Victorian's most vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

Deborah Itzkowic

SSRV's 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 for 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 call 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 2014–2015, SSRV provided 1939 telephone and email information services and advices. This represents an increase of more than 27% since 2013–2014.

SSRV Legal Practice

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

SSRV provided assistance to 1434 individual clients in 2014–2015, up 20% on 2013–2014.

The service opened 169 cases in 2014–2015, representing a 41% increase in casework files during the reporting period for matters requiring more intensive casework assistance. Of the 121 cases closed during the period, 69 involved up to five hours of work, 42 involved six to 20 hours of work, and 10 involved more than 20 hours of work. There were 25 cases involving representation for clients at the Social Security Appeals Tribunal or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This represents a 47% increase in our tribunal advocacy and representation since 2013–14.

SSRV's Services continued...

Secondment Program

In 2014–2015, Western Suburbs Legal Service (WSLS) experienced increasing requests for face-to-face appointments and assistance with Centrelink disputes (particularly relating to debts and refusal of Disability Support Pension). In order to meet this need, WSLS approached SSRV to see whether it could host its Principal Solicitor on a weekly basis for six months in a professional capacity so that she could learn about Centrelink law and become skilled at delivering legal advice in this area of law. Subsequently, from January to June 2015, the Principal Solicitor at WSLS undertook a secondment at SSRV.

While providing casework assistance, WSLS and SSRV observed an emerging pattern of legal problems that disproportionately affected newly arrived and refugee women (often single parents) in the western suburbs of Melbourne. WSLS and SSRV submitted a successful joint grant application to the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust.

The grant will enable WLS and SSRV to collaborate on the provision of targeted and accessible community legal education and information to assist such women who have established themselves as home-based family day care educators to avoid the accrual of large Centrelink debts, debt recovery action by Centrelink, and potential criminal prosecution.

Key outcomes of the secondment project included:

- Identifying an unmet legal need of a local community group and collaborating on a project to address this unmet legal need; and
- High quality professional development for community lawyers. This was a unique opportunity for the principal lawyers to share ideas, discuss practice management issues and solve problems for the mutual benefit of both WSLS and SSRV legal practices.

Clinical Legal Education Program

Clinical Legal Education Program

SSRV commenced a new partnership with Deakin University in November 2014. Starting with a cohort of five students, the program has grown to incorporate up to 12 students per trimester. We look forward to growing and strengthening our relationship and continuing to provide a valuable program for Deakin law students. We would particularly like to thank Marlene Ebejer who has been fantastic to work with.

We are thankful for the opportunity to have worked with Melbourne University and its law students over the past few years. Our partnership with them in relation to the clinical legal program has ended, and we are now looking forward to other ways our organisations may be able collaborate in the future.

“ Clinical Student Experience

By Sarah Ricketson

In my time at Social Security Rights Victoria, I have gained so much from being able to apply myself to real legal issues, and have learnt so much from working with Graham, Deborah and Peter. It has been great to observe and apply areas of law that I have studied at university, and I have really enjoyed the diverse and challenging yet exciting work. When I started, I knew little about social security law, yet I was very soon to understand its great value and importance. It has been really rewarding to feel that I am helping clients, and it has been great to see all the hard work done at SSRV benefiting those in desperate need of support.

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. SSRV is very appreciative of the AAT's attendance and provision of training at our bi-annual clinical student induction days.

Senior Solicitor & Clinical Supervisor's Report

A prospective employer phoned me recently to ask about one of SSRV's past students. I explained that we teach students to run files and manage our clients' expectations, and that they do a lot of writing, particularly preparing the submissions we present at tribunals. We also try to teach our students, I said, to do "good law".

As community lawyers, we do more than just probe the facts or the merit of a matter. As community lawyers, we are not there to sit on the fence and maintain the status quo. Of course, if there is no merit in a case whatsoever, we do not want to waste the tribunal's time, but if our client is experiencing disadvantage, then we have an obligation to try to remedy any wrongs that the client has experienced.

Our role is to vigorously advocate the needs of some of the most disadvantaged people in the community. Doing "good law" means interpreting the Act in a way that forces Centrelink to re-examine its conventions. Earlier in the year, a colleague complimented me when said he was amazed we got so many "hopeless cases" up – i.e. we achieved good outcomes in problematic matters. The service received a similar accolade from a senior tribunal member who was impressed by how we were able to settle (and win) a lot of appeals against decisions made by her members.

A big part of our success is thanks to the solid team of experienced volunteers and students who forensically re-examine Centrelink documents before contests. Much of our success, too, lies with clients who are able to recount their deeply personal stories at tribunals. Using witness statements and various other expert reports we have been able to look behind Centrelink decisions and "work around" the various assumptions made by often well-meaning and busy Centrelink officers.

I want to thank our past Deakin University and Melbourne University students and supporters who have made a significant contribution to our service, and also the various volunteer and seconded lawyers who have helped us: Scarlet Wilcock, Shorna Moore, Annette Au Yeung, Max Koh and Tom Coban.

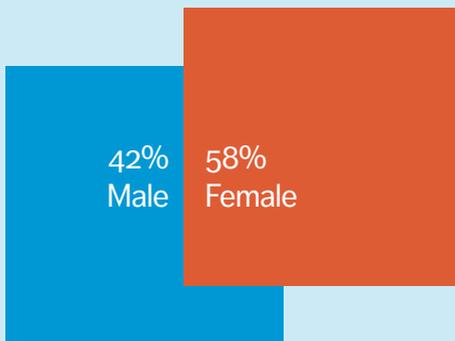
And of course, huge thanks go to my work colleagues, Deborah Itzkowic, Peter Horbury and Monica van Reyk.

Graham Wells

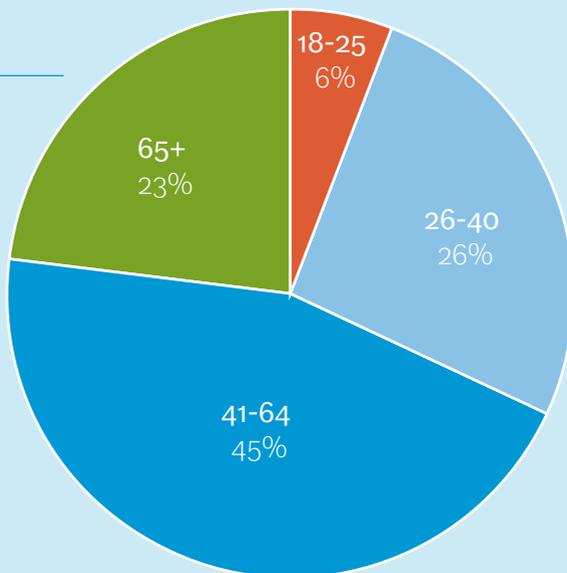
Legal Services At A Glance: Advice Statistics 2014-2015

SSRV provided 1939 advices in 2014-15 (1526 in 2013-14).

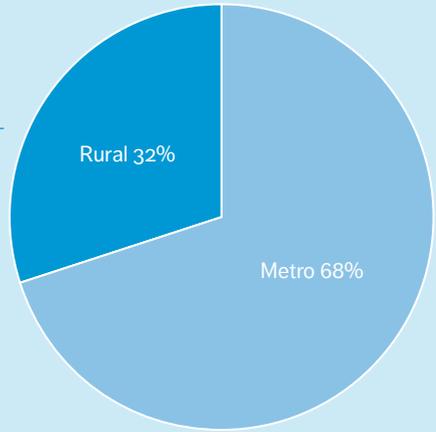
Client Gender



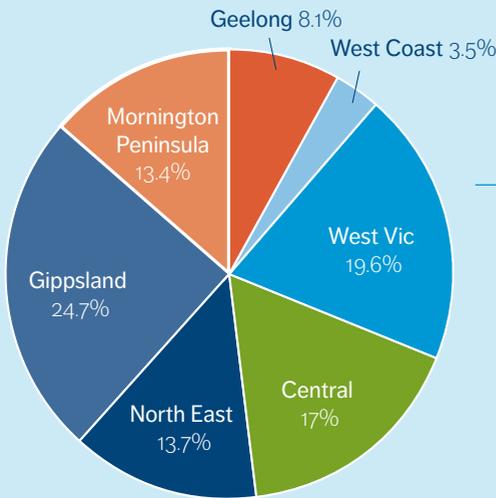
Client Age Range



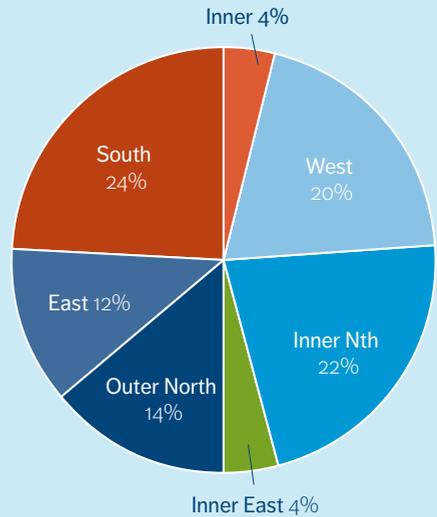
Client Locations



Rural Clients by Region

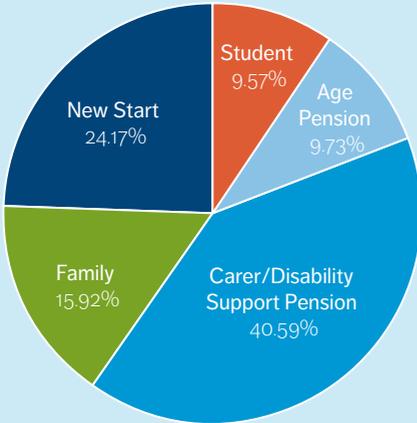


Metro Clientele



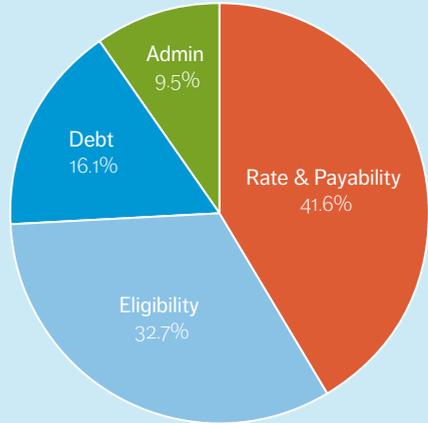
Payment Eligibility Types

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



Presenting Issues raised by 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.

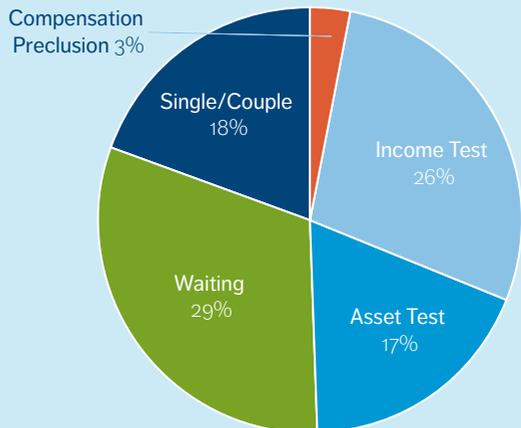
Waiting = Waiting period – how long must a person wait before a payment may commence.

Compensation Preclusion Period effect and calculation.

Single/Couple = The difference in rate between single and couples.

Income Test = Income test issues

Asset Test = Assets test issues



Eligibility Issues

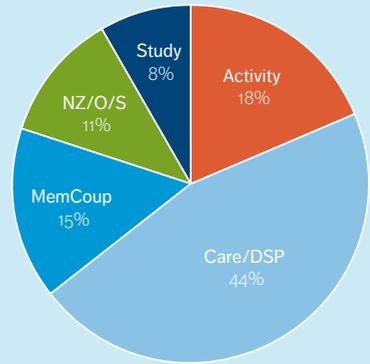
Care/DSP = Issues about being granted DSP or Carer payments

MemCoup = 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

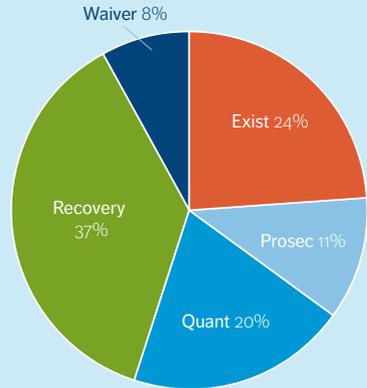
Recovery = Issues to do with the recovery of debts and negotiating repayment of debts with Centrelink.

Waiver = Issues relating to clients requesting that their Centrelink debt not be recovered because the 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 a debt.

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



Administrative Issues

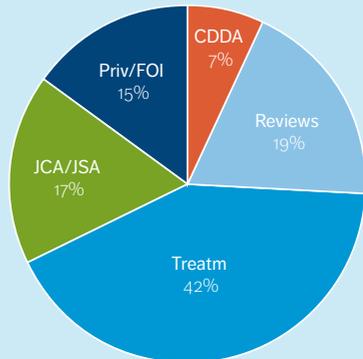
JCA/JSA = Job capacity assessment for Newstart Allowance and Disability Support Pension applicants and issues to do with Job Services Australia and the Disability Employment Services.

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 cannot be resolved through the usual appeal process, for example, they have received incorrect advice from Centrelink.

Reviews = Inquiries about appealing Centrelink decisions.



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.

Bill's Story : Disability Support Pension

Bill was once a very successful football player but after he suffered some serious injuries everything went wrong. Bill developed a severe psychiatric condition and became homeless.

After applying for the NewStart Allowance (NSA) he heard about the Disability Support Pension (DSP), but after several unsuccessful attempts to apply he gave up. Two years later he decided to reapply and a social worker encouraged him to contact SSRV for help. SSRV advised Bill of what evidence Centrelink required to support his application and his DSP application was successful.

Bill then explained that his situation had not changed in two years and asked whether there was any chance he could be reimbursed the difference between NSA and the DSP for those two years. SSRV lodged an application for compensation for detriment caused by defective administration (CDDA) on Bill's behalf. SSRV submitted that but for Centrelink's omission in not telling Bill what evidence it required to support his DSP application, he would have received the DSP at the time of his first application rather than two years later.

Ultimately SSRV's submissions were accepted and Bill was paid arrears of \$7000. Bill was elated.

Gail's Story: Youth Allowance

Gail was a student and was receiving Youth Allowance.

She was studying full-time at a rural campus, then moved to Melbourne and transferred her studies to a new university. She dutifully informed Centrelink of all the changes to her circumstances. Centrelink advised Gail that she could continue to receive Youth Allowance. As part of her new course, Gail was required to undertake a work placement in a workplace relevant to her studies. When Centrelink reviewed her eligibility for Youth Allowance it raised a debt of \$4500 against her on the basis that the work placement did not count towards her full-time study load for Centrelink purposes as it was not graded.

SSRV assisted Gail to appeal against the debt and represented her at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) Social Security and Child Support Division (then named the Social Security Appeals Tribunal). SSRV submitted that as required by a plain reading of the legislation, Gail had made "satisfactory progress" with her course and that the work placement should count towards her full-time study load, regardless of the fact that this component was not graded.

The tribunal member declined Gail's appeal on the basis that he would rather interpret the legislation in Centrelink's favour. SSRV appealed on Gail's behalf to the AAT. The matter was ultimately resolved by agreement between Centrelink and SSRV following an AAT conference whereby Centrelink agreed to waive the debt completely.

Gail was very happy. She was relieved that there was no debt to be repaid and her efforts to comply with Centrelink requirements were vindicated. Without the stress of a debt hanging over her head she was able to focus on finishing her studies and successfully obtained a graduate job.

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.

In 2014–2015, SSRV staff provided community legal education to organisations including:

- Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities
- Broadmeadows Community Care
- Chinese government delegations attending seminars on Australia's social security system
- Community Information Diamond Valley
- Creative Ministries Network, UnitingCare
- Financial and Consumer Rights Council
- Hume Community Forum
- St Luke's Anglicare (Bendigo)
- Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau
- Victorian Council of Social Service.
- Victorian Youth Affairs Council.

SSRV Newsletter - *Red Tape*

During 2014–15, SSRV published six issues of its newsletter *Red Tape*, covering a variety of topics including the garnisheeing of tax returns to pay Centrelink debts, the recently introduced Healthy Welfare Card, and the impact of private courses and full-time study on Centrelink payments. *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.

Law Reform & Policy

JobVoice.com.au

After many years of planning, researching and testing, SSRV is proud to report that JobVoice was officially launched in February 2015. Many thanks to the Ian Potter Foundation, the Victorian Law Foundation, the R E Ross Trust, the JobVoice Advisory Board and the project team who worked tirelessly to get JobVoice off the ground.

In a highlight of the year, JobVoice won the National Rural Law and Justice Alliance Innovation Award 2015 for transformative use of technology in the law.

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 and Centrelink. JobVoice, like TripAdvisor or Urbanspoon, provides transparent information that jobseekers can use to inform their choice of provider to best suit their individual needs.

JobVoice includes a “know your rights” page that aims to increase access to justice by addressing the inherent power imbalance in the employment services system. 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 to empower jobseekers to publicly share their stories, obtain knowledge about their rights and responsibilities, enjoy peer support, and ultimately effect systemic change.

Key Outcomes of JobVoice

- a. **Enable informed choice:** Jobseekers can make informed choices about their employment service provider because they have access to user reviews. This form of individualised support helps to remove barriers to employment and improves the transition into the workplace. For the first time in Australia, jobseekers can use geographic search functionality to find all job service providers close to their home or the local Centrelink office.
- b. **Provide a complaints mechanism:** JobVoice makes employment services and policy makers more accountable for the quality of the services they provide to jobseekers. Regional, rural and remote jobseekers, in particular, are able to anonymously voice concerns about the nature of service provision and delivery in a transparent way, and the risk of victimisation is reduced.
- c. **Inform policy and research:** JobVoice empowers jobseekers to provide a perspective on employment services that has not previously been available to policy makers. The online platform makes it easy for jobseekers to contribute, regardless of their location, and easy for policy makers to access the data.

continued...

Law Reform & Policy *continued*

- d. **Enable participation in service design:** JobVoice offers policy makers access to qualitative information, including jobseekers' own evaluations of services. Policy makers could use this information to improve existing employment services and develop new ones. In this way, the platform gives jobseekers a voice in potential service improvements. JobVoice was designed using community co-design principles, and users were engaged as experts to advise on the development, testing and evaluation of the website.

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 undertook various media activities for the year, the highlights being interviews with:

- SBS television news about changes to the Disability Support Pension
- National Indigenous Radio, 4BC Brisbane and ABC Canberra about the introduction of the Healthy Welfare Card
- 3CR about JobVoice
- Radio National about social security issues in the federal budget.

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 attendance at the annual NWEN National Conference in Alice Springs in 2014
- Two SSRV staff members sit 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 significant number of volunteers in the advice and casework area and in general administration. A significant number of law students from the Australian Catholic University were involved, particularly in the second half of 2014. Our thanks go especially to the volunteers who undertook at least five advice or other volunteer sessions in 2014–2015:

Advice Volunteers:

Taylor Bono
Alison Burns-Smith
Freda Chang
Keegan Cook
Micaela Dali
Gianluca Fantacci
Emily Lau
Jack Maloney
Shaun Mellick
Melissa Passareli
Navee Singh
Meg Tait
Paige Taylor
Sarah Whelan

Subject Matter Expert and Casework Volunteers:

Andy Ellis
James Joseph

Legal Volunteers

Tom Cobban
Max Koh
Scarlet Wilcock

Administration and Program Volunteers

Joan Thong
Meredith Ward

“ Volunteer Program Experience

By Emily Lau

Being at Social Security Rights Victoria for the past year and a half has been a challenging, fun and satisfying experience. Working with Peter and the other volunteers means that I can build on my knowledge of social security law, on my communication skills and on resolving legal issues.

When I started volunteering here in July 2014, I didn't think I would stay a volunteer for more than six months. However, with such a great office environment and interesting problems to solve, who couldn't resist staying?

Being able to help people from across the state ensures a variety of characters from different backgrounds, cultures and walks of life. There is always something new to learn every day.

SSRV Financial Statements

Statement by Members of the Board of Management

The Board of Management of Social Security Rights Victoria Inc. have determined that the association is not a reporting entity.

The Board of Management have determined that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements. In the opinion of the Board of Management the financial report as set out on pages 22 to 27:

- a) Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of Social Security Rights Victoria Inc. as at 30 June 2015 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
- b) 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 2015

Income	2015	2014
Grant - Attorney General - Commonwealth	213,972	199,080
Grant - Attorney General - State	44,172	36,900
Project income	85,476	160,572
Interest received	3,090	4,833
	<u>346,710</u>	<u>401,385</u>
Expenditure		
Salaries	214,324	199,730
Superannuation contributions	20,120	17,532
Workcover	2,687	2,877
Annual leave expense	6,565	3,430
Long service leave	1,279	3,708
Staff related expenses	7,448	7,210
Premises	42,841	40,812
Office overheads	16,570	12,881
Communications	10,190	10,824
Finance & accounting	12,178	11,610
Insurance	1,200	1,287
Library & resources	3,291	386
Travel	637	947
Programme & planning	44,095	15,106
Depreciation	2,899	7,019
	<u>386,324</u>	<u>335,359</u>
Income tax expense (Note 1(e))	-	-
Surplus / (Deficit) after income tax	<u>(39,614)</u>	<u>66,026</u>
Retained surpluses at beginning of financial year	91,762	25,736
Retained profits at the end of the financial year	<u>52,148</u>	<u>91,762</u>


Janina Boughrey - President


Paul Garry - Treasurer

Assets and liabilities statement

	Note	2015 \$	2014 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	2	157,148	250,035
Trade receivables	3	13,249	-
Prepayments		3,552	1,633
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		173,949	251,668
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Plant and equipment	4	1,016	2,915
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		1,016	2,915
TOTAL ASSETS		174,965	254,583
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	5	73,564	121,412
Employee benefits	6	49,253	41,409
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		122,817	162,821
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
TOTAL LIABILITIES		122,817	162,821
NET ASSETS		52,148	91,762
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
Retained surpluses		52,148	91,762
TOTAL MEMBERS' EQUITY		52,148	91,762

Statement of Cash Flows

	Note	2015 \$	2014 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:			
Receipts from customers		277,509	396,552
Payments to suppliers and employees		(372,486)	(416,946)
Interest received		3,090	4,832
Net cash (used in) operating activities	7	(91,887)	(15,562)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:			
Purchase of plant and equipment		(1,000)	-
Net cash (used in) investing activities		(1,000)	-
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:			
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held		(92,887)	(15,562)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		250,035	265,597
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	2	157,148	250,035

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

(a) Basis of Preparation

This financial report is a special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. The Board has determined that the not-for-profit Association is not a reporting entity.

The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historic costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuations of non-current assets.

The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in the preparation of this financial report.

(b) Property, Plant and Equipment

Property, plant and equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all property, plant and equipment is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the Association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use.

Leasehold improvements are amortised over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful lives of the improvements.

(c) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

(d) Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the Association has a legal obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured.

Provisions are measured at the present value of management's best estimate of the outflow required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period. The discount rate used is a pre-tax rate that reflects current market assessments of the time value of money and the risks specific to the liability. The increase in the provision due to the unwinding of the discount is taken to finance costs in the statement of profit or loss.

(e) Income Tax

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

(f) Leases

Leases of fixed assets where substantially all the risks and benefits incidental to the ownership of the asset, but not the legal ownership that are transferred to the Association are classified as finance leases.

Finance leases are capitalised by recording an asset and a liability at the lower of the amounts equal to the fair value of the leased property or the present value of the minimum lease payments, including any guaranteed residual values. Lease payments are allocated between the reduction of the lease liability and the lease interest expense for that period.

1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies continued

(f) Leases continued

Leased assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives where it is likely that the Association will obtain ownership of the asset or over the term of the lease.

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.

(g) 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 entity and specific criteria relating to the type of revenue as noted below, has been satisfied.

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 measured reliably. If this is the case 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 measured then revenue is recognised to the extent of expenses recognised that are recoverable.

(h) 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 assets and liabilities are shown inclusive of GST.

2. Cash and cash equivalents

	2015	2014
	\$	\$
Cash at bank and on hand	9,288	12,515
Short-term bank deposits	147,000	237,000
DGR Trust Account	860	520
	<u>157,148</u>	<u>250,035</u>

3. Trade and other receivables

Trade debtors	13,200	-
Staff payments in advance	49	-
	<u>13,249</u>	

4. Plant and equipment

Furniture, fixture and fittings		
At cost	21,091	21,091
Accumulated depreciation	(21,091)	(18,604)
Total furniture, fixture and fittings		<u>2,487</u>
Office equipment		
At cost	15,923	14,923
Accumulated depreciation	(14,907)	(14,495)
Total office equipment	<u>1,016</u>	<u>428</u>
Computer equipment		
At cost	11,786	11,786
Accumulated depreciation	(11,786)	(11,786)
Total computer equipment	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total plant and equipment	<u>1,016</u>	<u>2,915</u>

5. Trade and other payables

CURRENT

Other payables	36,083	30,820
Grants in advance for specific projects (Non VLA)		-
Grant funding unspent for specific projects (Non VLA)	12,502	65,916
Grant funding unspent (VLA funded)		
Allowable	24,979	24,676
Capital expenditure		
	<u>73,564</u>	<u>121,412</u>

6. Provisions

Annual leave	22,531	15,966
Long service leave	26,722	25,443
	<u>49,253</u>	<u>41,409</u>

7. Cash Flow Information	2015	2014
	\$	\$
Reconciliation of net income to net cash used in operating activities:		
Surplus / (Deficit) for the year	(39,614)	66,026
Cash flows excluded from surplus attributable to operating activities		
Non-cash flows in surplus / (deficit):		
- depreciation	2,899	7,019
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
- (increase) / decrease in trade and other receivables	(13,249)	-
- (increase) / decrease in prepayments	(1,919)	811
- increase / (decrease) in trade and other payables	(47,848)	(90,557)
- increase / (decrease) in provisions	7,844	1,139
Cash flows (used in) operating activities	<u>(91,887)</u>	<u>(15,562)</u>

8. Capital and Leasing Commitments

(a) Operating Leases

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases:

- not later than one year	31,052	27,976
- later than one year	3,436	5,154
- later than five years	-	-
	<u>34,488</u>	<u>33,130</u>

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 was renewed in June 2015 for a term of 12 months.

9 Contingent Liabilities

In the opinion of the Board of Management, the Association did not have any contingent liabilities at 30 June 2015 (30 June 2014: None).

10 Events Occurring After the Reporting Date

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.

11 Economic Dependency

The association is primarily funded by the Federal and State Attorney Generals Departments Community Legal Service Program - 75% this year and 59% 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 assets and liabilities statement as at 30 June 2015, the statement of income and expenditure and 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 2015 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 and Restriction on Distribution

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.

Hayes Knight Audit

**Hayes Knight Audit Pty Ltd
Melbourne**

Dated this 29th day of October 2015

A. Wehrens

**Andrew Wehrens FCA
Director**

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:

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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/>



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https://twitter.com/ssrights_vic

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Incorporation Number: A0015471X



**Social
Security
Rights
Victoria Inc.**

A0015471X