

30
YEARS

Annual Report

2016 2017



**Social
Security
Rights
Victoria Inc.**

A0015471X

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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.
- Law reform activities to address systemic unfairness in the law and legal system.

Our Funding

SSRV is funded by the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department and the Victorian Government, administered by Victoria Legal Aid. In 2016/17, we received and/or applied project funding from the Victoria Law Foundation, the Victorian Legal Services Board and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and Deakin University. We gratefully recognise our funding sources and acknowledge their contribution to our services, and to client and community outcomes.

Our People

SSRV Board Members

Nina Boughey
President

Martin Pike
Vice-President
(Until December 2016)

Agata Weizbowski
Vice-President
(From December 2016)

Paul Garry
Treasurer

Lyndall Grimshaw
Member

Kirsty Gregory
Member

Marianne De Leo
Member

Collette O'Neill
Member

Tom Cobban
(From March 2017)

SSRV Staff

Gillian Wilks
Director
(From January 2017)

Ben Zika
Director
(Until December 2016)

Graham Wells
Principal Solicitor
(Until April 2017)

Denny Meadows
Community Lawyer
(From May 2017)

Peter Horbury
Manager - Operations and Information Services

Kate O'Hara
Job Voice Social Media & Online Content Administrator
(Until November 2016)

Karen Betts
Job Voice Manager
(Until November 2016)

Contractors

Russell Smith
Accountant

Wendy Foster
Bookkeeper

SSRV Volunteers

Once again SSRV has been greatly assisted in its work by a significant number of volunteers who have contributed mainly in the areas of advice and casework services.

We note that very significant contribution made by Joan Thong, a volunteer at SSRV for over a decade. Joan was involved in the advice service for a number of years and more recently contributed to SSRV's administrative work. Due to changing work requirements, Joan finished up in mid-2017. We are deeply grateful to Joan for her contribution to SSRV over this last decade.

A number of other volunteers finished up in the 2016/7 year. We remain indebted to them for their generosity and professionalism.

2016/17 Volunteers:

Emily Lau	Laura Cantil
Micaela Dali	Sarah Brassil
Melissa Passarelli	Emma Berry
Sarah Whelan	Kristy Turner
Grace Innes	Georgia Macri
Stephanie O'Leary	Rebecca Hart
Sarah Hodgson	Dermott Williams
Stephanie Moncur	Denny Meadows
Stephanie Tran	John Berrill
Eris O'Donnell	Meredith Ward
Catherine Gloutney	James Joseph
Josh Shub	Joan Thong
Darren Thomas	
Adrian Ladd	

Pro Bono Support

SSRV gratefully acknowledges the pro bono legal assistance and support provided by:

Berrill & Watson Lawyers

Colin Biggers & Paisley Pty Ltd.

Volunteering with SSRV

Stephanie Moncur

I initially started volunteering with SSRV as part of Deakin University's legal internship program at the end of 2015. I thoroughly enjoyed my time within the internship and I have stayed on as a long-term volunteer since then. The team at SSRV is friendly and approachable and I also find that the work I do is interesting and challenging.

By working with SSRV, I have improved my legal skills and increased my knowledge of social security law. It is immensely satisfying that the legal information and support that I can provide through SSRV is directly providing a positive outcome to the community. The most rewarding aspect of volunteering is making a difference to our community through using my legal skills developed at SSRV. As volunteers, we get a hands on approach to providing assistance to a diverse range of clients on a range of issues. Besides developing my legal skills, I have made friends and able to provide access to justice through our work. That is why I love working with SSRV.



27 September 2016 SSRV display at the Casey Job Fair

President's Report

Nina Boughey

2017 has been a particularly challenging year for community legal centres around the country, and SSRV is no exception.

In 2015 the Federal Government announced that it would be cutting the funding it provides to community legal centres by 30%. As a result, much of SSRV's energy in 2016 and the first half of 2017 was devoted to deciding whether, and how SSRV could survive with such a large reduction in our core funding. We sought expert help to carefully examine what we do and how we do it, and how we might serve our community better with fewer resources. The Board was forced to make some difficult decisions about staffing and our service delivery model to respond to the impending cuts.

Fortunately, in late April 2017 the Federal Government announced that it planned to reverse these cuts. It took several months for it to become clear that this means SSRV will not have its funding reduced for the next two years. Which is great news. But it's clear that this is not the end of the funding uncertainty in the sector. SSRV will need to continue to adapt to ensure that we are spending our limited resources in a way which most benefits our vulnerable clients, and demonstrate ways to prove our value to funders in order to continue to secure ongoing funding. This type of strategic work is an enormous challenge for such a small organisation with such a high day-to-day workload.

We are, however, extremely well-positioned to do this work and continue to improve our services due to our wonderful Director, Gillian Wilks. Gillian started at SSRV in January 2017 and has been absolutely amazing. She has taken on the many challenges that SSRV has faced this year with exceptional skill, and has shown passion for and dedication to the work of SSRV. I have no doubt that Gillian is the best person to lead SSRV through the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Among those challenges and opportunities was a move to Fitzroy Town Hall. Our new offices are a bit cheaper to rent than our old ones. More importantly though, SSRV is now right next door to Fitzroy Legal Service, which offers exciting opportunities for SSRV to work with a well-respected generalist centre.

Another challenge has been in the changeover in Principal Solicitors. We farewelled Graham Wells in April 2017. Graham has done an outstanding job in building the Clinical Legal Program with Deakin, and SSRV is very grateful for his dedication over many years.

However, we were lucky enough to find a wonderful new Principal Solicitor to join us—Vivienne Topp. Vivienne is a talented and experienced community lawyer, and we are very fortunate that she has joined the SSRV team.

President's Report continued.

There were about four months between Graham's departure and Vivienne's arrival—which coincided with our move to Fitzroy. During this difficult and stressful time SSRV was very fortunate to have two of our wonderful volunteer solicitors step in to fulfil the role of Principal Solicitor—Denny Meadows and John Berrill. Denny and John's willingness to volunteer their time to help SSRV and our clients is testament to what an incredible, supportive community of employees and volunteers we have. SSRV could not have survived without John and Denny, and we are greatly indebted to them both.

Despite the many challenges associated with SSRV's funding uncertainty, staffing changes, and the relocation, SSRV did not lose sight of our main purpose, which is to assist those with social security problems. Quite the opposite: in 2016-17 we once again exceeded most of our quantitative targets for providing advice and assistance to those struggling in the maze of Australia's social security system. We provided information and advice to approximately 2500 Victorians this year.

Our services were particularly important and in-demand in a year which saw the government introduce the 'robo-debt' process—where Centrelink systems automatically generated debt notices after comparing a person's tax information with the information held by Centrelink. The problem with this process of calculating debts is that it compares data calculated over

different time periods: tax is calculated annually, while Centrelink payments are calculated fortnightly. As a result, its error rate is extremely high—lots of people are told they have debts, when they don't. The process is also extremely unfair, requiring people to obtain records of their income from many years ago, when their employers may have shut down. SSRV played a pivotal role in assisting Victorians with the problems that arose from the 'robo-debt' process.

Not only did we assist thousands of Victorians, but the quality of the advice we provide is clearly outstanding, as evidenced by the many excellent outcomes Gillian, Peter, Vivienne, John, Denny, Graham, 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.

I'd like to express my enormous gratitude to the staff of SSRV, past and present, 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 in the last 30 years since it was founded, what SSRV will achieve in years to come, and of our role in creating a fairer and more equitable society.

It has been my enormous privilege to work with you all for the past eight years.

Director's Report

Gillian Wilks

In March 2017, SSRV reached its 30th anniversary. In that time SSRV, one of the smallest and lowest funded community legal centres in Victoria, has provided quality services to individuals and to the community, and been recognised as an expert in social security and related law and legal assistance service delivery. SSRV's clients are often among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the community. SSRV's assistance can literally mean the difference between having some form of income security (or income) or not, between understanding and complying with obligations and having penalties imposed, between challenging decisions with confidence or accepting what may be unfair or unjust. This is important work, and a much needed and demanded service. As a specialist community legal centre, which delivers services across Victoria, to individuals, their carers and professionals who support them, SSRV should be recognised for the unique and valued role which it plays in the Victorian legal assistance sector.

It was an honour to be appointed to the role of Director in January 2017 and invited to work with the Board, staff, volunteers and others to further develop and strengthen the organisation so that it can continue and extend its services to individuals and to the community.

I wish to formally acknowledge the previous Director, Ben Zika, who left the role in December 2016. With Ben's

leadership, the organisation began the process of strategically considering its role and positioning for the future. This included engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and, with funding provided by the City of Melbourne Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, working with ThinkPlace Consultants to co-design a new business model.

Nina Boughey will be completing her term as President of the SSRV Board at the 2017 Annual General Meeting. All in the organisation thank her for the intelligent, considered and passionate leadership shown and contributions made during her time on the SSRV Board. Part of Nina's legacy will be that she leaves a Board whose membership is experienced, skilled and committed, and well placed to continue to provide excellent governance and stewardship for the organisation.

SSRV Board members have demonstrated resolve, have provided wise counsel and have been prepared to make difficult decisions in addressing the challenges and uncertainties of 2016-2017. I thank all Board members for their contributions.

Throughout the year SSRV's wonderful staff and volunteers have 'held the frame' and continued their work to meet the constant demand for expert information, education and legal assistance in relation to social security and family assistance law matters.

Director's Report continued.

Staff delivered a range of community legal education sessions and presentations, primarily to professionals such as financial counsellors and social workers. Presentations were delivered at the National Community Legal Centres Conference regarding SSRV's Clinical Legal Education Program, and at the Disability Employment Services Conference regarding Job Voice. A number of issues of the Red Tape newsletter were produced and distributed. With a grant from the Victoria Law Foundation, a series of fact sheets regarding issues commonly raised by SSRV's clients were produced and made available through our website.

SSRV's policy and reform activities were mainly undertaken through contributing to the initiatives of the National Social Security Rights Network. However, media work was undertaken and submissions made in relation to the 'robo-debts' issues which arose early in 2017. The current stage of the Job Voice project was completed and the website was promoted through social media and other outlets.

SSRV continued its valued relationship with Deakin University, by offering a number of clinical legal education placements to law students during the year. The organisation also participated in sector-based accreditation and professional indemnity cross check processes.

SSRV was extremely pleased to be selected to participate in the Federation of Community Legal Centres' Evaluation Capacity Building and Outcomes Measure Project. Through this project SSRV has accessed training and resources, consultant guidance, and

a community of practice, to support our commitment to developing our capability and processes in monitoring and evaluating our work. The Theory of Change statement and diagram located later in this Annual Report were developed through the project. Many thanks to the Federation and its Project Manager, Rohan Thwaites, consultants, Elaine Hendrick and Mark Planigale, and to our CLC 'fellow travellers' for sharing their experience and expertise, and for providing support and encouragement.

Looking towards the future, SSRV plans to focus more of its attention on training and resourcing other professionals to better identify and provide initial responses to their clients' social security law matters. We are grateful to have received a grant from the Victorian Legal Services Board with which we will work with four generalist community legal centres towards these purposes.

Outcomes and learnings from the project will inform further activities in this area.

SSRV acknowledges and appreciates the funding that it receives from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and Victoria Legal Aid. In 2017-2018 we look forward to working with these bodies and others in the legal assistance and broader human service sectors to ensure that people who require information and assistance regarding social security law matters are able to obtain it in accessible, timely and appropriate ways.

Our Services

SSRV provides legal information, advice, casework assistance and representation in relation to social security and family assistance issues. Initial intake was primarily via our telephone and email advice services.

Advice, casework and representation services

In the 2016/17 year the advice service operated Monday to Friday 9.30am-12.30pm (except public holidays and between Christmas and New Year).

In the financial year SSRV provided 2,404 information and advice services by telephone, email and in person*, representing an increase of 24% on the 2015/16 year. This assistance was provided to 1,710 individuals and organisations, representing an increase of 19% on the 2015/16 year.

In 2016/17, SSRV opened 178 new cases, and closed 189 matters. SSRV's lawyers undertook 27 appearances at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Community Legal Education (CLE)

SSRV develops and delivers CLE with the objective of improving the knowledge and access of a variety of groups to the social security system. Our program particularly targets professionals working in related areas such as financial counsellors and community workers. 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 2016/17 SSRV staff provided community legal education to organisations, including:

- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- Australian Unemployed Workers' Union
- Financial and Consumer Rights Council (Annual Conference and CPD program)
- VCOSS Disability Advocacy Resource Unit
- Jewish Care
- Inner Melbourne Community Legal Service
- Sacred Heart Mission
- Royal Women's Hospital Social Work Department
- North Eastern Financial Counsellors Network

In addition

- Graham Wells spoke about SSRV's Clinical Legal Education Program at the 2016 National Community Legal Centres Conference
- Ben Zika delivered a presentation regarding Job Voice at the Disability Employment Services Conference.



Four issues of SSRV's newsletter, Red Tape, were published in the 2016/17 year.

Topics covered in the newsletter included:

- The effects of superannuation insurance on Centrelink payments
- Future Disability Support Pension reviews
- '18 month ' issues for the Disability Support Pension, and

Social security issues arising from the 2017/18 Federal Budget which was delivered in May 2017.

With a small grant from the Victoria Law Foundation SSRV produced a series of fact sheets focussing on common issues experienced by or clients. The fact sheets are available on the SSRV website. Topics include:

- Newstart Allowance
- Compensation Preclusion

- Total Permanent Disability Insurance
- Income Insurance
- Disability Support Pension.

*Due to changes in the data collection system used by community legal centres in Australia, some client and service data generated by the new system for the later part of the financial year is incomplete. Therefore, SSRV has compiled some statistics manually. These may need to be verified when the system is fully operational. We do believe, however, that the statistics displayed in this report generally accurately reflect our service delivery and client demographics for the year.

Law and policy reform

Issues arising from Centrelink's 'robo-debt' program were a major focus for SSRV's advice and casework, and policy and media work during 2016/17, particularly during January and February 2017. SSRV prepared a submission and provided evidence in person to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into the Design, scope, cost-benefit analysis, contracts awarded and implementation associated with the Better Management of the Social Welfare System initiative.

SSRV staff were interviewed by a number of media outlets, mostly in relation to 'robo-debts', during the year.

Media outlets included:

- The Age
- Joy-FM

- 3CR's 'Done by Law' and Breakfast programs
- Radio National
- Posts on social media sites.

SSRV also contributed to and supported the social security law and policy work undertaken by the National Social Security Rights Network.

During the year SSRV completed work on the funded stage of the Job Voice project. Job Voice was designed as an innovative social platform that empowered unemployed jobseekers from across Victoria by providing a website on which they could share their experiences of employment service providers. Further work is being undertaken to determine the future and ongoing resourcing of this important initiative.

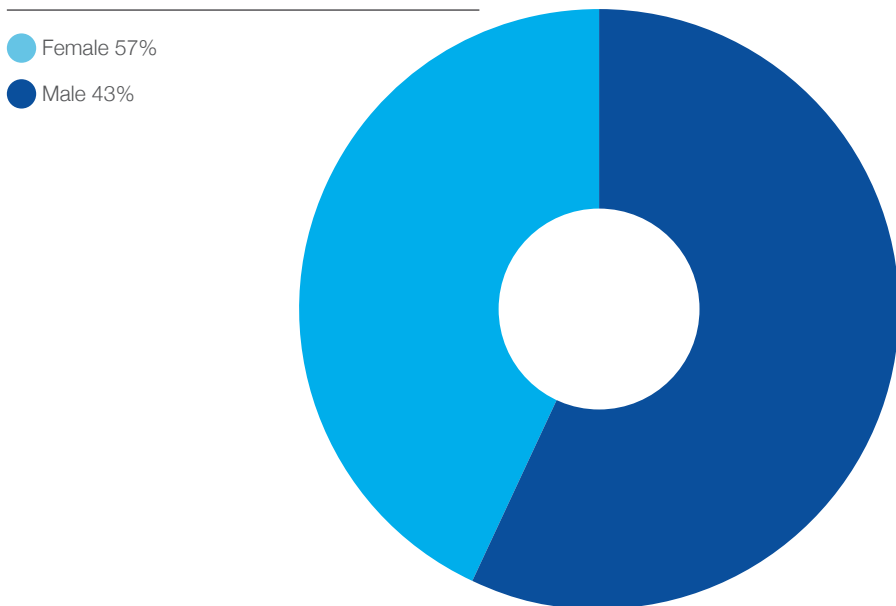


26 August 2016 - Senator Janet Rice met with SSRV staff and students.

Our Clients

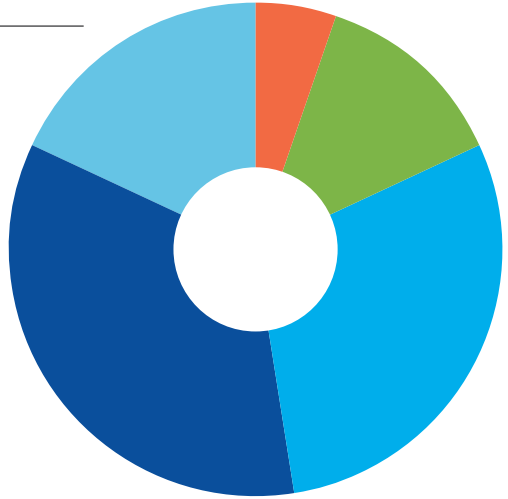
Please note that all graphs have been rounded to the top five issues or payments with aligned payments/issues rounded in. For example, Parenting Payment has been included in Family, Sickness Allowance with Newstart. In the Presenting Issues graphs, matters such as 'gifting' are included in the assets test category.

Gender



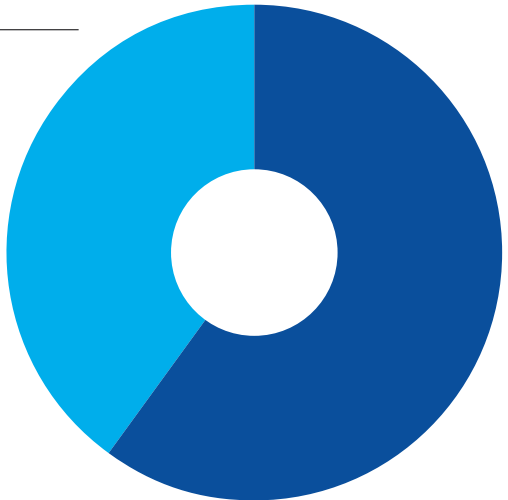
Age

- <24— 5%
- 25-34— 13%
- 35-49— 29%
- 50-64— 34%
- 65+— 18%



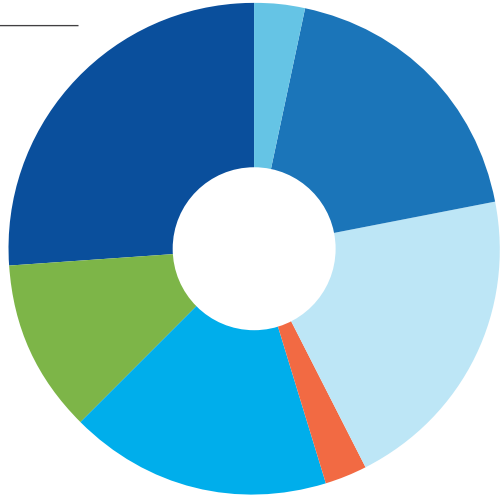
Client Locations

- Metro 60%
- Regional & Rural 40%



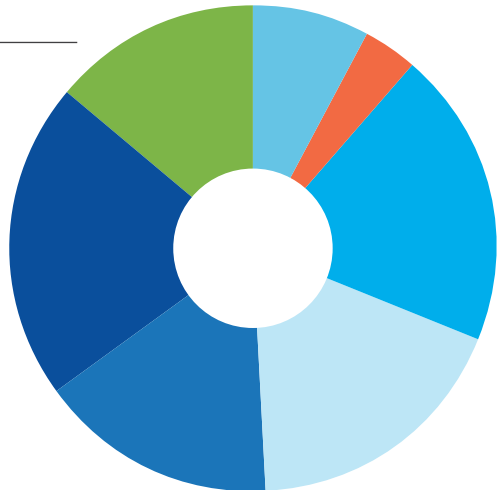
Metro Postcodes

- Inner East 3%
- Inner 4%
- East 12%
- Outer North 17%
- West 19%
- Inner North 20%
- South 26%



Rural and Regional Postcodes

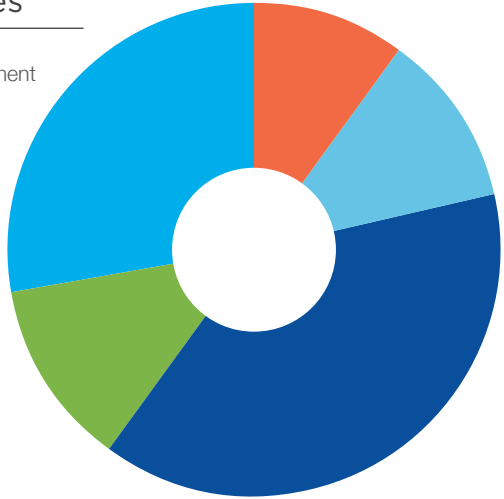
- West Coast 4%
- Geelong 8%
- Mornington Peninsula 14%
- North East 16%
- Central 18%
- West Victoria 20%
- Gippsland 21%



Payment Eligibility Types

This graph represents the Centrelink payment types about which clients are seeking information.

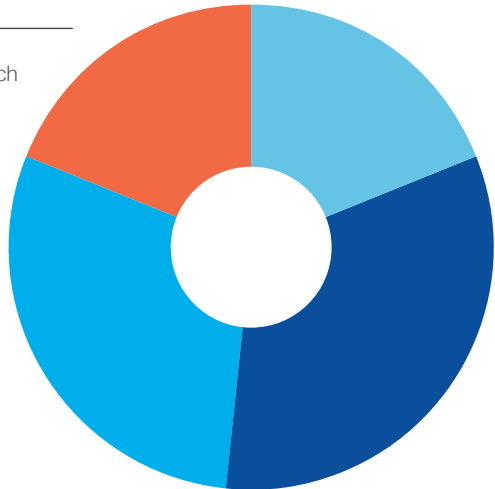
- Study 10%
- Age 11%
- Family 12%
- Newstart Allowance 28%
- Disability Support pension/
Carers Allowance 39%



Presenting issues

This graph shows the major issues for which clients are seeking assistance.

- Debt 19%
- Admin 19%
- Eligibility 29%
- Rates & Payability 33%



Client Stories

Jon

Jon suffered from a series of health issues over a number of years. He made four applications to Centrelink for the Disability Support Pension (DSP). Each of these was rejected. Following the fourth rejection and an appeal to a Centrelink Authorised Review Officer, Jon contacted SSRV. SSRV assisted Jon to lodge and appeal at the AAT 1 (Social Services and Child Support Division) and with the subsequent phone hearing. Unfortunately this appeal was unsuccessful.

SSRV the assisted Jon to prepare and lodge an appeal to the AAT 2 (General Division). Part of the General Division process is that two pre-conference hearings are undertaken to see if an outcome can be negotiated. With SSRV's support, Jon was able to provide more specific medical information at the conferences. Based on this information Centrelink agreed that Jon met the criteria and he was placed on the DSP.

Josephine

Josephine's son, Alfred, was experiencing a number of physical health problems. Josephine was struggling with mental health issues. Alfred often moved between her home and that of his father, mostly because his paternal grandfather was a retired doctor and was able to assist with his health issues. Centrelink had previously raised a Family Tax Benefit (FTB) debt against Josephine, because Alfred was not in her care some of the time. A Centrelink Authorised Review Officer (ARO) overturned the debt due to Josephine's difficult circumstances.

Around a year later another similar debt was raised. Despite Josephine spending significant time trying to get both the Child Support Agency and Centrelink (both parts of the Department of Human Services) to stop her FTB payments, they continued and a debt was raised. Josephine again appealed the debt. This time the ARO did not overturn the decision.

After being contacted by Josephine, SSRV assisted her to lodge an appeal at AAT 1 and represented her at the hearing. Josephine did not dispute the raising of the debt, but she requested that the debt not be recovered as recovery was 'not in the public interest'. The Tribunal agreed with this argument and further recovery of the debt was halted.



Our Clinical Legal Education Program

During 2016/17, SSRV continued its relationship with the Deakin University Law School. 15 day internships were offered to students on either an across trimester or intensive basis. Under the supervision of SSRV staff, students were involved in information, advice, casework, legal research and policy, and engagement activities.

Reflection on SSRV Internship

Anna Morrow

Before volunteering with SSRV my knowledge of social security law was extremely limited. Despite being a participant of the social security system, I knew very little of my rights in regard to social security. This is not an uncommon scenario. In a system which is designed to confuse, it is the norm that many Centrelink recipients feel like they are kept in the dark about their rights. This is why SSRV is crucial to the progression of equality in our community.

From volunteering with SSRV I saw the organisation has a life-changing impact on its clients. For example, successfully appealing a Centrelink decision to raise a debt against a client, often means that the other stresses in a client's life are reduced or eliminated, such as financial stress, risk of homelessness and the inability to afford everyday living expenses. SSRV provides much needed legal advice and representation to people who have been treated unfairly by the social security system, and who lack the appropriate support networks to defend themselves. Without this organisation many people would not receive the basic rights which they are entitled to.

As a law student, I gained valuable experience and knowledge in social security law, an area of law that is complex, and generally not taught at university. SSRV provides law students with practical opportunities to learn and build upon our skills in interviewing clients through the advice line, as well as allowing students to gain experience in drafting letters of advice, and legal research. SSRV is a unique CLC, as it is the only CLC in Victoria which specialises in social security law. The practical experience and the fact that SSRV is focussed on a highly specialised area of law, provides law students and volunteers with a unique and rewarding experience.



Our Theory of Change

SSRV has greatly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Federation of Community Legal Centres' Evaluation Capacity Building and Outcomes Measurement Project. In March 2017, Board representatives, staff, volunteers and students participated in a Theory of Change workshop. Input from the workshop and further consultation provided the basis for our first Theory of Change Statement and Diagram.

The Theory of Change is an effort to document how we understand that the activities undertaken by SSRV lead to a series of results or changes that contribute to the organisation making a difference and achieving its intended outcomes. The Theory of Change will be reviewed and refined over time, and it will inform SSRV's monitoring and evaluation framework.



SSRV Theory of Change Workshop 23 March 2017

SSRV Theory of Change Statement

Purpose Statement

SSRV is a Victorian state-wide, specialist community legal centre (CLC) which works to secure the right to equitable social security entitlements for all Victorians. SSRV helps vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians to understand and access their social security entitlements to ensure an adequate standard of living.

Description of problem/need

More than one million Victorians are social security recipients. For many of these people financial support from the government is required or sought because they are experiencing, or caring for someone who is experiencing, forms of financial and other disadvantage such as unemployment, old age, illness or disability, or family breakdown. These people are amongst the most disadvantaged in our society. Many meet the financial disadvantage and one or more of the other criteria to be considered for inclusion in the National Partnership Agreement priority groups for legal assistance services.

The Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales has found that “[T]hose on government payments tended to experience legal problems that reflected their socioeconomic disadvantage ... had significantly increased likelihood of experiencing family, government, health and rights problems. The high levels of government problems were largely due to problems related to receipt of government payments (Coumarelos, et al, 2015, p. 71)”. The Foundation has also made findings about the prevalence of legal problems among socially disadvantaged groups, the links between socioeconomic disadvantage and lower personal capability of

resolving legal problems, and the interconnection between legal and non-legal need and problems (p. 3).

Disadvantaged people often rely on social security payments. The social security system can be difficult to navigate. The complexity of the system means that access and compliance can sometimes be challenging, and errors by individuals or Centrelink are common. SSRV's experience is that while many people do self-identify social security related legal problems and seek assistance to address these, many others have not considered that their various disputes and stresses involving Centrelink were legal problems, or that they could be addressed through legal processes. Therefore, for many people, their problems with Centrelink are only raised as part of a range of matters discussed with a legal or non-legal advisor, or only come to light because the advisor has acted as a “problem-noticer” (Coumarelos, et al, 2015, p. 4) and identified the social security law issue. This may be after the person's life and financial security have been compromised because they were unaware that they could have resolved the matter earlier through legal assistance.

These factors highlight the need for those people who are experiencing legal problems associated with their social security entitlements, and those who are assisting them, to have access to specialist legal information, advice and assistance in relation to these matters. To assist with the prevention and resolution of social security law problems, there is also a need to identify, highlight, propose and lobby for changes which will address systemic issues on policy and practice levels.

Context in which the intervention occurs

SSRV provides free and accessible legal assistance, education and policy advocacy in the area of social security law. SSRV is one of the smallest and lowest funded CLCs in the state.

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) also provides specialist legal information and

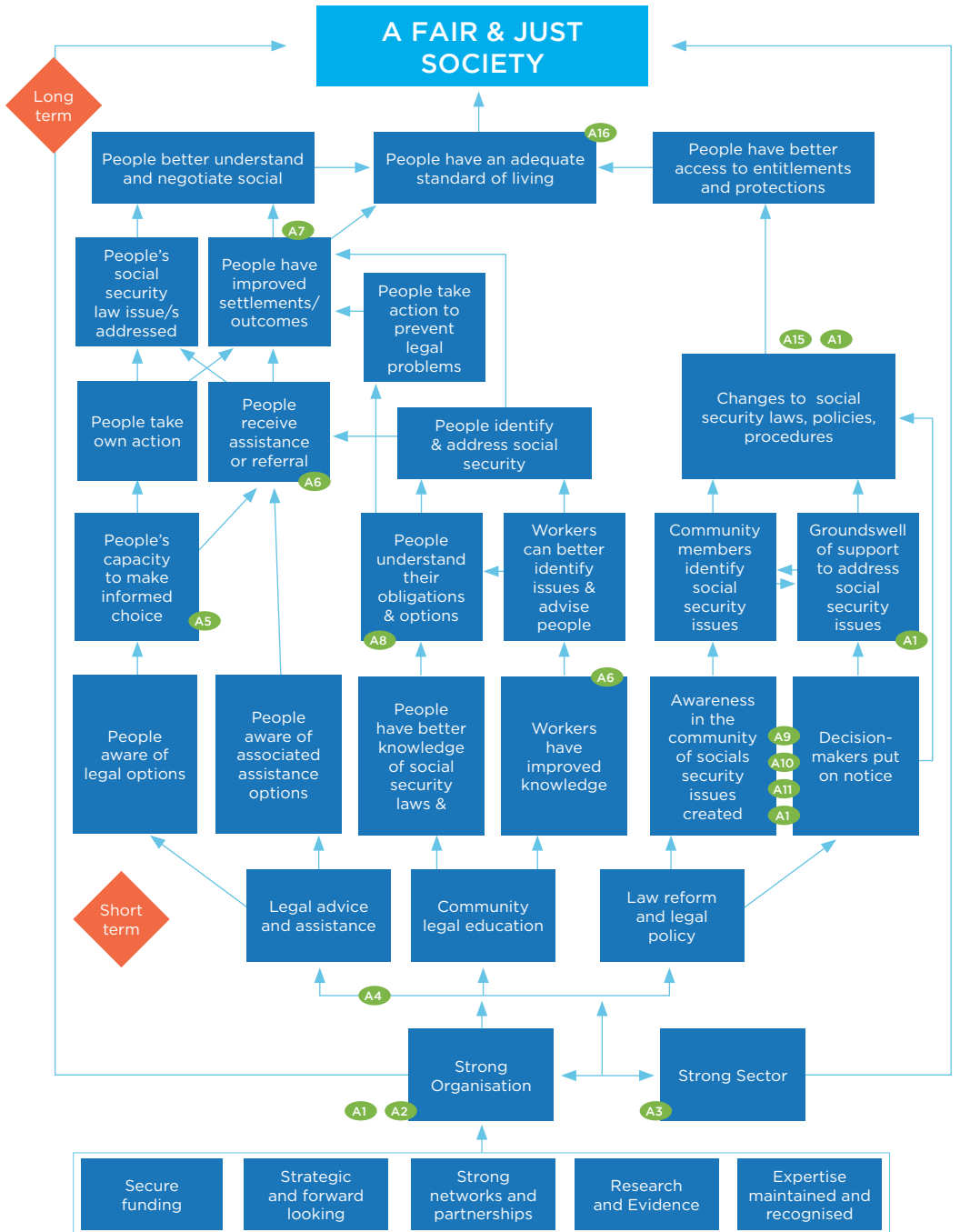
assistance in the area of social security law, through its Legal Help telephone service and the Commonwealth Entitlements Unit. To receive legal assistance from VLA, guidelines, means and merits tests must be met.

Some Victorian CLCs and non-legal service providers provide information and assistance to clients in relation to social security matters. Many legal (such as CLC lawyers) and non-legal (such as financial counsellors) workers refer people to SSRV or consult with SSRV in relation to client social security law matters.

SSRV is a member of the Federation of Community Legal Centres and the National Social Security Rights Network. The organisation can access the resources and support offered by these peak bodies and contributes to their activities.



SSRV Theory of Change Workshop 23 March 2017



Assumptions underpinning Theory of Change

(correspond to numbered, green ovals on chart)

1. That SSRV recurrent and sufficient funding and other resources.
2. That SSRV has the capability to put the resources into action.
3. That we are collaborators, not competitors.
4. That SSRV has the required knowledge and skills.
5. People have capacity and confidence to act on their own behalf.
6. That SSRV and/or other relevant organisations exist and have capacity to pick up the work.
7. That resolutions are fair.
8. That people retain knowledge/have confidence.
9. That SSRV has the skills to influence policy.
10. That SSRV collects, compiles and analyses statistics, research and other evidence.
11. That evidence influences policy towards good ends.
12. SSRV's unique perspective informs law and policy making.
13. Law-makers contribute to positive social outcomes.
14. That laws, policy and procedures will be put into effect.
15. That laws, policy and procedures will be enforced.
16. That people who are due entitlements get them.

How what we do leads to the intended outcomes

SSRV believes that the capacity to achieve its objectives is underpinned by ensuring that it is a strong organisation and that it is located within a strong community legal centre/legal assistance sector. Therefore, some of its resources are allocated to building and maintaining these foundations.

SSRV provides legal advice and assistance, primarily through its telephone advice line in the first instance, directly to social security recipients or those hoping to access social security payments, and to others, such as carers and community workers, on their behalf. Through receiving initial advice and assistance, such as checking documents received from Centrelink and draft responses, it is intended that people will better understand their legal problem and be in an improved position to make decisions about their preferred action. Many people will then be able to take their own action to address the social security law issue.

As noted above, many very vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians rely on social security payments. Where a related legal issue arises, research suggests that these people may have less legal capability than others to deal with the matter independently. In these cases, subject to guidelines and resources, SSRV may provide more intensive legal assistance (to the person or to a third party who is helping them) to assist in the resolution of legal issues, with the objective of obtaining improved outcomes to those that would otherwise be achieved.

SSRV is aware that social security law problems often occur in combination with other legal and social issues. An individual's capacity to address and resolve a social security matter may be contingent upon the related matters being attended to. Therefore, SSRV workers consciously identify where referrals to relevant associated assistance may be required.

SSRV provides information and education about social security law to the public and to workers who assist vulnerable and disadvantaged people. For social security recipients who have the requisite level of legal capability, it is envisaged that improved knowledge about social security law and processes will lead to improved understanding of rights and obligations within the system. Improved knowledge and understanding assists people to prevent legal problems from occurring and/or to identify and address them at an earlier point.

For workers, SSRV believes that improved knowledge about and understanding of social security law and processes, will help them to better assist their clients to identify and address (directly and/or through effective referrals and collaboration) social security matters.

In SSRV's experience, there can be policy and systems issues which affect vulnerable and disadvantaged people's access to social security entitlements. Through identifying and raising awareness of these issues and proposing action to address them, SSRV aims to create a fairer system which adequately provides for those in need.

Evidence base

SSRV aims to access and develop evidence which will assist it to better understand legal need and issues within the social security context and related areas, and the legal and related needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians and how to appropriately respond to these. SSRV is also committed to collecting and analysing evidence to assess whether its activities are resulting in the intended outcomes.

The following is a list of evidence that has informed the development of the SSRV Theory of Change. The organisation will continue to add to this list and reference this evidence in service planning and review.

Legal Need

- Coumarelos, C., Marcourt, D., People, J., McDonald, H.M., Wei, Z., Irianna, R. & Ramsey, S. (2012) Legal Australia-wide Survey: Legal Need in Australia/Legal Need in Victoria, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, Sydney
- Coumarelos, C., McDonald, H.M., Forell, S., & Wei, Z. (2015) Collaborative Planning Resources - Service Planning, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, Sydney

Service Delivery Approaches

- Coumarelos, C., McDonald, H.M., Forell, S., & Wei, Z. (2015) Collaborative Planning Resources - Service Planning, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, Sydney
- McDonald, H.M. & Wei, Z. (2016) How people solve legal problems: level or disadvantage and legal capability, Justice Issues 23, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Sydney

SSRV Service Delivery and Performance

- Social Security Rights Victoria, CLSIS/CLASS client and service data
- Think Place (2017) SSRV business model redesign - Final Report, Victoria

References

Coumarelos, C., McDonald, H.M., Forell, S., & Wei, Z. (2015) Collaborative Planning Resources - Service Planning, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, Sydney

SSRV Financial Statements

For year ending 30 June 2017

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 2017 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:

President 
Janina Boughey

Treasurer 
Paul Garry

Dated this 19th day of October 2017

* The Audited Financial Statements have been reprinted in this Annual Report pages 28- 37.

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2017

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Income		
Grant - Attorney General - Commonwealth	258,488	234,393
Grant - Attorney General - State	40,796	40,751
Project income	113,561	45,067
Interest received	740	1,263
	413,585	321,474
Expenditure		
Salaries	(226,625)	(218,400)
Superannuation contributions	(19,771)	(20,818)
Workcover	-	(2,616)
Annual leave expense	5,079	(677)
Long service leave	(4,649)	(2,533)
Staff related expenses	(2,220)	(2,661)
Premises	(46,740)	(51,705)
Office overheads	(10,555)	(9,337)
Communications	(12,191)	(9,306)
Finance & accounting	(13,477)	(10,164)
Insurance	(1,294)	(1,487)
Library & resources	(2,818)	(3,022)
Travel	(1,678)	(619)
Programme & planning	(64,189)	(3,468)
Depreciation	(813)	(1,073)
	(401,941)	(337,886)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	11,644	(16,412)
Total comprehensive surplus/(deficit) for the year	11,644	(16,412)

Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended 30 June 2017

	Note	2017 \$	2016 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	194,544	189,047
Trade and other receivables	6	16,500	7,920
Prepayments		825	1,971
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		211,869	198,938
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	7	3,909	1,617
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		3,909	1,617
TOTAL ASSETS		215,778	200,555
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	8	116,364	112,356
Employee benefits	9	52,034	52,463
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		168,398	164,819
TOTAL LIABILITIES		168,398	164,819
NET ASSETS		47,380	35,736
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
Retained surpluses		47,380	35,736
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS		47,380	35,736

Statement of Changes to Members' Funds

For the year ended 30 June 2017

2017	Retained Surpluses \$	Total \$
Balance at 1 July 2016	35,736	35,736
Surplus for the year	11,644	11,644
Balance at 30 June 2017	47,380	47,380
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

Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 30 June 2017

	Note	2017 \$	2016 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:			
Receipts from customers and funders		404,265	350,770
Payments to suppliers and employees		(396,403)	(318,460)
Interest received		740	1,263
Net cash provided by operating activities	5	8,602	33,573
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(3,105)	(1,674)
Net cash used in investing activities		(3,105)	(1,674)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents held		5,497	31,899
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		189,047	157,148
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	4	194,544	189,047

Notes to the Financial Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2017

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*, *AASB 1048 Interpretation of Standards* 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.

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

Notes to the Financial Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2017

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

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)

Revenue, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST), except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

Receivables and payable are stated inclusive of GST.

The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included as part of receivables or payables in the statement of financial position.

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.

3. Critical Accounting Estimates and Judgments

Those charged with governance make estimates and judgements during the preparation of these financial statements regarding assumptions about current and future events affecting transactions and balances.

These estimates and judgements are based on the best information available at the time of preparing the financial statements, however as additional information is known then the actual results may differ from the estimates.

The significant estimates and judgements made have been described below

Key estimates - receivables

The receivables at reporting date have been reviewed to determine whether there is any objective evidence that any of the receivables are impaired. An impairment provision is included for any receivable where the entire balance is not considered collectible. The impairment provision is based on the best information at the reporting date.

4. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Cash at bank and in hand	1,394	1,249
Short-term deposits	190,000	186,000
DGR Trust Account	3,150	1,798
	194,544	189,047

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:

Cash and cash equivalents	194,544	189,047
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Notes to the Financial Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2017

5. Cash Flow Information

Reconciliation of result for the year to cashflows from operating activities

Reconciliation of deficit to net cash provided by operating activities:

Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	11,644	(16,412)
Non-cash flows in deficit:		
- depreciation	813	1,073
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
- (increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	(8,580)	5,329
- (increase)/decrease in prepayments	1,146	1,581
- increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	4,008	38,792
- increase/(decrease) in employee benefits	(429)	3,210
Cashflow from operating activities	8,602	33,573

6. Trade and Other Receivables

CURRENT

Trade receivables	16,500	7,920
Provision for impairment	-	-
	16,500	7,920

The carrying value of trade receivables is considered a reasonable approximation of fair value due to the short-term nature of the balances.

The maximum exposure to credit risk at the reporting date is the fair value of each class of receivable in the financial statements.

7. Property, plant and equipment

	2017 \$	2016 \$
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	19,028	15,923
Accumulated depreciation	(15,587)	(15,319)
Total office equipment	3,441	604
Computer equipment		
At cost	13,459	13,459
Accumulated depreciation	(12,991)	(12,446)
Total computer equipment	468	1,013
Total plant and equipment	3,909	1,617
Total property, plant and equipment	3,909	1,617

8. Trade and Other Payables

CURRENT		
Unsecured liabilities		
Grant funding unspent (SACS Remuneration Order)	6,331	9,047
Grant funding unspent for specific projects (non VLA)	927	52,944
Grant funding unspent (Victorian Legal Services Board)	72,500	-
Other payables	36,606	50,365
	116,364	112,356

Notes to the Financial Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2017

9. Employee Benefits

Current liabilities

Long service leave	33,904	29,254
Annual leave	18,130	23,209
	52,034	52,463

10. Capital and Leasing Commitments

Operating Leases

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases:		
- not later than one year	25,000	1,718
- between one year and five years	4,247	1,770
- later than five years	-	-
	29,247	3,488

An operating lease had been taken out for the PABX phone system which commenced in July 2013 for a term of 60 months. The PABX lease was paid up during the year in order to purchase the hardware outright due to the move to new premises.

The lease of the office premises expired on 30 June 2016 and since then it has transitioned to a month-to-month arrangement, however a new sub-lease was signed for new premises in May 2017 commencing on 2 June 2017 for 1 year and 3 months less two days.

11. Contingencies

In the opinion of the Board of Management, the Association did not have any contingencies at 30 June 2017 (30 June 2016: None).

12. 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.

13. Economic Dependency

The Association is primarily funded by the Federal and State Attorney Generals Departments Community Legal Service Program - 72% of this year and 86% last year. Without the continued support of the Departments, the Association would not be able to provide its valuable services to the community.

The Association has a funding agreement in place with the Departments until 30 June 2019 and there are no indications that these arrangements will be discontinued thereafter.

14. Association Details

The registered office and principal place of the association is:
Social Security Rights Victoria Inc
4th Floor, Fitzroy Town Hall
126 Moor Street
FITZROY VIC 3065

Independent Auditor's Report To the Members of Social Security Rights Victoria Inc.

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the 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 2017, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the declaration by those charged with governance.

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 2017 and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the auditor independence requirements and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of matter regarding basis of accounting

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report is prepared to assist Social Security Rights Victoria Inc. to comply with the financial reporting provisions of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 referred to above. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the financial report

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.

Independent Auditor's Report To the Members of Social Security Rights Victoria Inc.

Auditor's responsibility for the audit of the financial report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit 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.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by those charged with governance.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.



**Nexia Melbourne Audit Pty Ltd
Melbourne**



**Andrew S. Wehrens
Director**

Dated this 26th day of October 2017



A0015471X

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
ssrv.org.au

Support our work by donating at :
ssrv.org.au/donate

Donations of \$2 and over to SSRV are tax deductible

SSRV is a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI). Please give generously so that SSRV can continue to serve vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians.



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