Disability Support Pension (DSP) Help Project

Year One Implementation and Evaluation Report

DSP Help http://dsphelp.org.au

The DSP Help Project is funded through the Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program

Social Security Rights Victoria Inc.
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DSP Help
By Social Security Rights Victoria

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Background

Social Security Rights Victoria (SSRV) is an independent, state-wide community legal centre that specialises in social security related law, policy and administration. SSRV's vision is for a fair and just society in which all people are able to receive a guaranteed adequate income in order to enjoy a decent standard of living. SSRV's contribution to this vision is the provision of legal services to vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians and those who support them, which assist them to secure and protect their right to equitable social security entitlements.

The Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner is the regulator of the legal profession in Victoria. The Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program distributes "funding to projects that aim to improve the administration of laws, increase access to justice, improve legal services and inform and educate the wider community about legal services." *(https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/grants-and-funding/grants)*

In early 2019, the Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program funding round sought expressions of interest for an Explore Stream, with a view to *Designing Justice Differently*. As a successful applicant, SSRV representatives were offered the opportunity to "participate in a series of three tailor-made workshops with design specialists … to put design techniques into action to move along the innovation continuum, from defining your opportunity, to generating ideas, to developing a prototype." (Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program 2019 Grants Funding Round, Expression of Interest, Explore Stream). At the completion of the workshops, SSRV representatives had developed a proposal based around a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), which formed the basis of a further application to the Board for implementation funding.

In October 2019 SSRV was advised that the application had been successful. A grant of two year funding was approved by the Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program to design, develop and deliver the 'DSP Help' Project.

The Project aims to explore the use of human-centred design and technology to address the question of –

> **"How might we help people with disability prove their eligibility for the Disability Support Pension so that they enjoy a fairer, faster pathway to adequate income support?"**

As outlined in the funding submission, for people with a disability who are unable to generate an income, Australia's social security system provides a safety net: the Disability Support Pension (DSP). There are approximately four million Australians who have a disability and over half of them are working age. In recent years the number of DSP recipients have fallen, not because there are less people with a disability, but because it has become harder to demonstrate eligibility for the pension. Eligibility criteria and evidentiary requirements are complicated and confusing for applicants, those who support them, and for medical professionals who are called upon to provide reports to support claims.

Many people with disabilities who are unable to work are forced to claim or remain on JobSeeker (formerly Newstart) payments to obtain income support. JobSeeker is not designed for people with disabilities. It is designed as an "allowance" rather than a form of permanent support, the rate is less than for DSP, and recipients are required to undertake reporting, work and training requirements unless they can obtain a medical exemption. These requirements can exacerbate an individual's vulnerabilities. Living with a disability often has expenses which a JobSeeker payment does not cover.

SSRV is very aware of these issues. A large percentage of calls to SSRV's advice lines over recent years, and a commensurate amount of casework and representation services, have been related to DSP applications and rejections. A common scenario is a person calling because their DSP claim has been rejected. They'll say, "I'm currently on JobSeeker but I can't work. Centrelink expects me to try though, but it just isn't going to happen. My health is stopping me. I applied for the DSP because that seems like a more appropriate payment, but I've been rejected. I don't understand. I can't work. Why have I been rejected?"

Social security is a complex area of law. Of the many social security payments available, the DSP has some of the most complicated eligibility criteria and evidentiary requirements. Often DSP applicants can make a claim for the pension without understanding what is actually required, and only learn about the evidentiary requirements if and when their application is rejected. To have the best chance of success, applicants need to understand the DSP eligibility criteria, and need to support their claim with good quality, appropriate medical evidence. The DSP Help Project was envisioned as a way in which SSRV could help with this.

The MVP proposed by the DSP Help Project was a "user-centred information, advice and advocacy service for DSP applicants and their support workers, designed to surmount the complicated evidentiary burden of DSP eligibility" (SSRV Grant Application, May 2019, p.6). It was envisaged that in the first year human-centred design principles would be applied to the development of a website and wrap around legal services, and that community legal education and promotional activity would be undertaken. In year two it was proposed that findings from year would be reported and reviewed, with a view to "improving the on-line and in-person service … and extending evidence-based advocacy with Centrelink, the Department of Social Services and the AAT with a view to driving the requisite systemic change" (p.7).

In seeking to support DSP applicants before their claim is rejected, its focus on strengthening support worker understanding, the development of an on-line tool and resources that could be accessed at a pace suitable to the user, and the provision of tailored legal advice and casework services, the DSP Help Project aimed to Design Justice Differently.

This report documents the conceptualisation, implementation, evaluation and recommendations arising from Year One of the DSP Help Project.

Acknowledgements

SSRV wishes to acknowledge and thank the Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program and its staff for the funding and support that has been provided to date.

We also acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of:

- DSP applicants, support workers and other stakeholders who participated in consultations and provided feedback;
- Steering Committee Members – Patrick McGee (Australian Federation of Disability Organisations AFDO), Natasha Thompson (AFDO Social Security Consultant), Len Jaffit (Victoria Legal Aid), Yvette Maker (Melbourne Social Equity Institute, University of Melbourne) and John Berrill (Berrill & Watson Lawyers);
- Reuben Stanton, Wendy Fox and Hannah Mitchell (Paper Giant, Strategic Design Consultancy);
- Taimur Siddiqi (The Incus Group, Monitoring & Evaluation Consultant);
- Sam Flynn (Josef Legal); and
- SSRV staff who contributed to the development, implementation and management of the DSP Help Project, in particular Dermott Williams (DSP Help Project Community Lawyer), Bryn Overend (Principal Lawyer), Michael Tamblyn (Principal Lawyer) and Gillian Wilks (Director).

Victorian Attorney-General, The Hon. Jill Hennessy (centre), (L- R) Fiona Bennett (Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner, Board Member), Bryn Overend (SSRV), John Berrill (Berrill and Watson Lawyers), Gillian Wilks (SSRV), Yvette Maker (Melbourne University), Len Jaffit (Victoria Legal Aid). Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner 2019 Grants Launch, 22 October 2019.

Context

The design, development and implementation of the DSP Help Project was informed by relevant legislative, societal, sector and other contexts. This section details the impact and effects of these on the first year.

Disability Support Pension Eligibility Criteria

DSP eligibility criteria sits at the core of the DSP Help Project. It is this criteria the Online Resource assists applicants to understand and engage with, and it is this criteria SSRV's lawyers grapple with as part of their casework. It is complex.

For a DSP claim to be successful the applicant must show:

- They have physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment or impairments.
- The condition(s) causing the impairment(s) is/are fully diagnosed, fully treated, and fully stabilised.
- The impairment(s) attracts a severe rating (20 points) under the Impairment Tables.
- They have a Continuing Inability to Work.

Each of these criteria have their own nuance, for example there are specific rules covering the kinds of practitioners who can diagnose certain conditions, the treatment that needs to have been undertaken for a condition to be "fully treated", and how the tables should be applied where there are multiple conditions or impairments. To fully understand DSP eligibility is an exercise in statutory interpretation.

Additionally, if the person has multiple impairments and no single impairment is assigned a severe rating but together the impairments together add to more than 20 points, the applicant may also have to have participated in a Program of Support. This usually means being on JobSeeker for 18 months, participating in the activity requirements for that payment.

As noted above in the background section, many people call SSRV having had their claim for DSP rejected without understanding why or what it is they are being assessed on.

Impact of COVID-19

Implementation of the DSP Help Project commenced on 17 February 2020. Soon afterwards the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic became apparent and Melbourne moved into an extended period of lockdown. COVID-19 and government responses to the pandemic impacted upon the DSP Help Project in the following ways.

Substantive changes to the social security system and framework

Working age people living with a disability are often keen to move from JobSeeker to the DSP. DSP is paid at a higher rate than JobSeeker and the extra money can help meet disability related costs other job seekers do not have. JobSeeker also has activity requirements that recipients must engage with – and people living with disability find difficult to complete – while for most DSP recipients there are no activity requirements.

In March 2020 the Federal Government announced and began to implement significant changes to the social security system in response to the pandemic.

Notably:

- Mutual obligations were either reduced or suspended. Recipients of JobSeeker were not required to attend their Job Service Providers and were required to look for fewer (at times as few as zero) jobs each reporting period in order to continue receiving the payment.
- The rate of JobSeeker was effectively doubled by way of a temporary supplement. This meant that JobSeeker was paid at a higher rate than the DSP for a period of time.

These changes drastically reduced both the financial and non-financial pressures to move from Jobseeker to the DSP. As such, the demand for DSP related services at SSRV was also atypical in this period.

Debt recovery and other compliance activities were also reduced or suspended. While these may not have always had as direct a connection to the DSP as the changes noted above, they *did* contribute to the social security system causing less stress, being easier to engage with, and generally being "friendlier". For some individuals there may have been a direct connection. Paused recovery of an overpayment may have been the financial difference between their income support being adequate for their needs and requiring the normally higher rate the DSP offers, hence this may also have contributed to the lessened pressure to seek the DSP.

Decrease in demand for services

While pandemic response measures were in place – particularly restrictions on movement and business activities – SSRV experienced a reduced demand for services from individuals, community workers and other professionals seeking assistance on behalf of their clients.

For individuals, this was most likely the result of the above noted changes to the social security system itself. Though the pandemic did impact individuals in other ways too. At least two clients who fit within SSRV's eligibility criteria for further legal assistance chose not to pursue this due to the pandemic. These people were particularly vulnerable to

COVID-19 and were self-isolating to a much greater extent than required by lockdown rules. The combination of this and general anxiety about the pandemic led to them not pursuing further help with SSRV. It is not known how many people in similar situations may have put off even seeking advice for the same reasons.

For other legal, community and support workers the drop in demand was more related to changes in their own work. Workers SSRV spoke to noted that working remotely reduced both their own capacity and demand for their services. This of course flowed on to less calls to the SSRV Worker Help Line.

Changes to the way SSRV operates

SSRV was not immune to the pandemic and had to change the way it operated and adapt to ongoing uncertain conditions and pandemic responses. What was initially a trial of work from home for a few days has at the time of writing essentially been a year of working remotely, where only now are staff able to begin returning to the office.

The major effects on the DSP Help Project specifically were:

- Changing how SSRV engages with stakeholders, necessitating the need for remote tools rather than face to face meetings.
- Forcing SSRV to use remote delivery for things like Community Legal Education – this is discussed in more detail below.
- Limiting the options for design of the DSP Help Legal Service. Options like face-to-face appointments were simply not viable.

As pandemic response measures are wound down, SSRV anticipates an opportunity to revisit the structure of the DSP Help Project, and in particular the legal service, to explore whether changes can or should be made.

Changes at Paper Giant

The project kicked off a couple of weeks before Victoria went into the first round of COVID-19 lockdown. Paper Giant quickly adjusted to remote work with a regular schedule of meetings that took place over video sessions using virtual tools designed for collaboration and project updates. This approach was also used to keep the Project Steering Committee up-to-date and involved in the project. One positive of the situation was that working remotely made it easier to reach some research participants. Remote interviews also made it more comfortable for some people to participate – particularly those with debilitating disabilities who could remain comfortable in their home environment.

DSP/Disability Interest and Advocacy

SSRV began discussing the idea of a DSP Help Project in late 2018. The initial expression of interest was submitted to the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner in February 2019. SSRV was advised of a grant of two year funding in October 2019 and the Project commenced in February 2020. The report into Year One of the Project was prepared in February 2021. Over this two plus year period, generated in part by the DSP Help Project, there has been a growth in interest and activity related to the DSP. This is both in terms of service provision to assist individuals with DSP applications and advocacy to inform change to eligibility and assessment processes.

SSRV and the DSP Help Project have been able to inform and leverage this interest. This has included through contributing specialist social security law expertise and experience to policy initiatives lead by others, such as the Technical Experts on Social Security (TESS) organised through the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations. Interest groups and services were also active in supporting the promotion of the DSP Help Project and website through their own networks. Also, others have sought SSRV input and support in the development of DSP related services and projects, such as Mental Health Legal Centre's application to the 2020 round of the Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program.

Following the launch of DSP Help, SSRV was contacted by the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU) of the Victorian Council of Social Services and invited to present a session as part of their annual Advocacy Sector Conversations forum series (details of which are discussed later in this report). In the lead up to this event DARU indicated they were considering undertaking a project similar to DSP Help with a focus on helping people access support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). SSRV is excited for the opportunity to contribute the knowledge and experience developed through the DSP Help project in another important area for people living with disability.

Project Management & Guidance

The DSP Help Project was managed via SSRV's internal structures and processes. Project funding supported the employment of a four day per week Community Lawyer, time for contributions by the SSRV Principal Lawyer and Director, and assistance with project administration and promotions.

Service design consultancy, Paper Giant, were engaged to lead the process to develop and iterate the on-line resource. INCUS were engaged to lead project monitoring and evaluation.

A Steering Committee was established to guide and advise on project development, implementation and review. Steering Group members contributed a broad range of lived, legal, disability sector, policy and advocacy expertise. The Steering Committee met formally three times during Year One. All members contributed to service design and evaluation consultations, and to service promotions. All are active in advocacy and other activity related to the DSP.

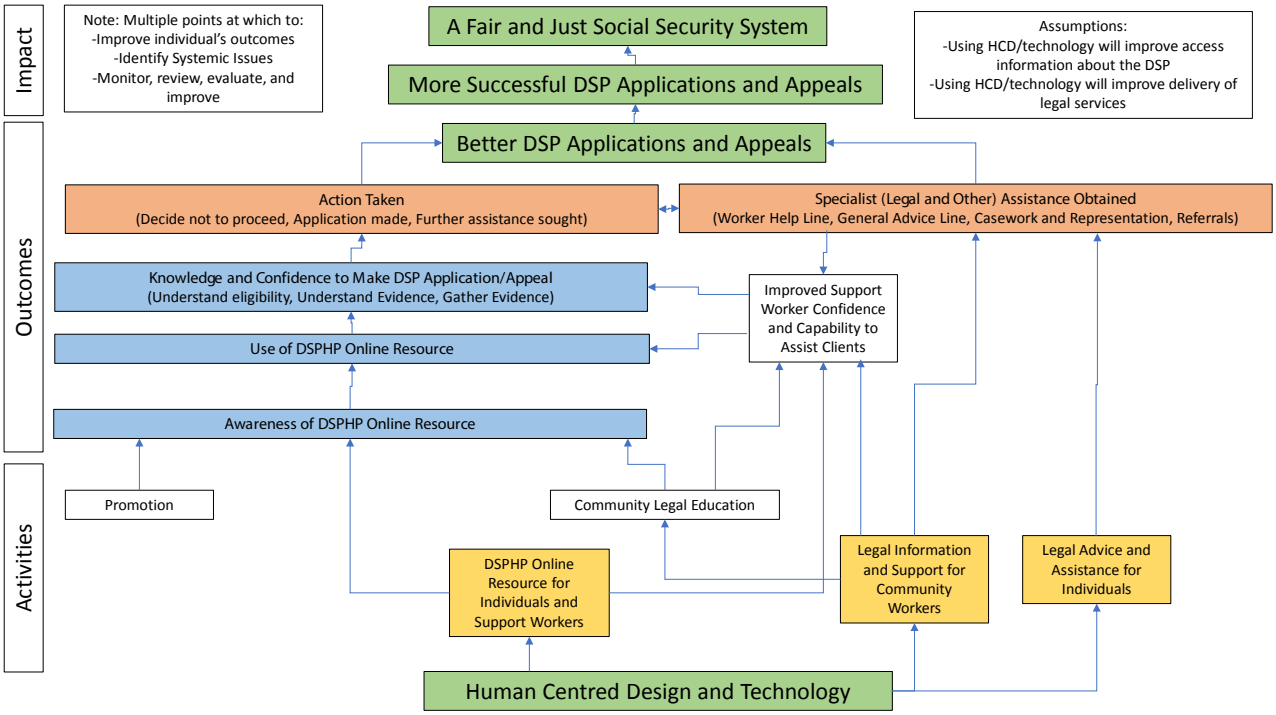
DSP Help Project Steering Committee – Patrick McGee, Yvette Maker, Wendy Fox, Reuben Stanton.

DSP Help Project Steering Committee – Dermott Williams, Hannah Mitchell, Bryn Overend, Len Jaffit (missing – John Berrill, Gillian Wilks).

Conceptual Framework

Theory of Change

As part of the project design process a Theory of Change was developed. This demonstrated how the project envisaged that the application of human-centred design principles and the use of technology would lead to better DSP applications and appeals, as well as how the activities of the Project overall would contribute to bringing about change.



The Theory of Change, along with the project's Work Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan informed decision-making process throughout the DSP Help Project's first year.

As detailed below, the project assumptions were largely substantiated. Feedback obtained from users of the DSP Help Online Resource shows that using human-centred design and technology has improved access to information about the DSP. Using human-centred design and technology has also improved delivery of legal services, including by:

- Being able to provide a detailed resource following an advice service. Using the DSP Help Online Resource in this way has proven more effective than a traditional fact sheet.
- Influencing/guiding the design of the DSP Help Legal Service to be as client centred as possible.
- Assisting in preparation for representation matters – including assisting with gathering medical evidence – which has improved outcomes for SSRV's clients.

Human-Centred Design

Human-centred design is an approach to problem solving that leverages the human perspective at all points in the process. It is essentially putting the person first and designing with their needs and wants in mind.

Human-centred design is a cornerstone of the DSP Help Project. As described above, the central question during the inception of the project was "How might we help people with disability prove their eligibility for the Disability Support Pension so that they enjoy a fairer, faster pathway to adequate income support?" using human-centred design and technology.

In the context of the project, the people at the centre of the design process are DSP applicants and those who support them, including friends, family members, and support workers. It was these groups that were consulted at all points of the design process.

It should be noted that human-centred design was applied to the project as a whole, not simply the online resource. Of particular note is the application to the design of the legal service, where the questions were:

- Which users are likely to seek out the legal service and which will rely on the online resource?
- What are the needs of those contacting the legal service?
- How can we best address those needs in an efficient, timely, and holistic way?

Human-centred design is an ongoing process. SSRV anticipates further opportunities to consult with stakeholders, DSP applicants and those who support them in the second year of the project, and that iterations will be applied to the design of both the online resource, the legal service, and the other aspects of the project as a whole.

Integrated Project Plan

As part of the Project's funding agreement, and Integrated Project Plan was developed. This established the key activities, targets, and milestones for the Project, as well as proposed indicators of success.

The evaluation sections below will refer to these targets and indicators of success when assessing how effective the Project has been in its first year.

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

As part of the Integrated Project Plan, SSRV identified the need to develop and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. The benefit of establishing this kind of document at the beginning of a project has been evident in SSRV's experience with other projects, both to ensure monitoring and evaluation is able to be carried out smoothly and progressively throughout the life of the project, and also as a source of guidance for the design and implementation of other aspects.

SSRV engaged Taimur Siddiqi from The Incus Group to assist with the design and implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation plan. The plan was framed around a series of guiding questions under four themes: Appropriateness, Process, Effectiveness and Sustainability of the Project. Guiding questions were further categorised as either evaluation questions (that is, the Project could assess how well it performed on the question) and research questions (questions that helped guide the project and contributed to building knowledge and understanding, but do not lend themselves to an assessment).

An example of these question is presented below and the full set as Appendix A.

Theme	Guiding Questions	Report Reference
Appropriateness To what extent was the design of the project suitable for achieving project objectives?	1. To what extent were the underlying program theory and assumptions substantiated or challenged?	See *Conceptual Framework: Theory of Change*

For each of the evaluation questions, a set of rubrics were developed to assess performance. These rubrics were devised by The Incus Group and reviewed by SSRV and included predefined indicators to determine the degree to which performance in an area could be judged as 'poor', 'adequate', 'good' or 'excellent'.

An example of the rubrics is presented below and the full set as Appendix B.

Evaluation questions	Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent
Effectiveness				
14. To what extent has community worker awareness and understanding of SSRV's services and pathways to services changed?	• Fewer than 50% of workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report "improved awareness of SSRV and pathways to services" • No change in number of calls to WHL for DSP matters, compared to 2019	• 50 – 70% of workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report "improved awareness of SSRV and pathways to services" • Slight increase (10-20%) in number of calls to WHL for DSP matters, compared to 2019	• 70-80% of workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report "improved awareness of SSRV and pathways to services" • Moderate increase (20-40%) in number of calls to WHL for DSP matters, compared to 2019	• Over 80% of workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report "improved awareness of SSRV and pathways to services" • Large increase (40%) in number of calls to WHL for DSP matters, compared to 2019

The evaluation and project team also identified relevant data sources and created data collection tools to answer the evaluation and research questions.

An example of the data collection sources is presented below and the full set as Appendix C.

Item	Description
6. SSRV General Advice Line statistics	Data collected through General Advice Line database filtered for DSP matters in 2019 and 2020: ‣ Number of calls ‣ Source of enquiry ‣ Location of caller ‣ Demographics
7. SSRV General Advice Line immediate feedback	Standard questions asked at end of General Advice Line service (including option of 'Online resource' or referral into SSRV)
8. SSRV Worker Help Line statistics	Data collected through Worker Help Line database filtered for DSP matters in 2019 and 2020: ‣ Number of calls ‣ Type of worker ‣ Location of caller ‣ Source of enquiry
9. Worker Help Line immediate feedback	Standard questions asked at end of Worker Help Line service (including option of 'Online resource' for referral into SSRV)

DSP Help Online Resource – Design and Development

SSRV worked with Paper Giant during the design and development phase of the project. SSRV's role was to provide Paper Giant with the expertise of lawyers working in this area of law and to facilitate conversations and consultations with relevant stakeholders, including DSP applicants and the people who support them.

Paper Giant's Perspective

The following section has been written by Paper Giant.

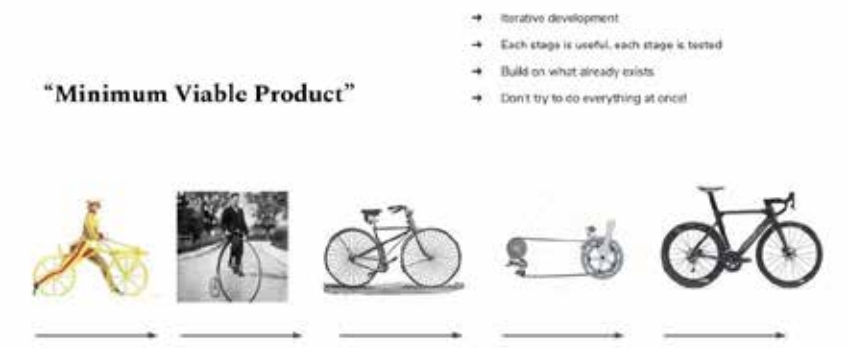
DSP Eligibility criteria is complex and success is dependent on having very specific types of medical evidence. People with disabilities face unique challenges that can make the already difficult DSP application process even harder. Our goal was to design a digital tool that guides people through the process, delivers the information in a way that helps applicants meet the assessment criteria and greatly improves their chances of a successful application.

Focusing on the 'the missing middle'

Information that is overwhelming, drip fed or ambiguous makes applying for the DSP difficult regardless of capability. To realistically help all eligible individuals get onto the DSP, we had to think beyond a one-size fits all tool. By choosing to focus on 'the missing middle', we were able to create a tool for people who could self-serve if the right information and tools were available to support them. This approach supports services like SSRV to better serve more vulnerable users with acute needs.

A tool that improves: A minimal viable product (MVP)

Our approach was to design an MVP - a digital tool that we could release reasonably quickly, get immediate feedback from users on and then improve.



The project started with a kick off meeting with SSRV. In this session we discussed how we would approach the project, the roles we would take and what a successful outcome might look like. A key component of this meeting was to explore the benefits and limitations of a digital platform. By examining what designing for the "missing middle" would look like and its ultimate goal being to free up resources needed for vulnerable users, we felt confident that this was the right approach. We also proposed using the Josef platform - as a chatbot designed to generate legal documents, adapting it to the DSP application process felt like an appropriate fit.

To determine what a digital tool needed to do we ran a hybrid research/design phase, conducting qualitative research interviews with people with lived experience, as well as support workers and family members who have acted in a support role for people applying for the DSP. These interviews provided us with insight into the confusion and frustration that people experience when applying for the DSP as well as giving us an informed understanding of the time and involvement needed from support workers to help people have a successful application. What we learned through listening to these experiences informed and guided our decision making during the design process.

We also engaged frequently with SSRV's steering committee, which includes people with deep expertise in the disability space – from advocacy, to legal, to policy and research.

After the initial interviews, we ideated and prototyped a range of concepts following the theme of 'a digital support worker'. We tested these concepts with support workers and those with lived experience, incorporating their feedback and our learnings into the next iteration.

This iterative design process was followed multiple times throughout the course of the project, engaging the community each time. This ensured we delivered a solution that was genuinely useful to "the missing middle".

Delivering the right information: a twofold digital solution

We landed on a twofold solution: a new content website and a chatbot (Josef). Both sought to equip the missing middle with the information and tools needed to create a great DSP application – and get them onto the DSP.

The website provides a comprehensive overview of the DSP, the process and the evidence required for a successful application. The content was co-written with SSRV lawyers, and communicates what many of our participants wished they had known at the start of their DSP journey.

The Medical Evidence Bot (Josef)

Social security legislation is complex, as is the claim assessment process. This is particularly in evidence when it comes to the DSP. The core rules for the DSP are the 'impairment tables' (a 65 page piece of legislation) and medical evidence must be provided from an applicant's doctors or medical specialists to demonstrate eligibility. The evidence must fulfill a set of requirements as well as address the "impairment tables". These rules are not clearly communicated to the public which creates a barrier to knowing what makes a successful application.

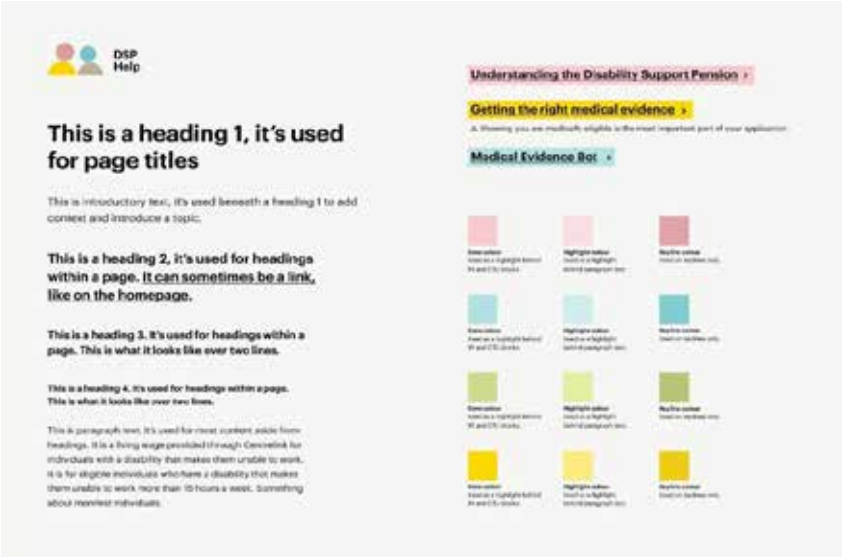
We collaborated with the SSRV team to create a Medical Evidence Bot to help candidates meet the assessment requirements of the fifteen impairment tables that best match the user's conditions, and prompts the user to self-reflect in line with the impairment tables. Addressing the tables is a big win for future applicants, as there's no tool available that currently does this.

At the end of the conversation with the bot, the user receives a personalised Medical Evidence Kit. The kit has been designed to help medical practitioners write a successful supporting letter for the applicant's DSP application – which often makes or breaks an application. We collaborated again with the SSRV to craft this kit, which contains detailed instructions around what to include in the letter, as well as intake info about the user's condition in line with the relevant tables.

The Josef platform was chosen for several reasons:

1. Paper Giant's prior experience with building FineFixer showed us the value of working with a dedicated platform such as Josef for question and answer type interfaces, especially when rapidly prototyping and testing, rather than reinventing the wheel and building from scratch.
2. Unlike other chatbot services, Josef is specifically designed for working with legal needs and legal documents, and is used widely through the sector - this meant that the Josef support team would likely be able to work effectively with SSRV.
3. Josef is a Melbourne based company, so understands the Australian legal help context.
4. Josef has aligned values and mission to SSRV and Paper Giant, and so were happy to offer a discounted subscription, making them excellent value for money.

Visual Design



The overall design of the website is clean and clear, allowing content to be the focus. We intentionally created a visual design language that puts content at the centre, since not getting the right content at the right time is what caused so many issues for past applicants.

We gave special attention to typography, to ensure the content is highly readable and easy to consume.

Colour is used as a navigational tool, with each chapter of the website being themed. Within these pages, coloured highlights are used to draw out key information, in order to support scanning and readability. The colour palette itself is warm, soft and friendly, representing our concept of a digital support worker. This is in stark contrast to the cold, bureaucratic branding of the government agencies that applicants found themselves up against. The focus of the design solution is to help candidates meet the assessment requirements.

SSRV is pleased to note DSP Help's entry in the Victorian Premier's Design Awards. DSP Help has been listed as a finalist, and the final results are expected to be announced during Melbourne Design week at the end of March 2021. SSRV would like to specially thank Paper Giant for taking the lead on this.

DSP Help Online Resource – Evaluation

DSP was 'soft' launched on 13 July 2020. The soft launch meant the website was live and available online, however efforts to promote or encourage use were not yet underway. This allowed some testing in a live environment and an opportunity to fine tune which is not always possible until a product is live and complete.

DSP Help was officially launched on 6 August 2020. Details of the launch event are provided below in the Communications section of this report.

Evaluation sections of this report (shaded in blue) have been written by Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant, Taimur Siddiqi, INCUS.

A range of data was tracked and recorded using a combination of Google Analytics and other tools built into the website (e.g. the Josef chatbot itself).

Use of DSP Help

Between the launch of DSP Help on 13 July 2020 and mid-January 2021, a total of 9,300 unique users visited the website. This equates to an average of 358 unique users each week.

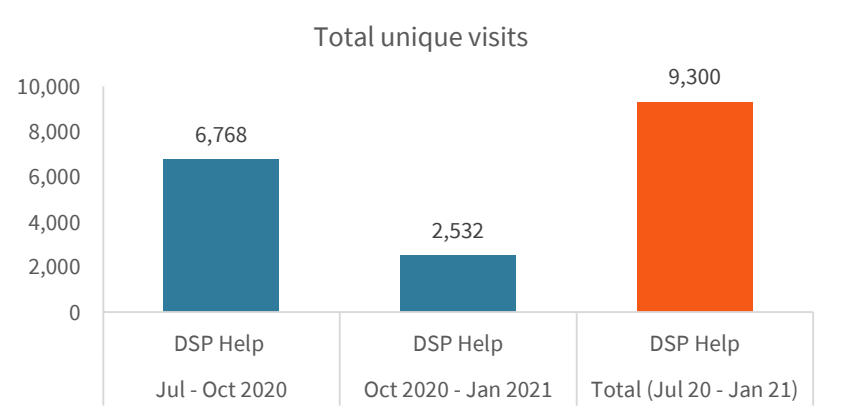


Figure 1 - Total unique views of DSP Help website

Figure 2 - Average unique visits per month to DSP Toolkit and DSP Help resource

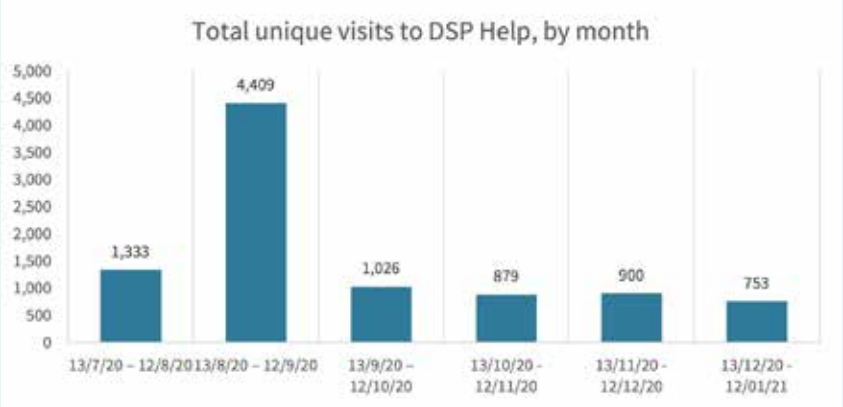


Figure 3 - Total unique views of DSP Help, by month

The DSP Help resource experienced the most visitors in August and the numbers have stabilised since then. The official launch event was held on 6th August 2020 and there was significant media promotion in August and this explains the increased engagement at that point.

Integrated Project Plan Indicator of success: *Increase in number of individuals accessing the resource in first four months of being launched (months 6-10 of the project)*

In the first six months, the numbers have declined and therefore the project has not met this target. It should be acknowledged that the initial engagement in the first 2 months was extremely high (linked to the launch and promotion of the tool) and the focus on DSP applications and matters across the sector was lower in 2020 than expected given the pandemic and pandemic responses, notably increased JobSeeker payments and suspension of mutual obligations. Both of these factors likely make the first six months of the resource anomalous and usage over the subsequent six months will be more revealing.

Experience of Online Resource Users – Immediate Feedback

There were feedback mechanisms built into the DSP Help website and between 17 – 23 users responded to feedback questions. This obviously represents a small sample of the users (less than 1%) but provides some indication of how it was used and the value of the site. It should be noted during design and development SSRV discussed how best to maximise feedback responses without impacting usability. The low number of responses suggests that these mechanisms should be reviewed in the second year of the project.

The majority of users who provided feedback were DSP applicants themselves (59%). When asked how they heard about DSP Help, around 30% were directly referred by a friend/family member/support worker or through contact with SSRV, while 53% listed 'internet' as their path to the website, which could be specifically searching for DSP related support or following a link from another website or online news article.

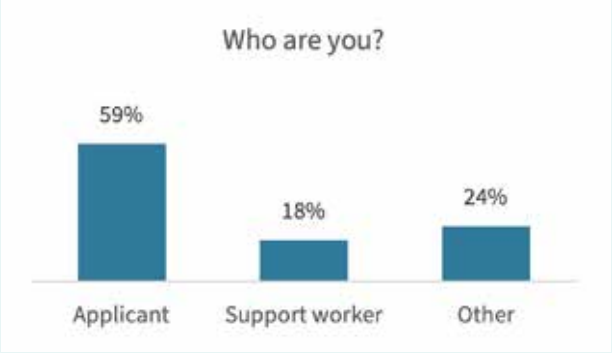


Figure 4 - Profile of DSP Help users who completed feedback forms (n=17)

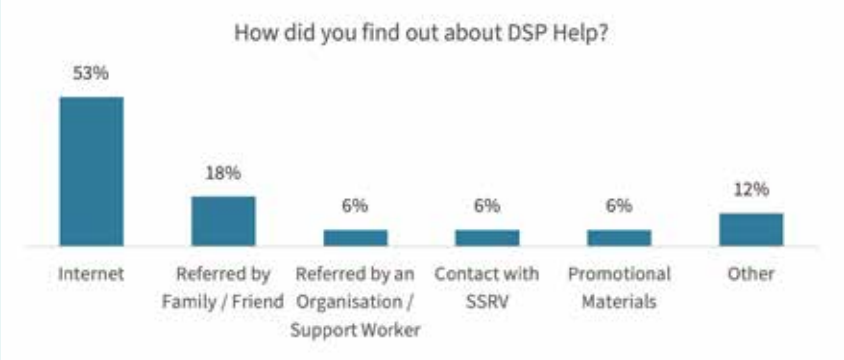


Figure 5 - How users heard about DSP Help (n=17)

The vast majority of users who provided feedback found the website itself useful and accessible.

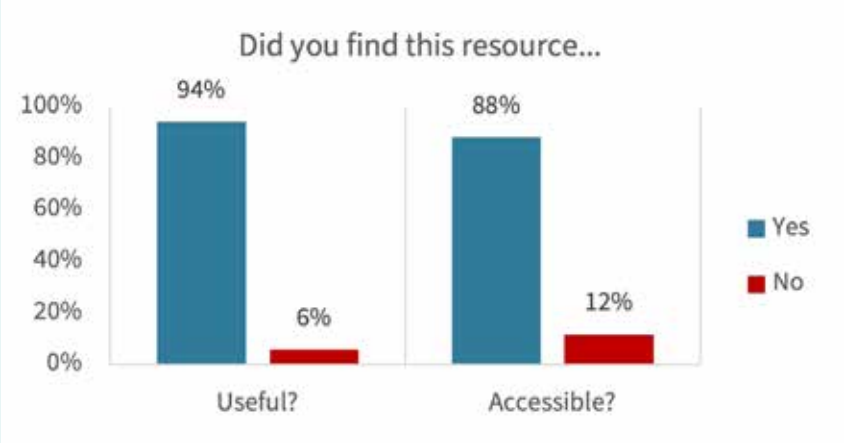


Figure 6 - Proportion of Users who found the DSP Help resource useful and accessible (n=17)

When asked specifically whether navigating DSP Help had helped their understanding around the DSP, medical evidence and options if their application is rejected, the response was similarly positive.

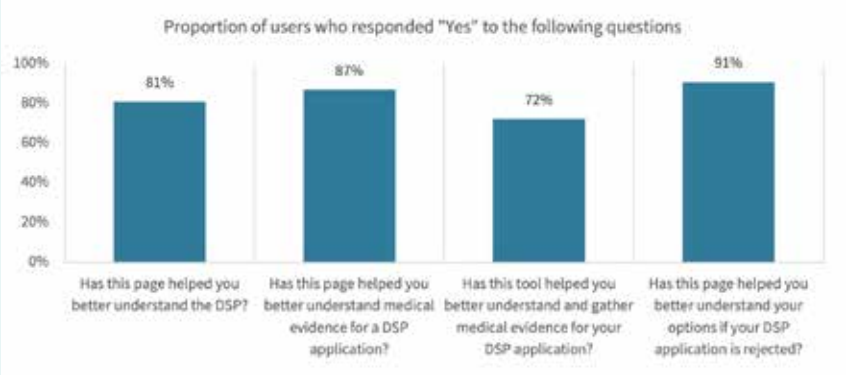


Figure 7 - Proportion of Users who felt DSP Help improved their understanding of the DSP, medical evidence required and options if an application is rejected (n=23)

There were two feedback topics where only five responses were registered so these should be treated as anecdotal evidence at best. However, this included the question "Were you able to find the help you needed?" which was the only question less than half of users indicated the Online Resource helped them. Given that most users felt the resource had provided them with a better understanding and there is a dedicated page on the website to get additional help, the fact that some users did not find the help they needed suggests they were looking for more direct or specific support on their particular application through the website itself.

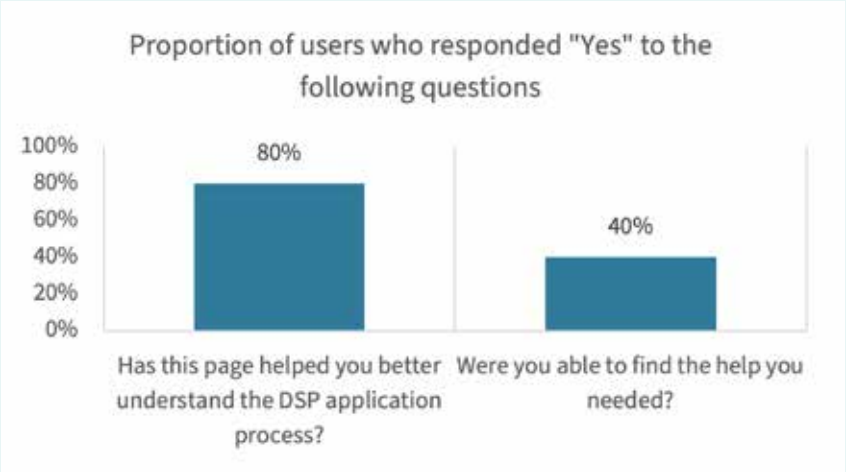


Figure 8 - Proportion of Users who felt DSP Help improved their understanding of the DSP application process and provided them the help they needed (n=5)

Open-ended comments from users of the website provided feedback on how they found the resource and also identified several opportunities for refining and improving DSP Help, which are discussed in later sections of the report.

"Hello, I came across through a news article. I have two daughters who need the DSP, unfortunately Centrelink have not been helpful in explaining what they are required to. Piecemeal information, different people give different advice it's shocking. This a fabulous site which I'm sure will assist many people. Wonderful job."
– DSP Help user

"VERY grateful its written as simply as possible, so much easier to process information as part of my disability means I can't handle wordy, long, policy-language, hard to navigate govt sites."
– DSP Help user

"The medical evidence kit should attach the relevant tables so that a client can just print the kit and take it along to the doctor - otherwise it relies on the client or the doctor going to the tables online which will probably get neglected and they won't do it in our experience"
– DSP Help user

Within the DSP Help website, there is a separate Medical Evidence chatbot, powered by Josef[1]. This 'bot' allows users to input data on their/an applicant's condition to create a personalised evidence kit for their doctor.

Since the launch of DSP Help, there have been 932 recorded interactions with the Bot and its usage mirrors the website more broadly, with the most interactions in August 2020.

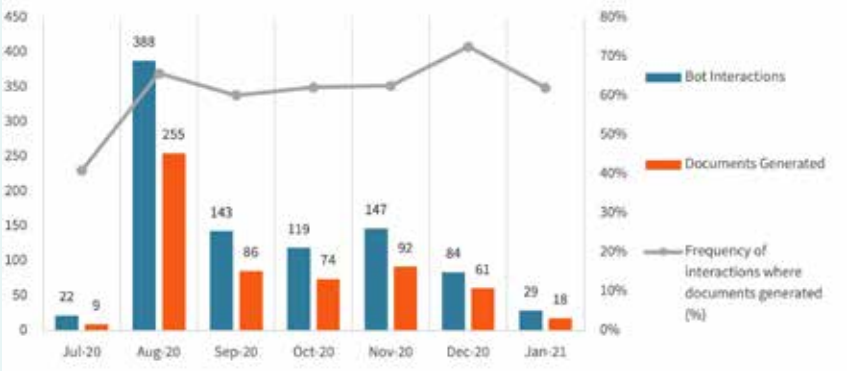


Figure 9 - Number of interactions with Medical Evidence Bot and documents generated, per month

It would be expected that not all interactions result in documents being generated as some users would only be exploring the Bot, so the proportion of interactions where documents were generated was also analysed. While the number of interactions declined after August, the proportion of interactions where users generated documents remained relatively stable at around 60-70%, suggesting that those who were actively engaging with the Bot were mostly seeking to gather evidence for their application.

As with the website generally, users of the Bot were also asked to provide specific feedback and suggestions for improvement. A much higher proportion of users completed feedback for the Bot, compared to the website overall, with 58 responding (6% of users). Unsurprisingly, most Bot users were Applicants themselves but a small proportion were also support workers and 'other', which could include family members, friends, medical professionals.

1 *https://joseflegal.com/*

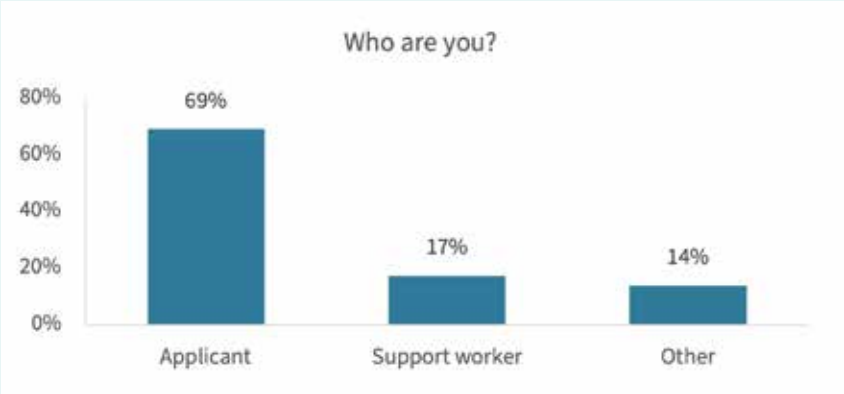


Figure 10 – Profile of Bot users who provided feedback (n=58)

93% of users who provided feedback felt the Bot had helped them understand gather medical evidence and open-ended comments confirmed that the Bot was a well-received feature, while identifying opportunities for improvement.

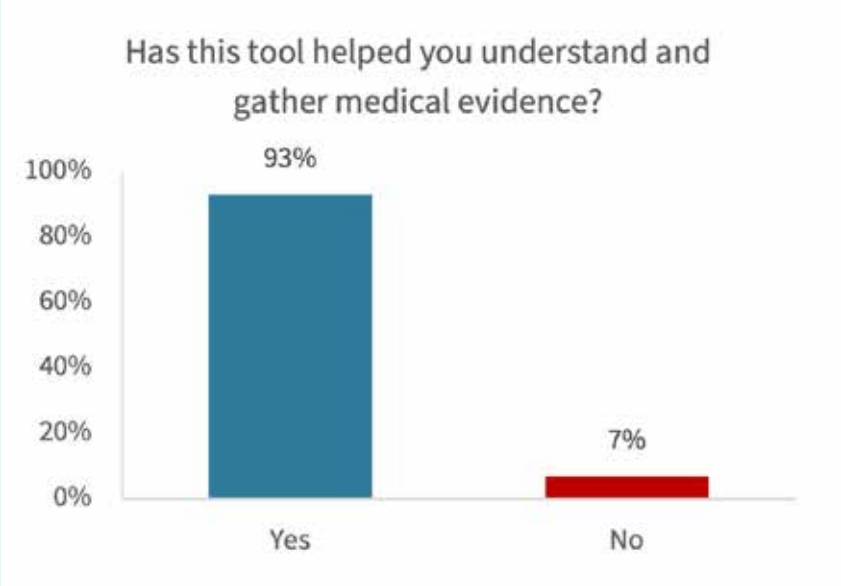


Figure 11 - Proportion of users who believed the Bot helped them understand and gather medical evidence (n=58)

"This is a fantastic tool to help! A great way for applicants to start getting an understanding before consulting further - thank you! It may further help to be more specific about describing what's needed re conditions" – DSP Help medical evidence bot user (Former applicant)

"Maybe get the word out there a little more somehow, I had no idea this tool existed and it changed how I'm going about this entirely, and made it possible. Thank you!!!" – DSP Help medical evidence bot user (Applicant)

"Great help thanks. I feel there should have been a few more questions at the beginning to help you tease out the most important health issues, from among your many problems, to trace out which are the most important for applying for the pension" – DSP Help medical evidence bot user (Other)

Experience of Online Resource Users – Longer Term Feedback

In addition to gathering immediate feedback from users at the point of their interaction with the website and/or medical evidence bot, SSRV also contacted DSP Help users in January 2021 who had consented to be followed up. These users were provided an online survey to reflect on their experience using DSP Help and 12 complete responses were received.

Of the 12, 75% were DSP applicants.

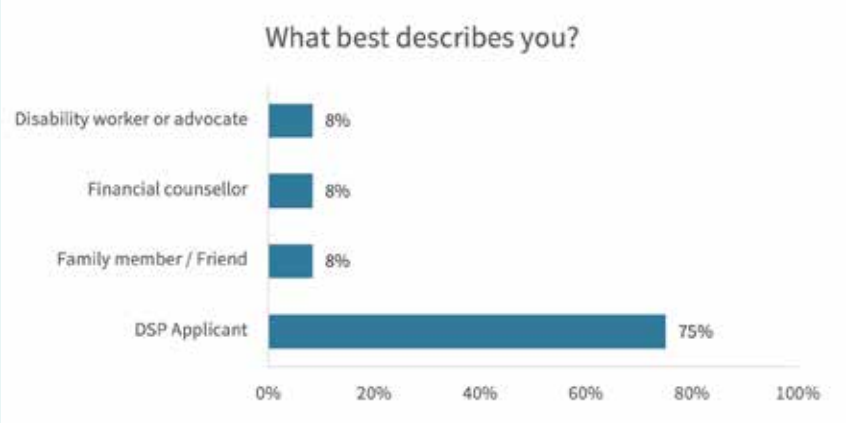


Figure 12 - Demographics of DSP Help user reflection survey in Jan 2021 (n=12)

Nearly all respondents found the DSP Help website very easy to access and navigate, which is significant given the importance of accessibility for the target group. It is possible, however, that the small sample who responded to this online survey are atypically adept at navigating online applications. A large majority also reported that the quality of information / resources provided were good or excellent, while all but one respondent felt that the resource helped them with what they needed.

Figure 13 - Proportion of users reflecting on the website (n=12)

Most respondents (75%) felt that the information about the DSP available on the website was the most useful aspect. Just over half identified the Medical Evidence Chatbot as useful and 1 respondent followed through and spoke with SSRV and found the legal service valuable.

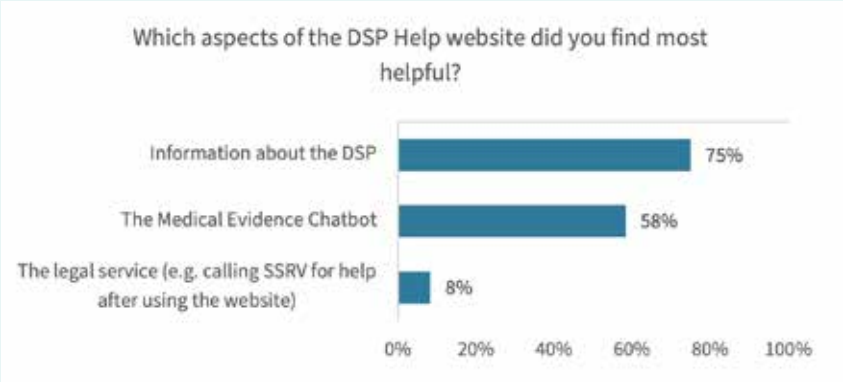


Figure 14 - Proportion of respondents who found various aspects of website useful (n=17, respondents could select multiple aspects)

When asked about how the DSP Help website had helped their understanding of the DSP process and evidentiary requirements, around a third felt it made a 'significant difference' and a further half felt it made 'some difference' while the remaining 1-2 individuals felt it reiterated what they already knew.

Figure 15 - Proportion of respondents who felt DSP Help website helped their understanding of the DSP application and process (n=11)

"It helped me feel less overwhelmed, and helped me actually understand stuff. Less jargon/legalese/double speak" – Family member of a DSP applicant

"The website provides instructions for medical practitioners on how to complete their side of the dsp application. However, I haven't found a doctor yet that will take the time to read the information properly. I had to pay $300 for a doctor to write a report after supplying all the information on the correct way to fill it out and she still did not do it correctly." – DSP applicant

"It helped clarify things I'd found in Facebook help groups. Had I not found those groups, the information from DSP help would have been crucial." – DSP applicant

When asked about whether DSP Help had affected the *outcome* of their DSP application, fewer respondents felt the resource made a difference. 4 of the 11 who responded to this question (36%) felt that it 'made no difference' to the outcome of their application or appeal, while 54% felt it made at least some difference.

Similarly, 54% felt DSP Help made at least some difference to their understanding of why an application/appeal was rejected and 63% reported that it helped them understand their options after the rejection. The 1-2 respondents who stated they were 'unsure' on these questions were either a family member/friend or a worker, not the applicant themselves.

The timeframes involved may be a factor in these results. A typical DSP claim will take at least 3 months to process, while many appeals can be heard a year or more after the initial claim was made. Many DSP applicants accessing DSP Help in the first year of the project will not have an outcome yet.

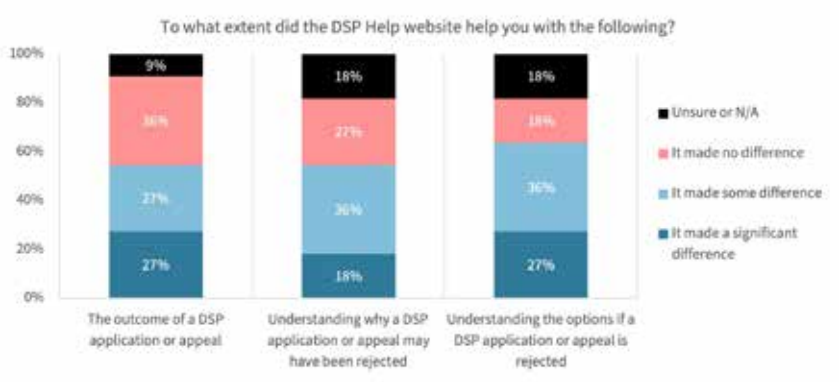


Figure 16 – Proportion of respondents who felt DSP Help website helped with understanding rejections, appeals, and impacted outcomes (n=11)

"The DSP website assisted in navigating the difficult and confusing process and succeeded far above other resources and advocacy programs available." – DSP applicant

"Thanks for trying but the government actually does not want to help anyone it's too stressful a process for a disabled person without professional help and even the GPs don't know where to get help with your application" – DSP applicant

"I had already applied for the DSP back in January 2020, but it had been rejected for particular reasons, and a review confirmed the rejection. Using your website confirmed that what I had put into my second application was accurate and helped address the criteria. "They still tried to reject it though, but I convinced them to speak to my GP (even though I had a letter from my GP), and I was successful after that. Centrelink look for reasons to reject an application, not accept one." – DSP applicant

Integrated Project Plan Indicator of success: *Majority of users indicate that the resource has assisted them to better:*

- Understand requirements for DSP eligibility
- Understand evidentiary requirements
- Gather relevant evidence to support applications

Immediate feedback from users of the main DSP Help website and the Medical evidence chat bot show that at least 80% of users better understand the DSP application process and evidentiary requirements and 72% and 93% of users felt the website and bot, respectively, helped them understand gather the medical evidence they required.

The longer-term experience of users gathered from the follow up online survey also indicated that 80-90% of users felt DSP Help had assisted them in these areas.

Based on this, the project has clearly met its target of ensuring that most users feel the resource has assisted them.

Promotions and Communications

During the planning phase of the project SSRV identified the need for, and developed, a communications strategy. The focus of the strategy was identifying relevant audiences, determining how best to reach them, and deciding what they needed to know about the DSP Help Project.

Three main audiences were identified:

- DSP applicants and friends or family supporting a DSP applicant.
- Community and support workers assisting DSP applicants. This audience was broken down into more specific categories e.g. disability advocates, social workers, and financial counsellors.
- Other stakeholders in the disability and social security spheres.

In other parts of SSRV's work word-of-mouth and direct communication were found to be very important communications methods. Notably, when asked how they found out about SSRV, users of the Worker Help Line will often mention a colleague or another organisation suggested they call, if they haven't used the service already. Users of the General Advice Line most often find out about SSRV online or were referred by a friend, family member, or support worker.

The DSP Help communications strategy looked to leverage these existing channels as much as possible. Communications pushes were focussed on existing users and demographics, with the anticipation being awareness would spread through these networks as it generally does for the organisation as a whole.

At the time of writing, two major communications pushes have been undertaken by SSRV. The first was at the time of the official launch, the focus of which was letting stakeholders know about DSP Help, encouraging them to attend the launch event if they could, and encouraging them to engage their own networks.

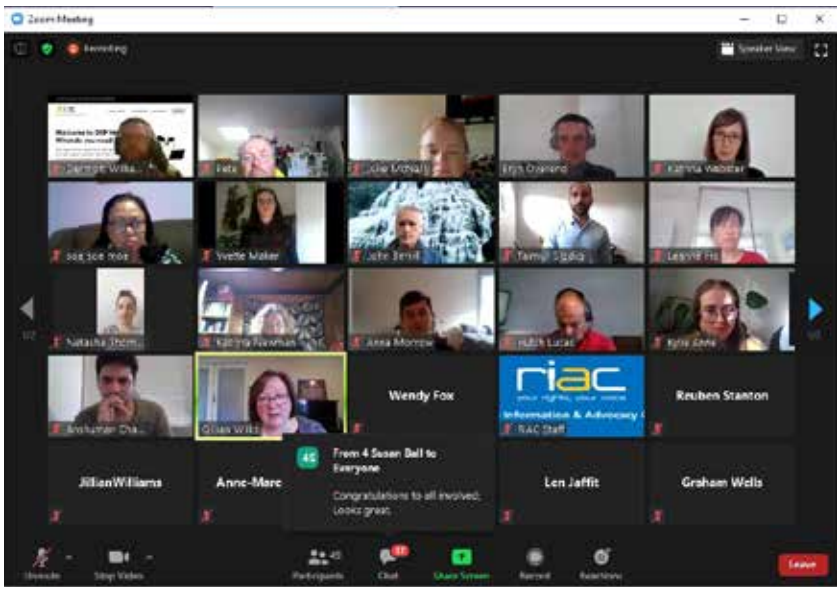
The second push occurred in December 2020 on the back of International Day of People with a Disability. SSRV saw this event as not only a day of celebration and acknowledgement, but also reflection on the issues people living with disability face. The push was an opportunity to highlight the work being down to help and the tools and resources available.

A third push is planned for February 2021 prior to the end of the first year of the project.

DSP Help Launch

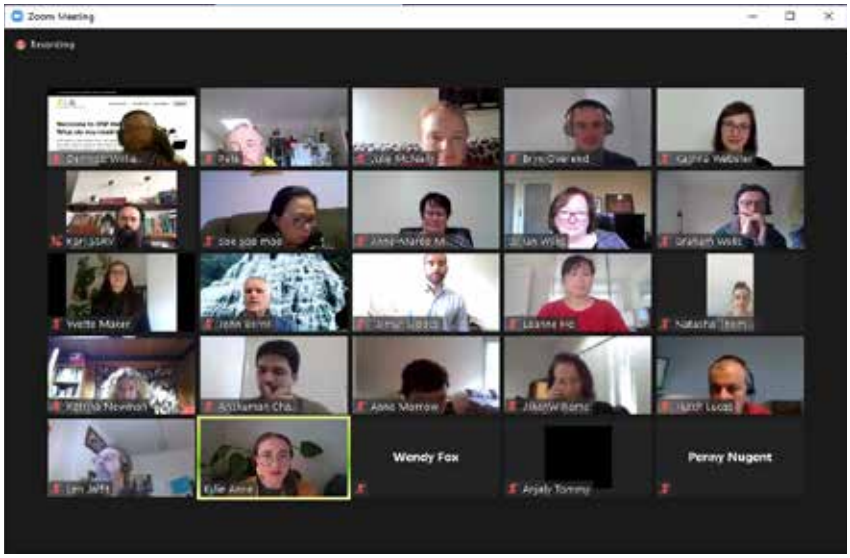
DSP Help was officially launched on 6 August 2020. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place in Victoria at the time, the launch event had to be held via 'Zoom' rather than the in-person celebration SSRV originally envisioned.

Despite the unique challenges 2020 created, the launch event was an unequivocal success. Representatives from different stakeholder groups were invited to attend, including the project Steering Committee, the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, other community legal centres, disability workers and advocates, financial counsellors, and may others.



Screenshot from DSP Help Launch, held via Zoom, 6 August 2020, Gillian Wilks speaking.

The highlight of the event was the contribution from people with lived experiencing of applying for the DSP and the associated challenges. Kylie Anne McArdell and Natasha Thompson – who were each consulted during the design and development phase of the project – were invited to talk about their experiences. Both Kylie and Natasha emphasised how they wished they had a resource like DSP Help when they were on their own journeys.



Screenshot from DSP Help Launch, held via Zoom, 6 August 2020, Kylie Anne McArdell speaking.

Yvette Maker from the University of Melbourne was also invited to speak about DSP issues from the perspective of an academic and member of the Project's Steering Committee. In her contribution, Yvette covered:

- The importance of access to the DSP from a rights and dignity perspective.
- The growing challenges people face in accessing the DSP, and the inadequacy of other payments – particularly Newstart and JobSeeker – for people living with disability and having disability related costs.
- The value and importance of clear and accessible information for people applying – or thinking about applying – for the DSP, and the ways in which this can complement legal assistance and representation services.

SSRV would like to thank everyone who attended or was otherwise a part of the DSP Help launch event, and would like to give a special thanks to Kylie and Natasha for sharing their personal stories.

Media Coverage

Coinciding with the launch of DSP Help (*DSPHelp.org.au)*, Paper Giant worked with Josh Gardiner Communications who helped promote awareness of this new online resource. Josh sent out a press release to the media and as a result the project was covered by SBS (*https://www.sbs.com.au/news/australians-will-now-get-more-help-to-access-the-disability-support-pension*) and ABC radio *(https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/am/online-tool-aims-to-ease-dehumanising-dsp-application-process/12548480)*. These stories were well received and helped spread awareness and direct more users to the site.

This was an unexpected windfall for the project. Mainstream media coverage was not anticipated nor envisioned as part of the project's communications strategy, but has nonetheless proven a great benefit. SSRV would like to specifically thank Paper Giant and Josh Gardiner Communications for their role in facilitating this.

Following the 'mainstream' media coverage, DSP Help was also covered in an episode of 3CR's Over the Wall program (*https://www.3cr.org.au/overthewall/episode/disability-support-pension-dsp-help-page).*

Moving into the second year of the project, SSRV would love to utilise these kinds of channels more frequently. However, SSRV acknowledges that this was not envisioned as part of the original communications strategy and was essentially a 'bonus'. Availability of resources will be the determining factor of whether similar opportunities are available in the future.

Social Media

Social media has been an area of communications SSRV has traditionally not made extensive use of. SSRV has had a presence on platforms such as Facebook, but has not had the resources to effectively leverage this until recently. However, this is changing.

In 2020 SSRV took steps to employ a part time Communications Officer to assist in communications across the organisation. With the added expertise and skills this appointment brings social media posts have become a bigger part of SSRV's overall communications, and DSP Help appears in these regularly.

SSRV sees social media channels growing in importance in the second year of the Project.

Network Engagement

The Project's direct communications were aimed at existing stakeholders and networks with the intention of spreading awareness beyond people and organisations SSRV spoke to directly. Two runs of direct emails have been sent out so far.

So far, DSP Help has been promoted by:

- Economic Justice Australia
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Financial Counselling Victoria
- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- Disability Advocacy Resource Unit

DSP Help has also been listed on the Administrative Appeals Tribunal's website as a useful resource for people seeing an appeal of a DSP eligibility decision (*https://www.aat.gov.au/help-with-your-centrelink-review/help-with-your-centrelink-review-victoria*).

Postcards

In addition to the above, SSRV has also produced promotional materials specifically for DSP Help. Specifically, a postcard was developed to DSP applicants and those supporting them via stakeholder networks. Postcard style communications have been effective for both the General Advice Line and Worker Help Line; DSP Help's postcard extends and builds off this success.

Due to COVID-19 and pandemic restrictions, this has been done digitally so far, but the Project is looking to have a physical version available shortly.

Legal Service – Design and Implementation

The DSP Help Project envisioned the "wrap around" legal service delivery. The idea was that the Online Resource and Legal Service would be integrated and support each other, primarily by enabling users of the Online Resource to "jump off" if and when they hit a point they needed more direct assistance.

Human-centred design was used in designing this service and developing the associated policies and procedures. SSRV reflected on current practices, the needs of the clients likely to access the service, as well as feedback from DSP applicants who have used SSRV's services before, in order to put client needs first and foremost.

Personnel

At the start of the project SSRV was able to "recruit from within" when seeking a Community Lawyer to work on DSP Help. This meant the DSP Help lawyer was already very familiar with social security, the DSP, and SSRV's legal practice, and was able to begin providing legal services immediately. This was different to other SSRV projects where the early stages would usually involve staff familiarising themselves with the practice area and building skills before being able to operate at full capacity.

The Project also provided for the direct involvement of SSRV's Principal Lawyer. This meant there was a second source of knowledge and experience to be drawn from, which was particularly valuable in designing the Legal Service (see "Casework Guidelines" below) and in directly providing legal services.

Casework Guidelines

Coinciding with the launch of DSP Help, SSRV developed and implemented casework guidelines for the project. The guidelines determined the way in which legal services were provided alongside the resource, and specifically how the DSP Help Legal Service fit within the broader scope of SSRV's overall service provision.

A triage model was adopted for advice services. Clients were referred to the DSP Help Community Lawyer where:

- They had used the DSP Help website and were looking for further advice.
- They had not used the DSP Help website and using it may have been of benefit in their situation.
- They had a DSP issue and would likely benefit from a more in-depth consultation than was possible through SSRV's regular advice services.
- They had a DSP issue and due to vulnerability required direct assistance rather than a referral to DSP Help.

This model allowed the project to leverage existing channels to efficiently provide advice. DSP applicants were able to call SSRV's General Advice Line and either obtain advice straight away, get access to the DSP Help lawyer, or both.

The guidelines also addressed casework – that is, representation matters – and other further legal assistance services. The guidelines deferred to SSRV's overall casework guidelines and Legal Practice Manual, noting that certain matters would be of particular relevance to the project.

Specifically:

- Matters where initial contact with SSRV was made via the DSP Help website or the applicant has otherwise made use of the website already.
- Matters where DSP Help could be leveraged as part of the service, e.g. assisting a client in obtaining medical evidence from their doctors as part of a tribunal representation.

The casework guidelines as a whole provided for "wrap-around" legal service provision where DSP applicants could obtain assistance that suited their specific needs, ranging from self-help and resources provided through the DSP Help website, through to information and advice on a discrete basis, to full casework and representation services.

Integration with Other SSRV Projects and Services

The DSP Help Project was also able to seamlessly integrate into SSRV's broader offering of services. Most notably, the Project contributed one day a week to the Worker Help Line service.

The Worker Help Line assists community and support workers (including other community lawyers and CLC staff, financial counsellors, disability advocates, health workers, and other professionals) in getting information and other services for their clients experiencing difficulty with the social security system. Primarily the service offers secondary consultations for the workers calling – that is, direct tailored information for the situation their client is experiencing. The Worker Help Line also provides a referral pathway for support workers who wish to make a warm referral of their client into SSRV's legal assistance services.

Other integration was more ad hoc and on a needs basis, including assisting with the General Advice Line and undertaking legal tasks – discrete legal services that are more intensive than advice but fall short of ongoing representation – as required to support SSRV's overall practice.

It should be noted when reading the following evaluation sections of this report that this integration means the Project has been responsible for services that are not directly DSP-related. Mostly this is due to the unpredictable and demand driven nature of telephone advice services (you don't know what the caller will ask about until they're on the line), but also the nature and complexity of social security matters means clients may need assistance with multiple issues simultaneously. Overall, this was seen as an advantage in that it helped the DSP Help Community Lawyer maintain and develop skills and expertise outside of the DSP and meant a more holistic service for clients.

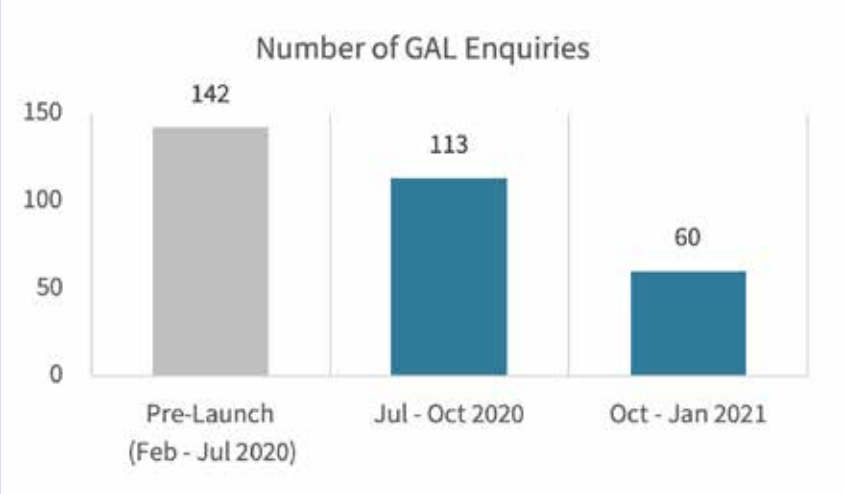
Integration is bilateral. DSP matters make up a significant portion of the issues for which individuals and professionals seek assistance from SSRV for. As such, the Project did *not* envisage that the DSP Help Legal Service would be responsible for *all* DSP matters, or that other areas and projects would not assist with the DSP. SSRV's other projects and lawyers continue to provide services in relation to the DSP alongside the DSP Help legal service, including referrals from and to the DSP Help Online Resource, advice, and representation and other casework. While these services have not been reported on as part of the DSP Help Project, they are still an important contribution to the success of the Project overall.

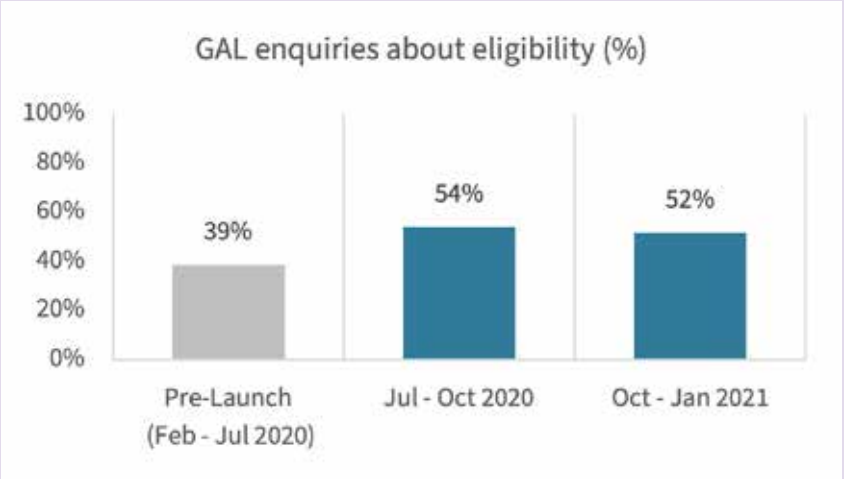
SSRV also has an in-house financial counsellor available to enhance service provision. While this is generally less relevant to DSP matters – financial circumstances are generally only relevant to DSP eligibility through income and assets tests which are rarely the issue at appeal – the option to refer clients for financial counselling continues to enhance the Project and make its services more holistic.

Legal Services to Individuals - Evaluation

General Advice Line – DSP Matters

SSRV tracked enquiries to its General Advice Line that were related to DSP matters and also identified enquiries which were specifically about eligibility for the DSP. This is presented in the charts below for the period prior to the launch of DSP Help and the subsequent six months.





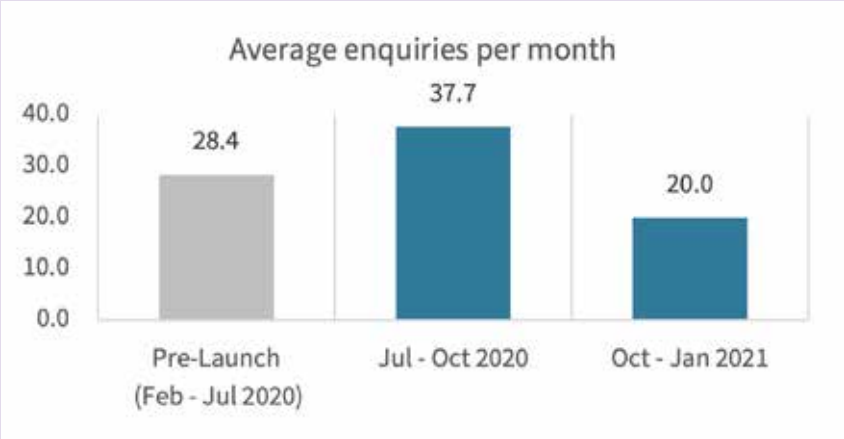


Figure 17 - Enquiries to GAL related to DSP matters (February 2020 - January 2021). First chart: All matters relating to the DSP. Second chart: Percentage of matters specifically relating to DSP eligibility. Third chart: Average enquires per month relating to DSP eligibility.

These enquiry figures indicate that there was an uptick in calls from the public about DSP eligibility in the first few months after the launch of the DSP (an average of 37 calls per month compared to 28 pre-launch). As with the DSP Help online usage trends, this likely reflects the media and promotion around DSP Help in July and August and the subsequent decline towards the end of the year also coincides with a drop off in all calls to SSRV around the holiday period.

The proportion of calls related to eligibility have, however, increased slightly and this is surprising as the resource deals specifically with eligibility and so it would be expected that calls about eligibility might decrease. It may be that the online resource is acting as an "enabler" for people to contact SSRV. That is, users may initially visit DSP Help believing information is all they need, but as they grasp the complexity of the DSP realise they need more hands on assistance. Further consultation and feedback from users in Year 2 will help confirm this hypothesis.

65 of the individuals who contacted the General Advice Line on DSP matters after the launch of DSP Help also provided immediate feedback on their initial enquiry to SSRV and 98% reported that it was both 'useful' and 'accessible'.

Legal Services – DSP Help Project

Flowing from the General Advice Line enquiries and referrals into the DSP Help Legal Service, DSP Help Lawyers delivered a total of 77 legal services for individuals in support of their DSP matter. These included 48 legal advices, 21 legal tasks (discrete legal services greater than advice but short of ongoing representation), and 8 representations since the DSP Help Project began in February 2020.

As noted in preceding sections of this report, the DSP Help project also contributed to non-DSP related services and casework. This is reflected in these charts.

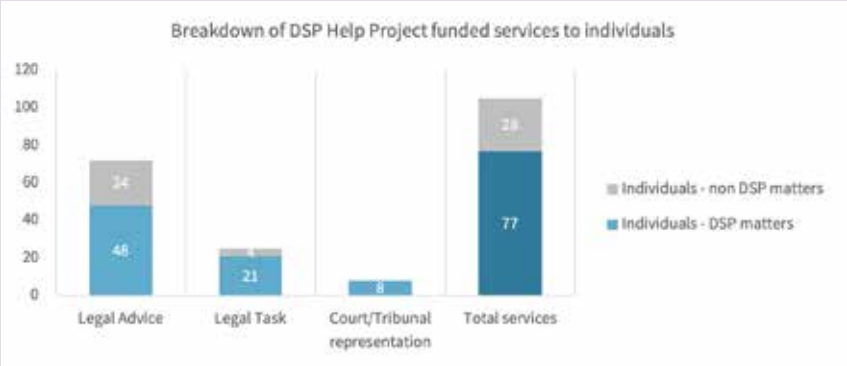


Figure 18 - Legal services provided to individuals, attributable to DSP Help between February 2020 and 12 January 2021

The majority of these legal services were provided after the launch of the DSP Help online resource in mid-July 2020, as shown in the graph below. 49 of the 77 legal services related to DSP matters, including 6 of the 8 court/tribunal representation services, were delivered after the launch.

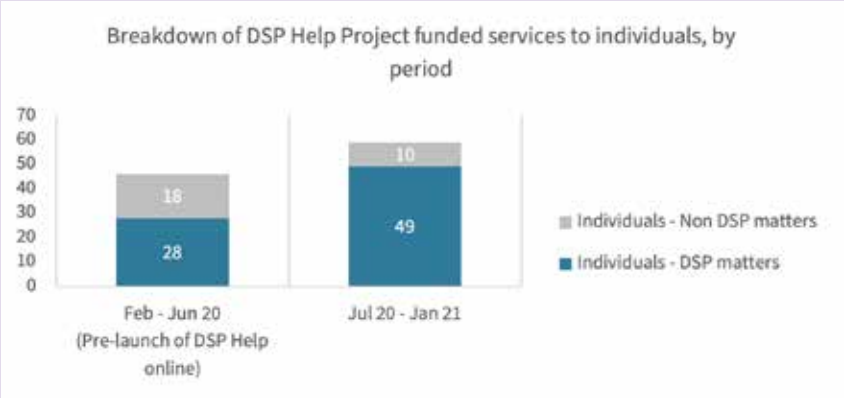


Figure 19 - Legal services provided by SSRV to individuals attributable to DSP Help, by period

SSRV also sought to track the overall demand for services flowing from DSP Help and to date, all internal referrals to the Project were able to be addressed and there was no unmet demand for legal services. This is largely a result of the structure of the project. Not all DSP matters were referred to the DSP Help legal service; SSRV's other advice lines, projects and lawyers continue to provide advice and casework in relation to the DSP. Demand for SSRV's services overall continues to outpace the organisations capacity.

Extremely grateful for the amazing tools, assistance and advocacy in helping to achieve a positive outcome for my claim. The DSP website/resources and advocacy facility made THE difference in the successful outcome of my claim. Thank you!" – DSP applicant supported by SSRV

Case Studies

The following are case studies prepared by the DSP Help Community Lawyer based on casework carried out during the Project.

Jennifer

Jennifer* is a woman in her 60's living in rural/regional Victoria. Jennifer has been living with a hormonal condition that causes severe fatigue her entire life, and has several other medical conditions including fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, and anxiety. Jennifer applied for the DSP in 2019, was rejected, and approached SSRV for assistance with her appeal to the AAT in 2020.

Jennifer's main challenge in accessing the DSP was gathering appropriate, good quality medical evidence to demonstrate her eligibility. Jennifer's doctors were supportive of her being on the pension, however they didn't understand what they needed to include in their letters and reports.

On contacting the DSP Help Legal Service, Jennifer noted that Centrelink and her doctors 'don't speak the same language'. Jennifer recognised that demonstrating her eligibility meant getting her doctors to address her conditions and impairments within the framework of the DSP eligibility criteria, and using the language Centrelink uses, but had not had success in doing this.

Initially the DSP Help Lawyer reviewed Jennifer's medical evidence and provided advice. The lawyer's view was that the medical evidence Jennifer had would not support a successful appeal. Jennifer was referred to the resources on the DSP Help website. Equipped with these, Jennifer approached her doctors and sought better medical evidence.

Jennifer was successful in getting new evidence and again approached the DSP Help Legal Service for assistance with her appeal. The DSP Help lawyer agreed to represent Jennifer at the AAT.

Ultimately, Jennifer was successful. The AAT determined that she was medically qualified for the DSP. In making this decision, the AAT highlighted the new evidence Jennifer was able to gather as persuasive.

Jennifer told SSRV:

'They're not speaking the same language. My doctors write their reports one way, but Centrelink is expecting something different, and I don't know how to get past this.'

'Thank you for your help. I don't think I would've been able to go to the tribunal by myself. I definitely wouldn't have been able to set everything out in the way you did.'

Anne

Anne* is a young person living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and associated mental health conditions. Anne struggles to engage with the world, spending most of each day in a darkened room and avoiding interacting with people. Anne needs assistance from her mother Juliette* to ensure her nutrition, hygiene, and other needs are met. Without this help, Anne would not remember to eat or change her clothes.

Anne has no work history since leaving school. Anne has tried to engage with tertiary education several times, but due to concentration and memory issues has never been able to stick with it. Anne needs income support as without it she would not be able to earn any money.

Juliette assisted Anne with an application for the DSP. The application was initially rejected by Centrelink, then rejected again at the internal review stage. Juliette sought help for Anne from the DSP Help Legal Service. The DSP Help Lawyer was able to assist by representing Anne at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Anne was found to be eligible for the DSP, which was granted with backpay to the original application date.

Throughout the engagement Juliette described the challenge of not only getting medical evidence to support Anne's application and appeal but getting doctors to give useful evidence. Many of the reports were general in nature, and not tailored to the DSP eligibility criteria. Until speaking to SSRV Juliette didn't have the knowledge and understanding of the DSP to ask the doctors the right questions.

Juliette was consulted during the DSP Help design process and noted that had this resource been available when Anne first applied for the DSP she may have been successful earlier and not needed to appeal.

Hamish

Hamish* is a 16 year old man living with severe Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Hamish is supported by his father Donald* in his day-to-day life. Hamish requires constant supervision and assistance, either from Donald, other family members, or while attending a special school.

Donald contacted the DSP Help Legal Service when Hamish was rejected for the DSP. Donald had taken this matter to an Authorised Review Officer (ARO) who found Hamish's conditions to not be permanent as they were not fully treated or fully stabilised. Donald sought assistance to take this to the AAT.

The treatment Hamish was receiving at this time and the recommendations health workers made led the ARO to believe that his conditions were not fully treated, and that he could show significant improvement if he undertook more treatment. Notably, the ARO considered support obtained through the National Disability Insurance Scheme to be relevant to this assessment.

The DSP Help Lawyer provided advice to Donald about the DSP eligibility requirements and how medical evidence can and should be used to demonstrate these have been met. Donald used this advice to obtain follow up reports from the health workers treating Hamish.

The DSP Help Lawyer then provided Hamish with representation at the AAT. During the hearing the lawyer made submissions about the way NDIS support was considered by the ARO, arguing that considering NDIS support to be treatment for the purposes of DSP eligibility – and using this to show a condition is not fully treated – is an overly simplistic view and ignores that NDIS support is only given for permanent conditions.

The AAT's decision came back in Hamish's favour and he was granted the DSP with backpay.

This matter highlighted an important issue that could be looked at further as part of SSRV's and the DSP Help Project's system advocacy activities. Namely, the interplay between different kinds of government assistance – in this case how NDIS interplays with the DSP – and how not considering this fully can lead to poor administrative decisions.

**Names have been changed*

Integrated Project Plan Indicator of success:

- Guidelines documented and incorporated into SSRV Legal Practice Manual
- 20 information and advice services to DSP applicants
- 10 further legal assistance services
- Majority of people assisted via the General Advice Line indicate that the service was accessible and useful

SSRV developed casework guidelines for the DSP Help project, and implemented them alongside the broader guidelines within the Legal Practice Manual.

SSRV was seeking to provide at least 20 information and advice services, and 10 further legal assistance services (task/casework/representation), to DSP applicants in the first year of the project.

Based on the legal services data so far, SSRV has far exceeded these targets with 48 information/advice services and 29 tasks/representations to individuals applying for the DSP.

Nearly all (98%) of individuals who contacted the telephone advice service and provided feedback noted that it was both accessible and useful.

Lastly, there was no unmet demand within the DSP Help Project (but as per above, it should be noted that demand continues to outpace capacity for SSRV at an organisational level).

Legal Services to Support Workers and Professionals - Evaluation

SSRV tracked enquiries to the Worker Help Line that were related to DSP matters and identified enquiries which were specifically about DSP eligibility. This is presented in the charts below for the period prior to the launch of DSP Help and the subsequent six months.

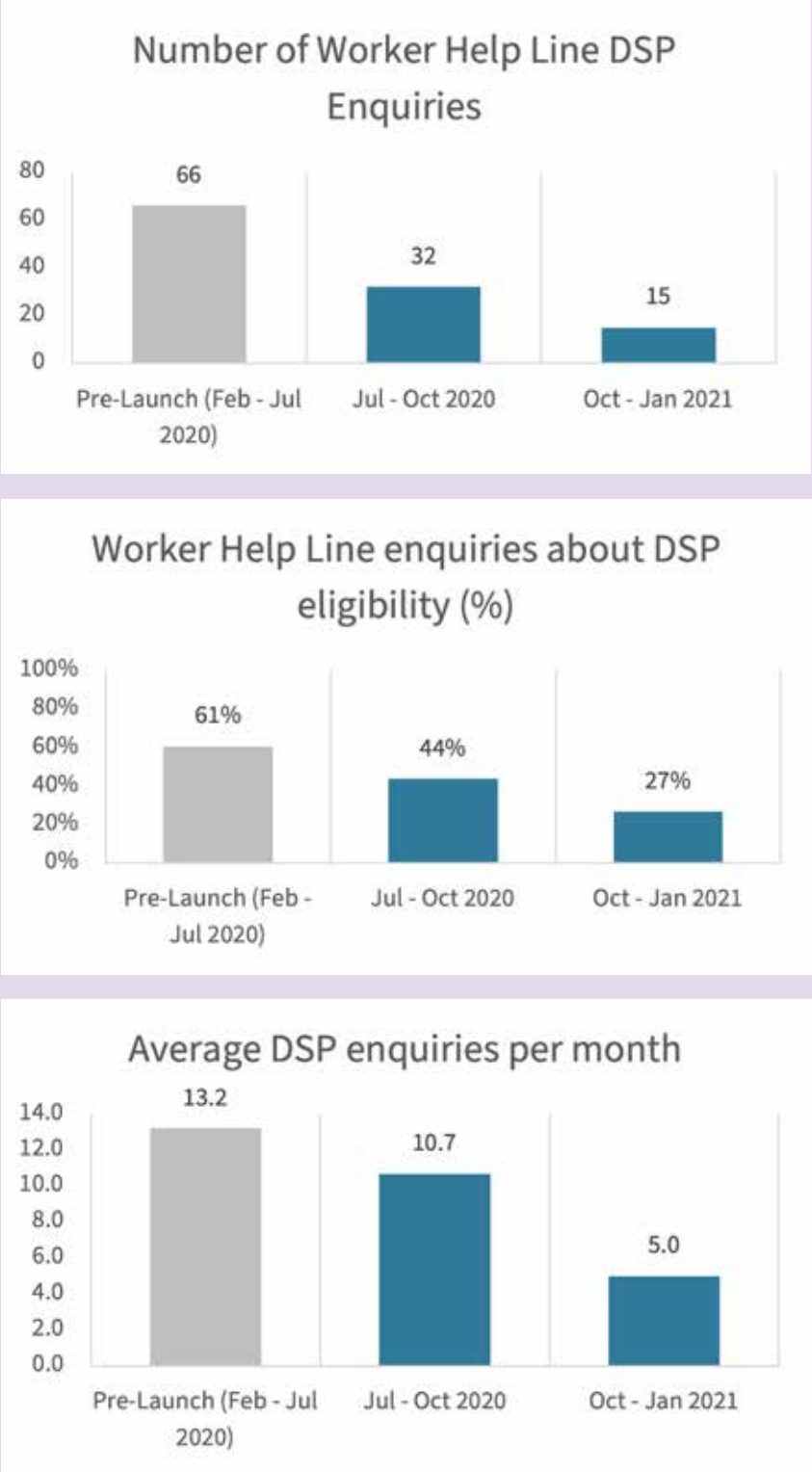


Figure 20 - Enquiries to Worker Help Line related to DSP matters (February 2020 - January 2021)

The enquiry figures indicate that there were slightly fewer, and steadily declining, calls to the Worker Help Line about DSP matters after the launch of DSP Help compared to the preceding months. As noted elsewhere, this at least partly reflects broader trends from the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. fewer applications for the DSP relative to JobSeeker and fewer calls for support from organisations for all matters, not just DSP.

The proportion of calls related to eligibility also declined sharply, suggesting that the workers who did call were potentially more aware of eligibility requirements (either via DSP Help or other resources) and/or required more specialist advice.

Immediate feedback was gathered for 40 of the 47 enquiries to the Worker Help Line on DSP matters and all workers reported that the SSRV service was 'useful' and 'accessible', and all but 1 noted that it was 'timely.

Since the DSP Help Project commenced in February 2020, SSRV has provided legal services to a number of organisations and workers in support of DSP matters. This included 58 secondary consultations and 7 legal tasks (e.g. reviewing documents and providing a more extensive consultation).

As noted previously, the DSP Help project also provided advice about non-DSP matters via the Worker Help Line and this is reflected in the following charts.

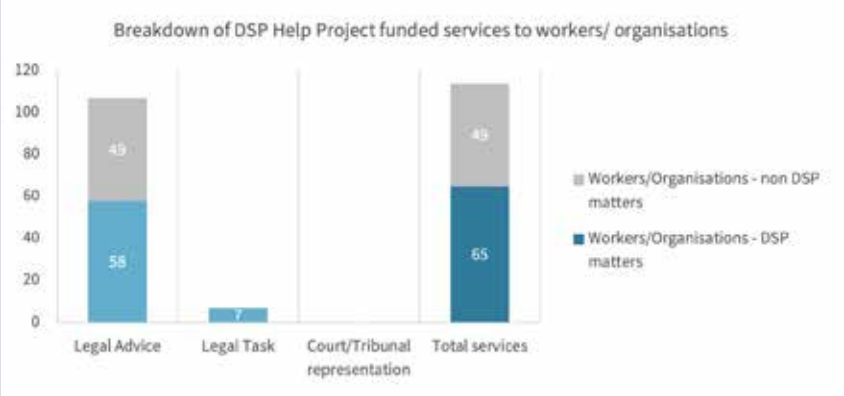


Figure 21 - Legal services provided to workers and organisations, attributable to DSP Help between February 2020 and January 2021

This has meant that in just under a year, the DSP Help project has contributed a total of 114 legal services to workers and organisations within SSRV's overall service provision, with just under half of those (51) occurring since the launch of the DSP Help online resource, as shown in the chart below.

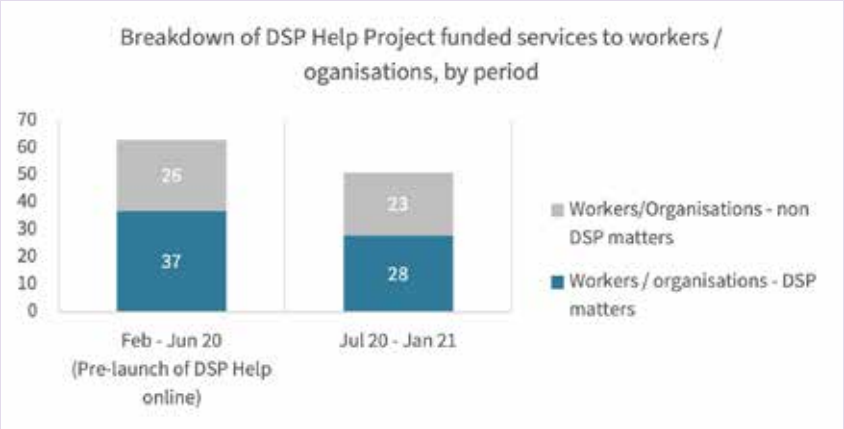


Figure 22 - Legal services provided to workers and organisations attributable to DSP Help, by period

In reading the above chart it should be noted that SSRV does not consider the lower figures in the second half of the project particularly anomalous. This period not only contains SSRV's least busy time – the December-January holiday period – but also contained *all* of the DSP Help lawyer's leave. DSP matters handled while the DSP Help lawyer was away were handled by other parts of SSRV and may have been more appropriately attributed to those lawyers and projects.

Additional consultation and surveys will be conducted with support workers in 2021 to ascertain whether the assistance provided was help to the conduct and outcome of their matter.

Integrated Project Plan Indicator of success:

- 20 information and advice services to support workers
- Majority of people assisted via the Worker Help Line indicate that the service was accessible and useful

The DSP Help Project Community Lawyer was seeking to provide at least 20 information and advice services to support workers in the first year and based on the data to date, SSRV has far exceeded these targets with 25 information/advice services and an additional 3 legal tasks for DSP matters since launch of the website. Over the entire first year of the DSP Help Project, a total of 65 services were provided to support workers.

All workers who contacted the telephone advice service and provided feedback noted that it was both accessible and useful.

Community Legal Education

One of the core priorities of SSRV's current strategic plan is 'building the capacity and capability of other professionals, enabling them to better identify and assist people experiencing, or who may encounter, social security problems.' By upskilling other workers in the community and support sectors, SSRV aims to extend the organisation's reach and impact beyond the people who seek assistance directly.

Community Legal Education (CLE) is one of the activities falling within this priority area and was incorporated into the DSP Help Project. Sessions run with community/support workers and other professionals were varied to meet the needs of particular audiences. Some sessions (e.g. the one delivered to the Centrelink Working Group) were focused on the Online Resource and how this can be used as to enhance services the workers are already providing, while others (e.g. the session delivered to Monash Health) were more focused on DSP eligibility and what can be done to support applicants who will not have an ongoing relationship with the worker. All sessions served both an educational and promotional purpose to varying extents.

Traditionally CLE has involved visiting other organisations and delivering sessions face to face. With the COVID-19 pandemic causing disruptions throughout much of the first year of the project, this was not possible. Instead, SSRV had to pivot to online service delivery for all CLE activities.

This had advantages and disadvantages. It proved more difficult to arrange CLE sessions; organisations were making fewer enquiries and seeking less advice (see above for further information about the impact of Covid-19 on service provision) and there were new technical considerations. For example, some organisations could not use Zoom, instead requiring their own specific platform.

However, there were also benefits to a move to online delivery. The most recognisable was reaching a wider audience in fewer sessions. When attendees can log into a session from their office (or even their home) and do not need to travel to or from a particular venue, it can often be easier to fit a session into a busy schedule. The use of technology also made it easier to do some things that may be difficult or inconvenient when delivering a session face to face. Screen sharing, for example, allowed the delivery not only of slides and visual material, but also a live demonstration of the DSP Help website, without the need to set up a projector or similar.

SRRV's learnings from this project and the Covid-19 impacted year will likely lead to more online offerings of services, and in particular CLE sessions. While these are not expected to replace face to face delivery, they are another tool available to enhance the organisation's reach and service delivery.

Evaluation

In the first year, a total of four CLE sessions have been delivered by the DSP Help Project to provide legal education around DSP and promote DSP Help. These sessions were attended by approximately 113 attendees:[2]

Session	Number of attendees	Mix of attendees
1. Financial Counselling Victoria Centrelink Working Group	23	Mainly financial counsellors and lawyers
2. Monash Health	25	Social workers and health workers
3. DARU	40	Social workers and disability advocates
4. Northern Health	25	Social workers and health workers

Several other organisations/support workers expressed interest in CLE, however a session was not able to be scheduled within the first year of the project.

These will be followed up in Year 2, and include:

- Economic Justice Australia (for Community Legal Centres in the social security sphere)
- Alfred Health (Social Work Department)
- Northern Health (Access and Support Workers)

Additionally, the DSP Help Project contributed to several other events in its first year. While these were not considered formal CLE sessions they are still important to note, and included:

- Contributing to Economic Justice Australia's national conference
- A Q+A session with a group of financial counsellors who regularly engage with SSRV
- Participation in and contribution to the "Future of Social Security for People with Disability in Australia" workshop series organised by the Australia Federation of Disability Organisations.

The CLE sessions were tailored for the audience but broadly covered the following topics:

- Overview of DSP eligibility and applications
- The importance of medical evidence
- Introduction to DSP Help
- What we did and how it works
- How it can be used by applicants and workers
- The future of DSP Help
- Understanding what options a client has if a DSP application is rejected
- Referral pathways for casework at SSRV and other resources

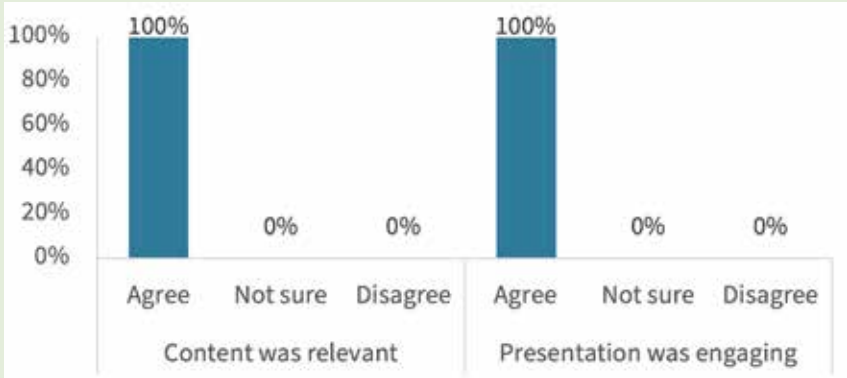
2 All CLE sessions were delivered online and participants may not have remained for entire time so there were some discrepancies between the number of participants who registered, those who attended and those who were counted as attending.

Screenshot of online CLE session delivered for Disability Advocacy Resource Unit on 15 October 2020.

Two of the sessions were arranged through SSRV's existing network, however the recipients were the driving factor in the other two. The Monash Health session was an invitation from a social worker who learnt about DSP Help through the media, while the DARU session was arranged as part of DARU's broader forum series, after representatives attended the DSP Help launch.

> **"I was listening to the radio while driving to work and DSP Help was being discussed on the show. I knew my colleagues had brought DSP application issues up and how they could only refer clients to Centrelink so I thought it was valuable and arranged for Dermott to come present" – Monash Health staff who organised CLE session**

Feedback on the sessions was solicited from participants through an online survey. Possibly due to delivering sessions online, the completion rates for the online survey were low for both the Centrelink Working Group and DARU sessions, and only 1 of the 25 attendees at the Monash Health session responded. This resulted in an overall 27% response rate (30 of the 113 attendees) so results should be treated cautiously, however the response was very positive. All respondents indicated that the content was relevant to them and the sessions were engaging, and virtually all found the materials useful and the presenter to be knowledgeable.



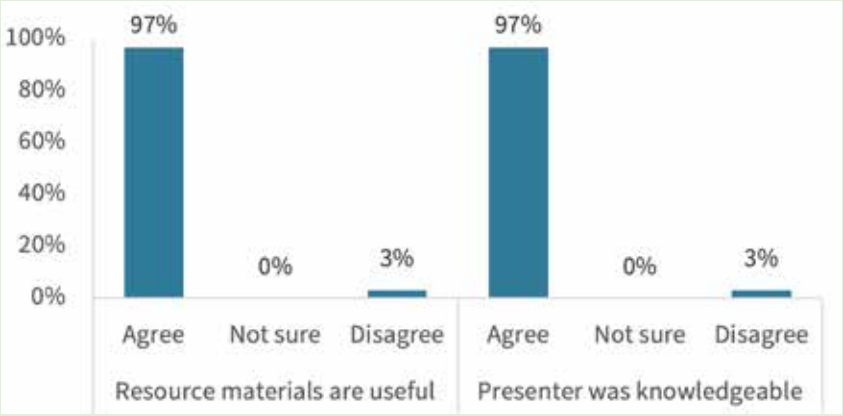
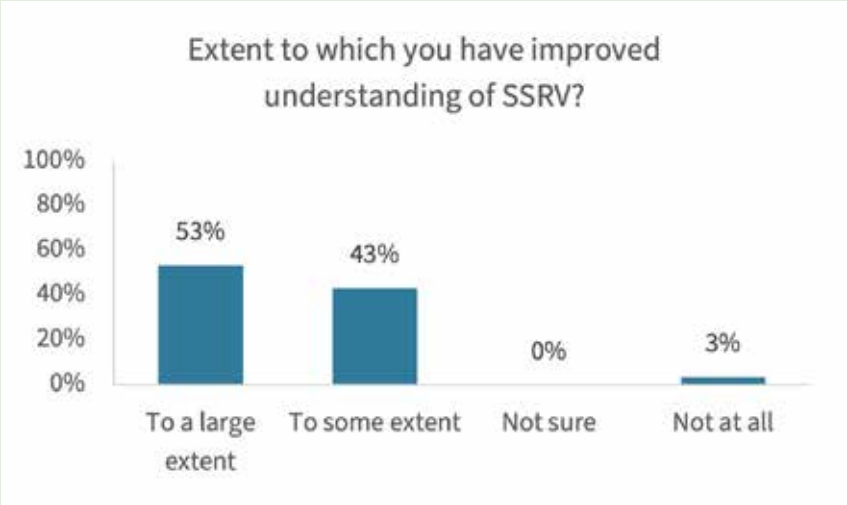
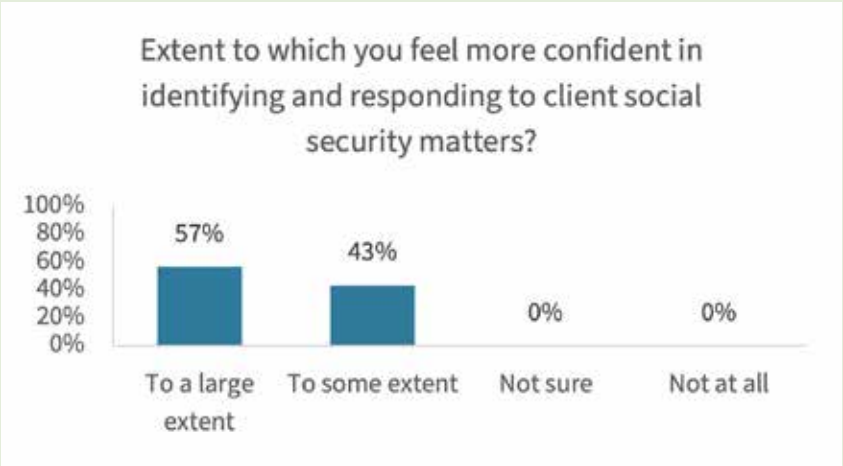


Figure 23 - Participant feedback from 4 CLE sessions on the session itself (n=30)

When asked whether the sessions had helped them better understand SSRV and how to identify and support clients with a social security issue, the feedback was also positive:

- 97% of respondents had a greater understanding of SSRV
- All respondents felt their confidence to identify and respond to social security matters had increased
- All respondents felt the session improved their ability to better assist clients, including 67% to 'a large extent'





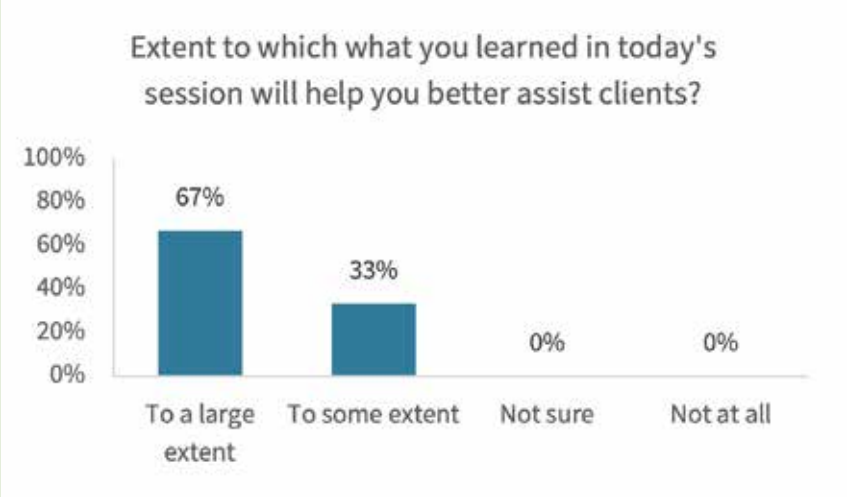


Figure 24 - Participant feedback from 4 CLE sessions on how session impacted their understanding and ability (n=30)

"[With information from this session], I can refer to clients who may be in a position to apply for DSP, or to help them to appeal a case that was rejected." – CLE participant

"This is really needed, and looks well thought out, thank you" – CLE participant

Integrated Project Plan Indicators of Success:

- 6 workshops with 50+ participants
- Majority of workshop participants indicate that:
- they anticipate that they will use what they have learned in the workshop to assist clients
- they feel more confident to assist clients with DSP applications.

SSRV has delivered 4 workshops on DSP Help to date so it is behind on the number of sessions but has exceeded the number of participants, benefitting from the higher reach of online sessions.

Of those who provided feedback on the CLE sessions, **all** felt that attending the session has made them more confident in identifying and responding to social security matters and will help them assist their clients.

Evaluation Assessment

This section of the report includes the assessment of the Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant on the evaluation questions set out in the Project's Monitoring & Evaluation Plan.

The following table summarises the Evaluation Rubric performance for each evaluation question and details for each assessment are provided in coloured boxes with accompanying commentary from the SSRV project team where relevant.

Evaluation questions	Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent
1. To what extent and in what ways did the DSP Help resource assist applicants to make a successful DSP application?				
2. In what ways and to what extent was the confidence and capability of support workers to effectively assist their clients in making DSP applications built?				
3. To what extent has community worker awareness and understanding of SSRV's services and pathways changed?				
4. In what ways and to what extent did the provision of accessible legal advice and representation services assist applicants and their support workers to make more effective DSP applications and challenge unfavourable decisions?				
5. To what extent was the DSP Help Legal Service able to meet demand for legal advice and representation services generated by the project?				
6. Did the project have any impact upon other SSRV services – GAL WHL casework and representation, CLE? (e.g. Changed demand? Did the services provided by the project enable SSRV to re/direct other services to more vulnerable DSP clients?)				

1. **To what extent and in what ways did the DSP Help Online resource assist applicants to make a successful DSP application?**

Adequate

- Fewer than 10% of DSP Help users engaged with Chat Bot, but 64% of Bot interactions resulted in documents being generated
- Around 70% of DSP Help website users who provided feedback indicated that the resource helped them understand the DSP application process and gather evidence, however the feedback sample represents less than 1% of total visitors to the site. 93% of Chat Bot users who provided feedback reported that the Bot helped them gather the requisite medical evidence.
- Only 12 individuals who used DSP Help responded to a follow up survey, however most of them (91%) reported that DSP Help made some difference to them gathering medical evidence and half (54%) stated that it made a difference to the outcome of their application/ appeal.
- The number of individuals accessing DSP Help has decreased over time, rather than increased

As noted above, the promotions – particularly wider coverage by the media – have likely skewed DSP Help's usage data. There was an extreme spike in visits in August and it is not realistic that usage would increase from those numbers. Usage data in the second year of the Project will hopefully be more illustrative.

Qualitative feedback collected has been positive, and indicates applicants and those supporting them are using DSP Help to make better DSP applications.

2. **In what ways and to what extent was the confidence and capability of support workers to effectively assist their clients in making DSP applications built?**

Excellent

- Only 4 CLE sessions delivered but 113 participants reached
- 100% of CLE attendees surveyed reported that the learnings made them more confident and able to assist their clients with social security issues
- 28 legal information and tasks provided to workers
- 100% of workers who provided feedback on SSRV's Worker Help Line indicated the service was accessible and useful
- Follow up surveys with workers did not identify specific examples of how the DSP Help resource or SSRV service had been reflected in their work but only a very small sample were followed up and more will be prioritised for the second year

3. **To what extent has community worker awareness and understanding of SSRV's services and pathways to services changed?**

Adequate

- 95% of CLE attendees surveyed reported that they had greater understanding of SSRV and its services
- The number of enquiries to the WHL declined in the six months after the launch of DSP Help (July – January 2021) compared to the preceding six months (January – June 2020).

As noted above, the decline in Worker Help Line enquiries may be related more to the impacts of COVID-19 than anything intrinsic to DSP Help. Further investigation in the second year of the Project is warranted.

4. **In what ways and to what extent did the provision of accessible legal advice and representation services assist applicants and their support workers to make more effective DSP applications and challenge unfavourable decisions?**

Good

- 28 legal information/advice services were provided to individual DSP applicants
- 18 legal tasks were completed for support workers and 6 casework/representation services were provided to individuals
- 54% of follow up survey respondents indicated that the DSP Help made at least some difference to the outcome of their application or appeal
- 1 follow up survey respondent specifically referenced that the DSP Help resource helped them successfully apply for the DSP

Qualitatively, DSP Help has proven useful in helping clients gather medical evidence, and this has impacted the outcome of their matters. For example, see "Jennifer's" case study above, where DSP Help was used to gather the evidence that was the difference between the success she had at the Tribunal and another rejection.

5. **To what extent was the DSP Help Legal Service able to meet demand for legal advice and representation services generated by the project?**

Excellent

- All individuals eligible for legal assistance were assisted by the DSP Help team at SSRV and all individuals who enquired via the General Advice Line were assisted

6. **Did the project have any impact upon other SSRV services – General Advice Line, Worker Help Line, casework and representation, CLE? (eg Changed demand? Did the services provided by the project enable SSRV to re/direct other services to more vulnerable DSP clients?)**

Poor

- No change in calls to the SSRV General Advice Line in the six months after the launch of DSP Help (July – January 2021) compared to the preceding six months (January – June 2020).

At the time the rubric was developed SSRV anticipated the Project would create an increase in demand for services related to the DSP, particular via the General Advice Line and Worker Help Line. Strictly speaking this has not happened.

However, as noted above, the demand for SSRV's services this year is anomalous due to the impact of COVID-19. It will be worth revisiting this measure in the second year of the Project to investigate the effect of DSP Help in more normal circumstances.

Overall, there has been a qualitative impact on SSRV's services. DSP Help is another tool available for use by all SSRV staff and has been used to enhance both advice and casework services.

Project Learnings and Next Steps

This section of the report has been prepared by Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant, Taimur Siddiqi, The Incus Group.

In its first year, the DSP Help project has demonstrated a minimum viable product with the DSP Help website. The online resource has been used by applicants and those supporting them to understand DSP eligibility, understand the DSP application process, gather medical evidence, and understand the options if a claim is rejected. DSP Help has also been used as a referral pathway into SSRV and a resource SSRV and other organisations can use in their casework.

Evidence gathered for the evaluation and detailed throughout this report demonstrates the success of the approach undertaken, and yielded lessons for SSRV, Paper Giant and the broader legal assistance and disability support sectors.

The DSP Help online resource has been very well received by users (both applicants and those supporting applicants). The Project overall has met most of the targets within its control, however it has not met many of the targets outside its control (e.g. number of users accessing the resource) or influenced by the broader challenges of the pandemic (e.g. depressed demand for social security related legal assistance).

The project has received strong support from the Steering Committee and there is strong momentum and opportunities for the project going into its second year. SSRV and Paper Giant have already begun discussing these opportunities, and planning for the second year. As discussed throughout this report, there are multiple opportunities to further refine and promote the resource as well as share lessons for similar projects in other areas of law. The CLE presentations developed by the DSP Help staff can also be updated and broadened to target particular demographic cohorts and geographies in its second year.

A set of recommendations to guide project delivery and ongoing monitoring & evaluation are provided below.

Project delivery

Topic	Recommendation
DSP Help online tool	1. Several options for content and tool functionality have been proposed by users and SSRV/Paper Giant. 2. If expanding the tool, consider including further information on: a. Program of Support for those who have been unsuccessful (potentially using existing DSP Toolkit material) b. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal (potentially using existing information on the AAT website)
Engaging medical professionals in year two of the Project	3. Prioritise engagement with medical professionals to understand whether they have utilised DSP Help and how to increase their utilisation of the resource. Consider: a. leveraging the GP Association representative from previous engagements around the DSP b. reaching out to large health insurances or health associations in particular areas to access their database of medical professionals and clinics. 4. Determine if medical professionals are accessing by adding functionality within the website to identify who is accessing it (e.g. as part of accessing the website and/or bot, not just at the point of providing feedback) 5. When engaging with hospitals, consider targeting sub-acute and non-acute settings where staff are less likely to be focused on a pressing need and more able to comment on longer-term, ongoing medical needs
Professional Development / Community Legal Education	6. Incorporate client case studies and DSP Help feedback from 2020 into future CLE sessions 7. Incorporate the Chat Bot into the presentation, e.g. have participants work through the Bot and generate a letter then give feedback / ask questions 8. Consider delivering more targeted CLE, combined with resource promotion, e.g. design and deliver sessions with an Indigenous, multicultural communities and/or rural & regional focus
Systemic issues	9. Follow up feedback from users of DSP Help indicated that use outside of Victoria, so consider showcasing this work through Economic Justice Australia and encourage interstate CLCs and disability support agencies to leverage the online resource 10. Impairment tables are due for a review in 2021/22 and SSRV should seek to use DSP Help project learnings to feed into this

Monitoring & Evaluation

Topic	Recommendation
Data collection - processes	11. Schedule a review with project team in early 2021 to consolidate and streamline existing M&E tools, including: a. an assessment of which data points are required again next year / need to be added / can be discarded b. identifying how data collection / analysis tools can be further incorporated into the online resource 12. Share CLE feedback forms before the conclusion of online CLE sessions, between end of formal presentation and time for questions, to encourage attendees to complete before they log off and increase response rate 13. Consider distributing Worker Help Line follow up surveys online for them to complete in their own time to reduce the impost on SSRV personnel
Data collection – indicators and sources	14. Work with Steering Group to determine if there are additional data sources to track in 2021 to identify if DSP Help is contributing to more successful DSP applications (e.g. more specific feedback questions on the website, consultation with Centrelink/AAT, system level data from DSS, etc.) 15. Identify potential ways to determine whether calls / referrals into SSRV are more or less 'complex' or 'vulnerable' clients 16. Consider consultations with broader sector stakeholders on the value of DSP Help (e.g. AAT, DSS, FCLC / Economic Justice Australia)

Future Development - Accessibility

This section of the report has been prepared by SSRV.

As noted above, changes to the Online Resource have already been proposed based on feedback the Project has received since launch. Generally users have indicated DSP Help was accessible and easy to use however, some feedback from the website, and also during advice calls and Community Legal Education workshops with support workers, raised accessibility for particular groups as an area of possible improvement.

This includes:

- *People living with a vision impairment* – One user noted certain screen readers did not work perfectly with DSP Help and suggested fixing this would greatly help people living with a vision impairment to access DSP Help.
- *People living with a hearing impairment* – One user noted DSP Help was not accessible to deaf people. This user could not be contacted for further feedback, however SSRV hypothesises this relates to people with Auslan as their first language. For them, written English is a second language.
- *People from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background* – Currently DSP Help is only available in English.

SSRV has identified accessibility as a key area to focus improvements on in the second year of the project. As part of the planning process for year two, SSRV and Paper Giant have already begun conversations about changes that could be made in the short, medium and longer terms, and how these could be best implemented.

Reference List

Social Security Rights Victoria (2019) *Application to Victorian Legal Services Board 2019 Grants Funding Round*, Victoria

Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner (2019) *Grants Program 2019 Grants Funding Round, Expression of Interest Form, Explore Stream*, Victoria

Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner website (2021) *Grants*, *https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/grants-and-funding/grants* , Victoria

Appendix A – Guiding Questions

Note: Evaluation questions are presented in italics.

Theme	Guiding Questions	Report Reference
Appropriateness ‣ To what extent was the design of the project suitable for achieving project objectives?	1. To what extent were the underlying program theory and assumptions substantiated or challenged?	See Conceptual Framework: Theory of Change
	2. During the period from when project funding was first sought (March/ May 2019) and the end of Year 1 of the project, where there any political, economic, socio-cultural or technological or other factors/changes that potentially impacted upon the design, implementation and outcomes of the project?	See Context: Impact of COVID-19
	3. What, if any, effect did these factors/ changes have on project design, implementation and outcomes?	See Context – Impact of COVID-19

Process ‣ In what ways was the concept of 'designing justice differently' applied throughout the project?	4. In what ways was human-centred design applied throughout the project?	See DSP Help Online Resource – Design and Development; Legal Service – Design and Implementation
	5. How was the use of technology incorporated into the project?	See DSP Help Online Resource – Design and Development
	6. In what ways did the human-centred design process inform the technology/ online resource, wrap around legal services and other aspects of the project?	See DSP Help Online Resource – Design and Development; Legal Service – Design and Implementation
	7. In what ways and to what extent did these approaches replicate, build on to, or differ from how SSRV (and others e.g. Centrelink) has designed and delivered services prior to the project?	See Legal Service – Design and Implementation
	8. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches to human-centred design/technology as implemented in the project?	See DSP Help Online Resource – Design and Development; Legal Service – Design and Implementation
	9. Are there any suggestions for improvement to project design and implementation?	See Project Learnings and Next Steps
	10. In what ways and to what extent has the project provided evidence that the use of human-centred design and technology can contribute to improved client outcomes? Are certain cohorts/groups more likely to benefit from these? Are there certain types or matters/stages of matters where this is more likely to be beneficial?	See DSP Help Online Resource – Evaluation; Legal Services to Individuals - Evaluation; Legal Services to Support Workers and Professionals - Evaluation

Effectiveness ‣ Was the project effective? ‣ In what ways and to what extent did the DSP Help Project assist people to increase their chance of success when making a DSP application? ‣ Were there any other changes or learnings arising from the Project? ‣ To what extent were these anticipated/intended/ beneficial?	11. To what extent and in what ways did the DSP Help Online resource assist applicants to make a successful DSP application?	See DSP Help Online Resource – Evaluation
	12. Which components of the resource were most useful/effective to whom/how?	See DSP Help Online Resource – Evaluation
	13. In what ways and to what extent was the confidence and capability of support workers to effectively assist their clients in making DSP applications built?	See Legal Services to Support Workers and Professionals - Evaluation; Community Legal Education
	14. To what extent has community worker awareness and understanding of SSRV's services and pathways to services changed?	See Community Legal Education
	15. In what ways and to what extent did the provision of accessible legal advice and representation services assist applicants and their support workers to make more effective DSP applications and challenge unfavourable decisions?	See Legal Services to Individuals – Evaluation
	16. To what extent was the DSP Help Legal Service able to meet demand for legal advice and representation services generated by the project?	See Legal Services to Individuals – Evaluation
	17. Did the project have any impact upon other SSRV services – General Advice Line, Worker Help Line, casework and representation, CLE? (eg Changed demand? Did the services provided by the project enable SSRV to re/direct other services to more	See Legal Service – Design and Implementation
	18. Did the link with human-centred design and technology cause SSRV to do anything differently in terms of general legal advice and further assistance service delivery and operations? Was this beneficial?	See DSP Help Online Resource – Design and Development; Legal Service – Design and Implementation
	19. In what ways did the project design and deliver 'justice differently' compared to how projects and services had previously been conducted by SSRV (other services/orgs)?	See Evaluation: Legal Services to Individuals - Evaluation; Legal Services to Support Workers and Professionals - Evaluation; Legal Service – Design and Implementation
Sustainability	20. To what extent, and in what ways, did the project contribute to organisational and sector knowledge regarding the use of human-centred design and technology to 'design justice differently'?	See Community Legal Education; Project Learnings and Next Steps

Appendix B – Evaluation Rubric

Evaluation questions	Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent
1. To what extent and in what ways did the DSP Help Online resource assist applicants to make a successful DSP application?	‣ Fewer than 20% of individuals / workers **do not** progress to point in online resource where they access legal information ‣ Fewer than 50% of users providing immediate feedback indicate the resource assisted them to better "understand requirements for DSP eligibility" / "understand evidentiary requirements" / "gather relevant data to support applications" ‣ Over 50% of individuals / workers consulted in follow up state that resource made **no** difference to the preparation or outcome of application ‣ Drop off in number of users accessing online resource over months 6-10 ‣ No calls to WHL or GAL referred from online resource	‣ 20 - 40% of individuals / workers progress to point in online resource where they access legal information ‣ 50 – 70% of users providing immediate feedback indicate the resource assisted them to better "understand requirements for DSP eligibility" / "understand evidentiary requirements" / "gather relevant data to support applications" ‣ 50 – 70% of individuals / workers consulted in follow up state that resource made **some** difference to the preparation or outcome of application ‣ Slight increase (10 - 20%) in number of users accessing online resource over months 6-10 ‣ 5 - 10% of calls to WHL or GAL referred from online resource	‣ 40 - 60% of individuals / workers progress to point in online resource where they access legal information ‣ 70 - 80% of users providing immediate feedback indicate the resource assisted them to better "understand requirements for DSP eligibility" / "understand evidentiary requirements" / "gather relevant data to support applications" ‣ Over 70% of individuals / workers consulted in follow up state that resource made **some** difference to the preparation or outcome of application ‣ Moderate increase (20 - 40%) in number of users accessing online resource over months 6-10 ‣ 10 - 20% of calls to WHL or GAL referred from online resource	‣ Over 60% of individuals / workers progress to point in online resource where they access legal information ‣ Over 80% of users providing immediate feedback indicate the resource assisted them to better "understand requirements for DSP eligibility" / "understand evidentiary requirements" / "gather relevant data to support applications" ‣ Over 70% of individuals / workers consulted in follow up state that resource made **some** difference to the preparation **and** outcome of application ‣ Large increase (Over 40%) in number of users accessing online resource over months 6-10 ‣ Over 20% of calls to WHL or GAL referred from online resource

Evaluation questions	Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent
2. In what ways and to what extent was the confidence and capability of support workers to effectively assist their clients in making DSP applications built?	‣ Fewer than 4 CLE sessions delivered / 40 participants ‣ Fewer than 15 legal information and advice services to support workers ‣ Fewer than 50% of support workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report they "anticipate they will use learnings to better assist clients" or "feel more confident to assist clients with DSP applications" ‣ Fewer than 50% of support workers assisted through the Worker Help Line, who provide feedback at the completion of the interaction, indicate that the service was accessible and useful ‣ Fewer than 50% of support workers who respond to follow up survey or interview indicate that, as a result of the assistance provided by SSRV, they "used the information / advice provided to assist a client" or "felt more confident assisting the client" ‣ None of the workers consulted can give an example in follow up of how this has been reflected in their work	‣ Fewer than 6 CLE sessions delivered / 50 participants ‣ 15 - 20 legal information and advice services to support workers ‣ 50 - 70% of support workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report they "anticipate they will use learnings to better assist clients" or "feel more confident to assist clients with DSP applications" ‣ 50 - 70% of support workers assisted through the Worker Help Line, who provide feedback at the completion of the interaction, indicate that the service was accessible and useful ‣ 50 - 70% of support workers who respond to follow up survey or interview indicate that, as a result of the assistance provided by SSRV, they "used the information / advice provided to assist a client" or "felt more confident assisting the client" ‣ A few of the workers consulted can give an example in follow up of how this has been reflected in their work	‣ 6 - 8 CLE sessions delivered / 50 - 60 participants ‣ 20 - 25 legal information and advice services to support workers ‣ 70 - 80% of support workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report they "anticipate they will use learnings to better assist clients" or "feel more confident to assist clients with DSP applications" ‣ 70 - 80% of support workers assisted through the Worker Help Line, who provide feedback at the completion of the interaction, indicate that the service was accessible and useful ‣ 70 - 80% of support workers who respond to follow up survey or interview indicate that, as a result of the assistance provided by SSRV, they "used the information / advice provided to assist a client" or "felt more confident assisting the client" ‣ At least half of the workers consulted can give an example in follow up of how this has been reflected in their work	‣ Over 8 CLE sessions delivered / 60 participants ‣ Over 25 legal information and advice services to support workers ‣ Over 80% of support workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report they "anticipate they will use learnings to better assist clients" or "feel more confident to assist clients with DSP applications" ‣ Over 80% of support workers assisted through the Worker Help Line, who provide feedback at the completion of the interaction, indicate that the service was accessible and useful ‣ Over 80% of support workers who respond to follow up survey or interview indicate that, as a result of the assistance provided by SSRV, they "used the information / advice provided to assist a client" or "felt more confident assisting the client" ‣ Majority of the workers consulted can give an example in follow up of how this has been reflected in their work

Evaluation questions	Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent
3. To what extent has community worker awareness and understanding of SSRV's services and pathways to services changed?	‣ Fewer than 50% of workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report "improved awareness of SSRV and pathways to services" ‣ No change in number of calls to WHL for DSP matters, compared to 2019	‣ 50 – 70% of workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report "improved awareness of SSRV and pathways to services" ‣ Slight increase (10-20%) in number of calls to WHL for DSP matters, compared to 2019	‣ 70-80% of workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report "improved awareness of SSRV and pathways to services" ‣ Moderate increase (20-40%) in number of calls to WHL for DSP matters, compared to 2019	‣ Over 80% of workers who attend CLE sessions and complete Feedback sheets report "improved awareness of SSRV and pathways to services" ‣ Large increase (40%) in number of calls to WHL for DSP matters, compared to 2019
4. In what ways and to what extent did the provision of accessible legal advice and representation services assist applicants and their support workers to make more effective DSP applications and challenge unfavourable decisions?	‣ Fewer than 15 legal information and advice services to applicants ‣ Fewer than 5 further legal assistance services to applicants / workers ‣ Fewer than 50% of workers / applicants who respond to follow up survey or interview indicate that the legal assistance made **some** difference to conduct or outcome of the matter ‣ SSRV lawyer indicates in service reflection that the legal assistance made **no** difference to conduct or outcome of matter in more than 50% of matters ‣ No examples provided by support applicant, worker or SSRV staff consulted on difference made by legal assistance	‣ 15 - 20 legal information and advice services to applicants ‣ 5 - 10 further legal assistance services to applicants / workers ‣ 50 - 70% of workers / applicants who respond to follow up survey or interview indicate that the legal assistance made **some** difference to conduct or outcome of the matter ‣ SSRV lawyer indicates in service reflection that the legal assistance made **some** difference to conduct or outcome in 50% or more of matters ‣ At least 1 example provided by support applicant, worker or SSRV staff consulted on difference made by legal assistance	‣ 20 - 25 legal information and advice services to applicants ‣ 10 - 15 further legal assistance services to applicants / workers ‣ 70 - 80% of workers / applicants who respond to follow up survey or interview indicate that the legal assistance made **some** difference to conduct or outcome of the matter ‣ SSRV lawyer indicates in service reflection that the legal assistance made **some or large** difference to conduct or outcome in at least 50% of matters ‣ At least 1 example provided by support applicant, worker **and** SSRV staff consulted on difference made by legal assistance	‣ Over 25 legal information and advice services to applicants ‣ Over 15 further legal assistance services to applicants / workers ‣ Over 80% of workers / applicants who respond to follow up survey or interview indicate that the legal assistance made **some or large** difference to conduct or outcome of the matter ‣ SSRV lawyer indicates in service reflection that the legal assistance made **some or large** difference to conduct or outcome in at least 75% of matters ‣ At least 1 example provided by support applicant, worker **and** SSRV staff consulted on difference made by legal assistance

Evaluation questions	Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent
5. To what extent was the DSP Help Legal Service able to meet demand for legal advice and representation services generated by the project?	‣ Over 25% of individuals eligible for legal assistance not assisted by DSP Help Legal Service due to capacity	‣ 10 - 25% of individuals eligible for legal assistance not assisted due to capacity	‣ Less than 10% of individuals eligible for legal assistance not assisted due to capacity	‣ All individuals eligible for legal assistance assisted by DSP Help Legal Service
6. Did the project have any impact upon other SSRV services – GAL WHL casework and representation, CLE? (eg Changed demand? Did the services provided by the project enable SSRV to re/direct other services to more vulnerable DSP clients?)	‣ No change in calls to SSRV GAL about DSP matters, compared to 2019 ‣ No change in mix of DSP clients assisted, based on vulnerability ‣ SSRV staff do not believe the project had any positive impact on other SSRV services	‣ Slight increase (10%) increase to SSRV GAL about DSP matter, compared to 2019 ‣ Minor shift towards more vulnerable clients being assisted, compared to 2019 ‣ SSRV staff believe the project had a minor positive impact on other SSRV services	‣ Moderate (10 - 25%) increase to SSRV WHL and GAL about DSP matter, compared to 2019 ‣ Moderate shift towards more vulnerable clients being assisted, compared to 2019 ‣ SSRV staff believe the project had a major positive impact on other SSRV services	‣ Large (25%) increase to SSRV WHL and GAL about DSP matter ‣ Large shift towards more vulnerable clients being assisted, compared to 2019 ‣ SSRV staff believe the project had a major positive impact on other SSRV services and can point to several examples

Appendix C – Data Collection Sources

Item	Description
1. **Environment scan**	Review of existing documents and resources undertaken during early stages of project
2. **Online resource usage**	Google analytics to identify usage volume and trends
3. **Online resource user feedback**	Built-in feedback tools to capture user feedback in different sections and at exit (including invitation to participate in follow up interview/survey)
4. **CLE Activity summaries**	Summaries of activity performed by DSP Help Project staff in three categories: ‣ Community legal education sessions delivered ‣ Online resource promotion activity ‣ Any systemic issues and policy related activity
5. **Community Legal Education Feedback**	Feedback forms completed by participants following attendance at a CLE session delivered by DSP Help Project staff.
6. **SSRV General Advice Line statistics**	Data collected through General Advice Line database filtered for DSP matters in 2019 and 2020: ‣ Number of calls ‣ Source of enquiry ‣ Location of caller ‣ Demographics
7. **SSRV General Advice Line immediate feedback**	Standard questions asked at end of General Advice Line service (including option of 'Online resource' for referral into SSRV)
8. **SSRV Worker Help Line statistics**	Data collected through Worker Help Line database filtered for DSP matters in 2019 and 2020: ‣ Number of calls ‣ Type of worker ‣ Location of caller ‣ Source of enquiry
9. **Worker Help Line immediate feedback**	Standard questions asked at end of Worker Help Line service (including option of 'Online resource' for referral into SSRV)
10. **CLASS service data**	Client data, legal tasks, other representation, legal representation, etc. filtered for DSP matters in 2019 and 2020
11. **Unmet demand log**	Record of instances where the person sought and was eligible for SSRV DSP Help Legal Service but was not able to be assisted due to capacity
12. **Medium term survey/ interview with users of online resource**	Electronic surveys or interviews administered by SSRV staff/M&E consultant to sample of users who have provided consent details for follow up
13. **Medium term survey/ interview with workers and clients who have received service**	Electronic surveys or interviews administered by SSRV staff/M&E consultant to sample of clients and workers who have provided consent to be followed up

14. **Client case studies**	Case summaries provided by DSP Help Community Lawyer and other SSRV lawyers, outlining the matter, assistance provided by SSRV staff, assistance provided, results achieved, learnings related to integrated practice and any client and/or financial counsellor feedback.
15. **Medium term survey/ interview with users of online resource**	Electronic surveys or interviews administered by SSRV staff to sample of users who have provided consent details for follow up
16. **SSRV lawyer reflection form**	Brief form that lawyers complete before and after providing a service
17. **Consultations with SSRV, Paper Giant and Steering Committee**	Semi-structured interviews conducted by M&E Consultant towards end of 2020 with SSRV staff, Steering Committee, Paper Giant
18. **Consultations with sector stakeholders**	Semi-structured interviews conducted by M&E Consultant towards end of 2020 with other system stakeholders to be identified by Steering Committee
19. **Macro data on DSP and Debt matters**	To be confirmed with Steering Committee and investigate: ‣ Trends in National Debt Line calls ‣ Trends in AAT matters ‣ Trends from Senate estimates