



**FEDERATION**  
OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES VIC

**MEETING PEOPLE  
WHERE THEY ARE**

**DELIVERING INTEGRATED  
COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would also like to thank the wider Community Legal Centre (CLC) sector. Several CLCs that have been delivering integrated services for some time shared their models and resources with us. We regret that we were not able to represent CLCs delivering integrated services from the wider sector specifically in this short report. We acknowledge their work and the materials shared with us have shaped and reinforced the core themes generated from consultations.

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### ACRONYMS AND KEY TERMS

AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
CALC	Consumer Action Law Centre
CLC	Community Legal Centre
CIJ	Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT
FKCLC	Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre
FLS	Fitzroy Legal Service
ISF	Integrated Services Fund
LACW	Law and Advocacy Centre for Women
LCCLC	Loddon Campaspe CLC
NACLC	National Association of Community Legal Centres
VLA	Victorian Legal Aid
WLSV	Women's Legal Service Victoria



WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL OWNERS OF COUNTRY AND WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND EMERGING. WE RECOGNISE THEIR CONTINUING CONNECTION TO LAND, WATER AND COMMUNITY. SOVEREIGNTY WAS NEVER CEDED.

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This work has been generously funded by the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

“ IF WE DON'T SUPPORT THE MOST VULNERABLE, MOST ISOLATED, MOST DISENFRANCHISED, MOST IN NEED, THEN WE CANNOT CLAIM THAT OUR SYSTEM IS FAIR AND EQUITABLE. WE HAVE TO ASK OURSELVES, WHAT SORT OF SOCIETY DO WE WANT TO LIVE IN? ”

- COMMUNITY LAWYER

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Clients that use services provided by CLCs often experience layers of disadvantage. People do not experience legal issues in a vacuum; problems can build up and life continues around them. A person may not identify or present with a legal issue, but with another issue, or in another type of setting in which vulnerability is revealed.

Community lawyers recognise the overlapping causes of hardship, such as family breakdown, debt problems, and housing insecurity that are experienced by their clients. They work collaboratively with other community professionals such as social workers, financial counsellors, school communities and health providers to provide holistic support to people experiencing disadvantage to address those overlapping issues.

Community service providers and lawyers partner through a range of different models to better enable them to meet these complex needs.

The Federation commissioned external researchers to:

- ▼ identify key features of community partnerships;
- ▼ profile different models of integration; and
- ▼ document the experience of partners who are delivering integrated services to clients with complex needs.

### WHO SHOULD READ THIS REPORT?

Through its exploration of different approaches to integration, this research report presents key considerations for service providers seeking to explore new integrated services or enhance existing services. It will also be relevant to peak bodies seeking to support the sector to deliver improvements to services offered to the community, and to government funders to inform opportunities to strengthen this work.



# KEY THEMES

A number of key themes emerged from the research, with some clear lessons about facilitators and inhibitors of effective integrated service delivery.

## STRONG PARTNERSHIP PLATFORM



Stakeholders and service providers identified a number of features of effective partnerships that specifically relate to providing integrated services. Strong partnerships are exemplified by an aligned vision; responsiveness to emerging client and community needs; recognition of the complex intersection of marginalisation, trauma and poverty that clients have often experienced; commitment to collaboration and strengthening the partnership; and trust.

✓ FACILITATORS
Formal protocols such as agreements, advisory groups and joint meetings
Dedicated coordinators of the partnership to bridge communication across partnering organisations
Dedicated funding to enable a focused effort on building partnerships
✗ INHIBITORS
Lack of shared vision or commitment of the partners influences levels of trust
Differing funding priorities and emphasis on outputs inhibits the development of quality partnerships
Short-term funding threatens partnership sustainability

## PERSON-CENTRED SUPPORT



Each professional in an integrated service partnership needs to recognise the interplay of legal and other social issues that can disrupt a client’s life. Professionals need to lend their expertise to identifying key decision points in a client’s journey and developing the strategies that best support each individual’s particular needs.

✓ FACILITATORS
Services that are embedded in local communities are best able to respond to particular client needs
Well-developed referral and assessment processes between partners can strengthen the capacity of community professionals to meet the needs of an individual, without requiring them to retell their story to multiple service providers
✗ INHIBITORS
Inadequate professional support and learning opportunities in trauma-informed practice can inhibit the capacity of community professionals to effectively support highly disengaged clients
While a client-centred approach underpins integrated service delivery, a common understanding of the implications of being client-centred may not be shared across all settings.

## INTER-PROFESSIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT



The capacity to recognise and understand the different perspectives that professionals from different disciplines bring to a partnership enhances a service provider’s ability to respond flexibly to a broader range of an individual’s health, social, financial, legal and other needs.

✓ FACILITATORS
Leaders within organisations who champion and model inter-professional learning better enable different professionals to work together
Creative approaches to service delivery emerging from professions across different disciplines working together can have a positive impact on job satisfaction and service provider capacity to more effectively advocate for systemic reform
Leveraging off the strengths of different professions to address clients’ diverse needs facilitates effective service delivery
✗ INHIBITORS
Hierarchies between different professions within a partnership can inhibit transparent collaboration
Time pressures and heavy client caseloads may inhibit formal opportunities for interprofessional learning

## EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE



Integrated service providers valued monitoring and evaluation processes to inform and improve implementation of integrated services and to generate evidence about the effectiveness of those services.

✓ FACILITATORS
Monitoring and evaluation plans provide a framework to measure funding accountability, learning and local level service improvement
The Federation’s Outcomes Measurement Framework supports organisations to contribute to a consistent, state-wide evidence base
Sharing monitoring and evaluation resources with other CLCs delivering integrated services can promote effective service delivery amongst new service models
Client feedback and case studies provide a rich source of evidence about service effectiveness
✗ INHIBITORS
Disparate evaluation approaches to measuring integrated service models’ effectiveness and impact inhibit the potential for meaningful synthesis at the state level
Lack of dedicated resources for CLCs and integrated services to implement sector-wide evaluation tools such as the Federation’s Outcomes Measurement Framework.
The tendency to over-emphasise successes can inhibit the potential for valuable lessons to emerge from understanding failures, setbacks and limitations
Failure to measure the value of the partnership itself, or of information sharing between professionals through secondary consultations inhibits the potential for integrated services to demonstrate the breadth of their social and economic impact

# KEY IMPLICATIONS

Some of the services profiled in this research were just beginning their journey; others had been offering integrated service delivery for several years. Across these diverse experiences, some key implications emerged for service providers, peak bodies and government funders.

## SERVICE PROVIDERS

To demonstrate value for investment in integrated services, service providers need to adapt their monitoring and evaluation approaches to demonstrate the economic, social and cultural value of integrated services. An increased focus on person-centred and trauma-informed practice and on prioritising the coordination of partnerships at the service level will also ensure that diverse professionals working in integrated services can work effectively together to best reach the most disengaged clients.

## PEAK BODIES

Ongoing, sector-wide support from peak bodies to build the monitoring and evaluation capacity of the sector will lead to a robust evidence base about the impact of integrated services and enable integrated services at different stages of development to learn from the successes and setbacks of other organisations to deliver better targeted and more effective support to the community.

## GOVERNMENT FUNDERS

Sustained and flexible government funding mechanisms, and shared accountability across government agencies will harness the potential for service providers to invest in strong, responsive partnerships that better meet the needs of individuals in the communities they service. This requires investment not only in service delivery but also partnership development and maintenance, and effective monitoring and evaluation at a service and sector-wide level.

"

THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IS ON ITS KNEES WITH THE AMOUNT OF NEED. THE REAL AIM IS TO HELP PEOPLE TO HAVE FAIR REPRESENTATION, APPROPRIATE ADVICE, AND SUPPORT THAT ENABLES THEM TO MANAGE THE THINGS THEY NEED TO MANAGE AND NOT END UP IN THE HARD END OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

- COMMUNITY LAWYER

"

# THE COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR – PARTNERING TO ADDRESS COMPLEXITY

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MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

Victoria's Community Legal Centres (CLCs) aim to promote individuals' rights, particularly those at most risk of injustice. For many years now, CLCs have partnered with a range of agencies to provide integrated services to support clients with complex needs. For many of the 48 CLCs in Victoria, integrated practice is synonymous with effective community legal practice.

Clients that use services provided by CLCs often experience layers of disadvantage. People do not experience legal issues in a vacuum; problems can build up and life continues around them. A person may not identify or present with a legal issue, but with another issue, or in another type of setting in which vulnerability is revealed. Community lawyers recognise the overlapping causes of hardship, such as family breakdown, debt problems, and housing insecurity that are experienced by their clients. People experiencing vulnerability are more likely to be exposed to situations that raise legal issues.<sup>1</sup> Legal issues may arise because of a lack of stable housing or homelessness, substance use issues, family violence, financial difficulties or poor physical or mental health.

Yet, people who are experiencing disadvantage have the lowest rate of seeking professional legal assistance than any other group.<sup>2</sup> When they do reach out for support they are likely to present to health, drug and alcohol or other community services for assistance.<sup>3</sup> Staff working with these clients are aware that there are layers of issues the client needs to address, including legal issues, but may feel ill-equipped to support clients with some of their concerns.

CLCs recognise that the social, financial, health and legal needs of clients are often entangled. Addressing the presenting need is important, but it is likely to be insufficient. The individual may be overwhelmed with multiple issues, which may exacerbate stress, avoidance and anxiety. Unresolved issues may snowball out of control, contributing to further distress, and potentially contribute to further legal issues.

In an integrated service delivery model, CLCs partner with another organisation or several organisations. The partnership between organisations is bridged by a common purpose – to support the client to address their range of needs. The partnership is formed because collaboration among professionals with specialist skills (for example, social workers, financial counsellors, lawyers) strengthens their capacity to support clients. Integrated services involve partners working together to tailor a package of services to the individual.

The people that the CLC Sector see are ... people with multiple problems, and if they are [experiencing disadvantage] they will have more than one problem and the problems are interconnected. These clients are up against family violence issues, child protection issues, employment issues, drug and alcohol issues...Integrated [services] are about 'no wrong door'. Whatever your problem we can support YOU. - GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDER

Models of integrated service delivery vary.<sup>4</sup> CLCs may refer clients to a partner organisation to provide health or social support to the client. The CLC may co-locate on a permanent or part-time basis with an organisation and offer support through a multidisciplinary approach in collaboration with other professionals. Alternatively, CLCs may offer legal support to clients identified through outreach programs or services or provide support following referral from other organisations.

Integrated services share a commitment to be responsive to community need, and to advocate for clients and for broader law reform to improve health, social and legal outcomes. CLCs also use strategic casework opportunities as opportunities for further advocacy.<sup>5</sup>

Integration is client-centred, not output driven. Collaboration is a pre-condition for integration, but integration is not required for organisations to collaborate effectively. The potential benefits of integrated service delivery are comprehensiveness in addressing client need, operational efficiencies, and alignment of focus.

As services embedded in their local communities, CLCs and partner organisations are in a unique position to recognise patterns of need that are context-specific or emerging, and identify and enhance localised responses to these needs.



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LEARNINGS FROM DELIVERING INTEGRATED COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES



# WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR INTEGRATED SERVICES?

## EFFECTIVENESS OF REFERRALS

Collaborative ways of working are not new. There is a long history of referral arrangements between organisations, which enable clients to have multiple needs addressed. However, ‘cold’ referrals<sup>6</sup> may not work effectively for clients experiencing a cluster of health, social or legal issues. While the services may be open and welcoming, individuals with chaotic or unsettled life circumstances may fall through the cracks either because they do not feel able to follow through on appointments, or because they may be reticent to explain their story to yet another service provider. In integrated service delivery the service provider is able to facilitate a warm referral on the client’s behalf directly to another professional who may be able to support the client with other needs (for example, legal support, social security or debt issues, or health care). The relationship between the service providers is a conduit for the referral: the trust the client has with the initial service provider is carried into the relationship with the other service provider.

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE

The social and economic value of providing integrated service delivery is clear, for both government and non-government services. A report by the Productivity Commission identified that ‘holistic services have an important and prominent role to play in meeting the legal needs of disadvantaged individuals.<sup>7</sup> ... Legal assistance services can prevent or reduce the escalation of legal problems, which in turn can mean reduced costs to the justice system and lower costs to other taxpayer funded services (in areas such as health, housing and social security payments).’<sup>8</sup> Addressing the legal and social needs of clients with complex needs has an impact on less tangible outcomes such as clients’ experience of stigma, their resilience, and their level of social participation and wellbeing. Integrated service delivery has the potential to halt the cycle of re-presentation to community services, or re-offending.

While integrated service delivery may offer important benefits to clients and to the wider community, there is significant unmet legal need, connected to insufficient availability and capacity of services to meet community demand. The Productivity Commission’s analysis of unmet legal need estimated that “around 17 per cent of the population or just over a third of those with any legal problem experienced some form of unmet legal need”, related to a dispute with a moderate or severe impact on everyday life.<sup>9</sup>

There is a growing evidence base about the efficacy of CLCs and of the role of integrated service delivery, however there is a need to understand how they work in practice, and elements that facilitate or inhibit implementation and sustainability.

# THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The Federation commissioned an external research project to profile how integrated service delivery supports clients with complex needs.

The Federation was particularly interested in the conditions that facilitate or inhibit integrated service delivery to identify opportunities to better support partnerships across the sector.

While a number of CLCs have been working in integrated service settings for many years now, a decision was made to focus on the ten integrated service delivery projects funded through the Integrated Services Fund (2018-19) (see Appendix A), given the scope of the research. A Research Advisory Group (RAG) was established early in the project to provide guidance to the researchers. The membership of the RAG is outlined in Appendix B.

## METHODOLOGY

The research project involved five components.

- 1. Consultation with key stakeholders**, including: over 45 representatives involved in integrated service delivery across the state, the majority of whom were representatives of the ten services funded through the 2018-19 funding round; and 12 representatives from government agencies, funders, and peak bodies. Interviews were semi-structured to elicit views about the role of integrated service delivery, models of integrated service delivery, and existing strengths and challenges of integration.
- 2. Desktop review of relevant literature** about integrated service delivery and partnership approaches;
- 3. Four descriptive case studies** involving visits to the CLC and partner organisations to gain a richer understanding of how the partners work to provide an integrated service;

- 4. Invitation to CLCs** across the broader sector to share their perspectives on service approaches through email submissions and/or by completing a partnership survey<sup>10</sup>; and
- 5. Production of a short film** profiling a client’s experience obtaining support from an integrated service, which can be viewed at: [fcllc.org.au/integrated\\_services\\_fund](http://fcllc.org.au/integrated_services_fund)

This research documented the perspectives of those offering integrated services and stakeholders in the sector, and highlights the potential of CLCs to develop innovative responses to client and community needs. However, it was not an evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency or appropriateness of integrated services.

The research was framed from an advocacy research perspective. While the research is independent, the researchers acknowledge the role of the Federation and integrated services as advocates for clients with complex needs, and as researchers, share a commitment to social justice.

Interviews with stakeholders were recorded with the interviewee’s permission and fully or partially transcribed to facilitate analysis. The researchers compared and contrasted responses to core questions throughout the research process, with the focus of the analysis being on description of the integrated service delivery models, and experiences with integrated service delivery and partnerships. An additional key focus was to explore the conditions that support or inhibit integrated service delivery.<sup>11</sup>

Health services are ill-equipped to respond to [a lot of social problems], but lots of those social problems are problems that lawyers can help with. By embedding legal help into healthcare services and teams, we are better able to respond to the social problems that do underpin, drive, and sometimes cause poor health.

- HEALTH SERVICE WORKER – PARTNER TO CLC

// **WE ARE NOT JUST TRYING  
TO ADDRESS A NEED. WE  
ARE TRYING TO IMPROVE  
THE WAY WE ADDRESS  
NEEDS. WE DO BETTER  
IF WE WORK TOGETHER.**

- COMMUNITY SERVICES WORKER - PARTNER TO CLC



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings from the research are organised around four key themes that highlight the requirements that stakeholders identified as critical to effective integrated service delivery. They are:

- ▼ A strong partnership platform;
- ▼ Person-centred support;
- ▼ Inter-professional respect and understanding; and
- ▼ Evidence-informed practice.

The themes serve as an organising framework for the presentation of the research findings. Examples of practice are included from the ten services funded through the *Integrated Services Fund 2018-19* across Victoria. Facilitators and inhibitors of effective integrated practice are summarised at the end of the discussion of each theme. The final section of the report summarises the findings, and presents implications for community service providers, peak bodies and funders.



# A STRONG PARTNERSHIP PLATFORM

A core feature of integrated approaches is a partnership with other service providers or organisations. Partnership, like the term integration, has multiple meanings and can take various forms.

Partnerships are not an incidental component of an integrated service — they are critical to it. Services that partner with other services do so in order to respond to complexity. Complexity is evident in the issues clients are facing, in the challenges inherent in addressing multiple barriers, and in the complications of service systems. Existing ways of working may be inadequate to support clients with multiple needs.

Each partner must have the courage to explore new and creative ways to work together, and to lead into the discomfort of moving across traditional boundaries and existing ways of working.

- GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDER

## WHAT FACILITATES AND INHIBITS EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS?

✓ FACILITATORS
Formal protocols such as agreements, advisory groups and joint meetings
Dedicated coordinators of the partnership to bridge communication across partnering organisations
Dedicated funding to enable a focused effort on building partnerships
✗ INHIBITORS
Lack of shared vision or commitment of the partners influences levels of trust
Differing funding priorities and emphasis on outputs inhibits the development of quality partnerships
Short-term funding threatens partnership sustainability

## ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

There is considerable literature on the attributes or elements of effective partnerships. Five key attributes of effective partnerships in integrated service delivery were identified from the interviews and consultations undertaken during this research. The five attributes identified are not exhaustive, and mostly complement the concepts in the literature. Interviewees’ descriptions of how their services had managed or struggled with these elements of partnership offer insights for other services seeking to provide integrated service delivery.

The attributes are presented to illustrate their importance to integrated service delivery. The level of commitment to these partnership elements, and to practical actions associated with the elements may strengthen organisational capacity for integrated service delivery.

The five attributes, in no particular order, are:

- ▼ Aligned vision;
- ▼ Responsiveness;
- ▼ Commitment to collaboration;
- ▼ Trust; and
- ▼ A complexity lens

Four of the five attributes reflect relational issues between organisations. Interviewees from partner organisations shared the importance of partnering with organisations: that have aligned vision; that are responsive to the needs of the partners and the clients; that are committed to collaboration; and with which they have a trusting relationship. The fifth attribute—a lens of complexity—is seen as an enabling condition in that it relates to the capacity of integrated services to adapt and respond to emergent needs within the community, and within the partnership.

Each of these attributes is discussed briefly on the following pages, with examples of practice highlighted to illustrate the practical implications.



## ▼ ALIGNED VISION

Partnerships are developed in response to identified community need; partners acknowledge that working together will enhance client outcomes. CLCs engage clients in different contexts (for example, in school settings, in hospitals and in community agencies), sharing a common objective with their partners to support clients. For example, Seniors Rights Victoria and Dementia Australia aim to support older people with their health, social and legal needs. Seniors Rights Victoria's social workers and lawyers partnered with staff from Dementia Australia to reach older people who have a recent diagnosis of dementia and who may be at risk of elder abuse. Community lawyers provide legal advice and support to clients attending Dementia Australia's 'Living with Dementia' program. Integrated service delivery supports the objectives of both organisations and reinforces their organisational missions.

An example of a multi-service partnership also illustrates the importance of an aligned vision among the partners. The services in the partnership share a common goal of addressing injustice faced by clients experiencing family violence. Flemington Kensington Community Legal Centre (FKCLC) partnered with Inner Melbourne Community Legal Service, the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women, St Kilda Legal Service and Flat Out to focus on transparency and accountability of policing in family violence incidents (for example, misidentifying victims of family violence as perpetrators). The partnership's working group provides integrated case management, specialist training, and the primary platform for police complaints analysis and advocacy coordination for the project. Activities such as establishing a working group, and joint planning and deliberations are particularly important to maintain the shared vision in integrated service models with so many partners. An important element of the model was to acknowledge the differing knowledge and skill set of each partner in working towards the common goal.



An example of a partnership between organisations with differing organisational objectives reinforces the importance of partners identifying a common purpose through the partnership. Peninsula Community Legal Centre (PCLC) identified that an increasing number of clients were presenting to them with out of control toll fines. On average, clients had accumulated 87 outstanding enforcement orders. PCLC partnered with ConnectEast, a private toll provider, to explore options to support clients with toll fines and infringements. ConnectEast distributed fliers to toll users who had been issued with an overdue toll invoice to encourage them to attend a tolls clinic offered by PCLC. PCLC advocated for increased use of ConnectEast hardship provisions for clients experiencing financial and social disadvantage. While each service provider has different organisational objectives, they share a commitment to work together to reduce and manage toll fines and debts.

## ▼ RESPONSIVENESS

In integrated service delivery staff recognise that they need to be flexible in the way they respond to client referrals from partner organisations. The capacity to be responsive appears to be influenced by organisational culture and the autonomy and trust between professionals. But, they also need to balance this with other commitments and demands (for example, court appearances, other service delivery or outreach), and within available resources. These other demands may influence an individual's capacity to be as responsive as they would like.

Partners need to respect and understand the requirements of the other professions represented within the partnership. Each partner organisation needs to be aware that there are standards and approaches specific to different professions that will shape the way services are provided to clients.

The 'Sporting Change' project illustrates the importance of responsiveness. Sporting Change involves a partnership between Springvale Monash Legal Service (SMLS) and Pakenham Secondary College. Learnings from a previous

pilot at Narre Warren South College helped shape the adaptation of the approach to other school contexts. Through school-lawyer partnerships, SMLS identified the need to adapt service delivery to the school workplace culture, resource availability and student demographic that is unique to each school and its community. For example, when establishing the partnership with Pakenham Secondary College, SMLS obtained a licence to provide the program in the school and negotiated with school staff to ensure the program was a 'good fit' with the school culture. Embedding these processes involved investment of time by both partners – the school and SMLS and addressed potential risks associated with working on school premises.

Responsiveness requires negotiation. It is difficult to be responsive to the community and to the partnership when service funding is unstable or short-term. The focus is on meeting the output requirements of funders in a bid to secure ongoing funding, and this may limit the partners' capacity to innovate or be responsive to emerging needs.

## ▼ COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATION

Staff working within integrated services value interdisciplinary ways of working to address client needs. The partners of the participating services recognise that partnerships take time. Early stages of collaboration may involve the organisations working to develop a joint MOU or partnership agreement. Leadership appears to be critical to foster meaningful collaboration; signed MOU or protocols are not enough.

Day-to-day operation of the partnership may be between on-the-ground workers who work to maintain the partnership through attending meetings, regular communication, and sharing information.

Some of the partner representatives interviewed in this research noted that there was a risk of neglecting the partnership because of time demands in direct service delivery or secondary consultations. Practical strategies to maintain and strengthen the partnership included attending interdisciplinary team meetings or arranging joint planning meetings.

A clear message from representatives of integrated services was that allocating time to maintain the collaboration that underpins the partnership was critical to its success:

*Once you establish a relationship you have to keep working on it. If you take your foot off the pedal with a partner, you will go backwards.*

- COMMUNITY LAWYER, LONG RUNNING CLC

A community lawyer emphasised the need to balance levels of collaboration with an appreciation of partner resources: the service that is allocated the funding is also likely to assume responsibility for contractual agreements and reporting requirements. With multiple funding streams, the capacity to meet complex reporting requirements may distract from the core work of the partners.



## ▼ TRUST

Trust is key to an effective partnership. A community support worker is unlikely to refer to a partner they do not trust. Similarly, a client is unlikely to follow through with a referral without trust. Trust is earned; it is not a given when organisations make a commitment to partner.

Trust building is important. Staff will not refer if they don't trust us as they are putting themselves on the line when they refer. Trust involves reliability. They need to know we will answer the phone and follow-through, that we are flexible and responsive, and that we will be there every week.

- COMMUNITY LAWYER

Staff within the partnership need to work to build and to maintain trust by being reliable, following up on commitments, and building in time for regular communication. When staff trust each other they may be better able to fulfil their professional requirements with the confidence that the client is receiving support for their other needs.

Some organisations have funded a coordinator to support the partnership, streamline communication processes and identify opportunities for joint planning and review. For example, a Koori Engagement Manager at the Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC) has been instrumental in initiating and coordinating a partnership between CALC and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) to deliver integrated consumer, credit and debt legal services to Victorian Aboriginal communities. Both CLCs involved in that partnership recognised that putting time and energy into coordination would strengthen trust between providers and improve the quality of service experienced by clients.



📷 CALC AND VALS PROJECT AT THE CASEY GATHERING PLACE

A potential issue that may affect the level of trust between partners relates to the perception of level of buy-in or commitment by a partner to the partnership. For example, if one partner is seen to be less invested in the partnership, or appears to be using the partnership as a way to achieve its own objectives trust may be compromised.

Short-term funding also may create pressure on organisations as they are reticent to compromise the existing trust they have with local services.

We will burn bridges in rural communities if we approach one of our local organisations to partner for only a year. We can't say we have a partnership if there is no sharing of resources.

- REGIONAL CLC REPRESENTATIVE



📷 SPORTING CHANGE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SPRINGVALE MONASH LEGAL SERVICE (SMLS) AND PAKENHAM SECONDARY COLLEGE

## ▼ A LENS OF COMPLEXITY

A lens of complexity requires partner agencies to understand the ways in which clients and the services provided to them interact with each other to both enable and constrain outcomes. The focal question becomes, how can the existing structures, relationships, and skill sets be best utilised to improve outcomes for clients?

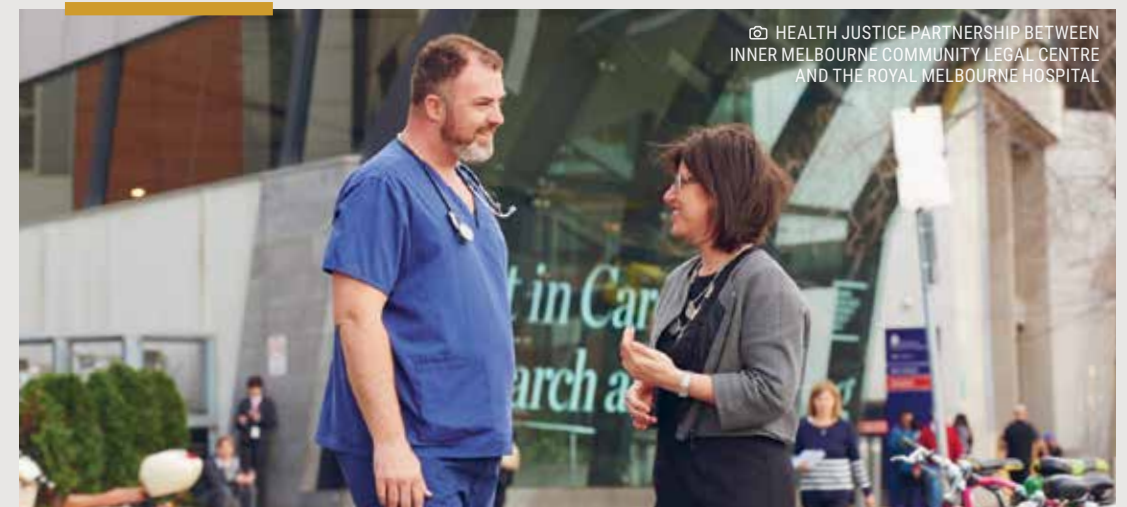
Clients present with legal and other social needs that are often not straightforward. They may have had a history of marginalisation and social exclusion, trauma (including childhood and adult physical, sexual and emotional abuse), poverty and stigmatisation. Their needs may only become apparent over time as the client builds trust with the service provider and begins to share more of their story. Service providers that partner to provide integrated services are comfortable with complexity and acknowledge that each professional's ability to address the presenting client needs is partial. This is not viewed as a limitation, but as an opportunity to identify new ways of working across traditional professional boundaries.

A lens of complexity is useful for understanding services that partner to provide integrated services. In a traditional service system, the roles and responsibilities for each provider are defined and structured by each discipline's standards of practice. There is little room for diversity and local adaptation. In contrast, integrated service delivery offers opportunities to explore creative ways of addressing client needs. Service providers in this research described how CLCs delivering integrated services were able to offer clients flexible support, which may contrast with

a single service that often is more prescriptive in their approach. This is a key strength of integrated service delivery.

The health justice partnership between Inner Melbourne Community Legal Centre and the Royal Melbourne Hospital illustrates how working in collaboration with other service providers contributes to increased accessibility of services for clients and strengthens the capacity to meet complex needs. Many patients who attend Royal Melbourne Hospital for health care have multiple social, health and legal issues. Some clients in the hospital are at risk of homelessness and require referrals to a range of other services. The health justice partnership equips staff to respond to the complexities their patients are experiencing, as lawyers support staff and patients to better recognise legal issues and pathways to legal help.

Community lawyers are able to meet with clients at their bedside if required. Not only do social workers refer patients directly to the lawyer, but the social worker and other hospital staff are able to seek legal information from the legal team through secondary consultations. These consultations enable the staff to undertake critical preliminary work with the client to prepare them for appointments with a lawyer. For example, to recognise that they have a legal issue in the first instance, or to encourage clients to meet with the lawyer. The integrated service uses opportunities created by the setting (in this case the health service) to identify and respond to clients' health and legal needs.



📷 HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INNER MELBOURNE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND THE ROYAL MELBOURNE HOSPITAL



The five attributes of effective partnerships identified through the research highlight opportunities and risks.

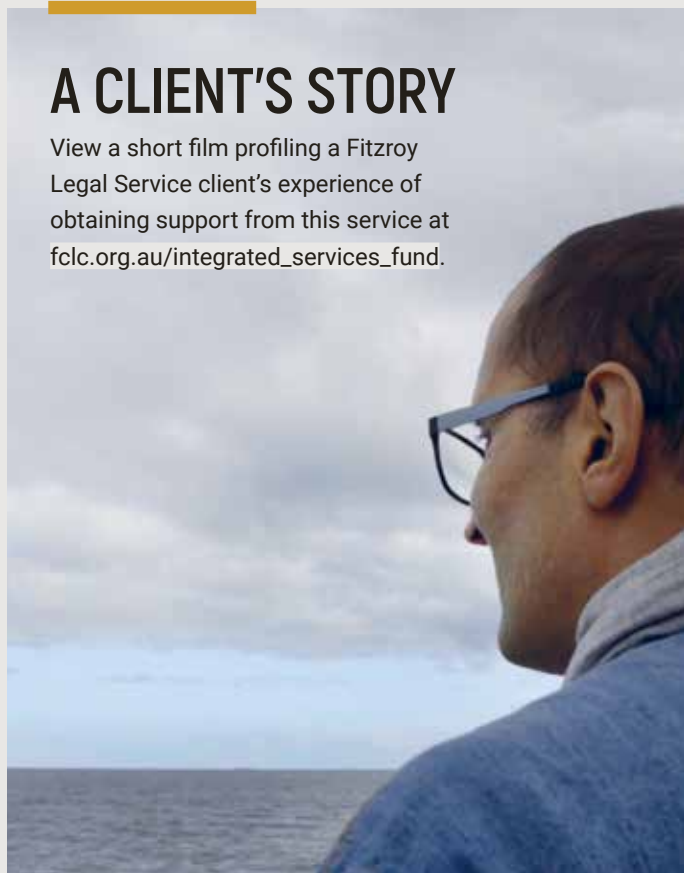
Even though partnering is appealing in principle, the practice is more complicated. The investment of time and resources required to partner effectively necessitates that more attention be paid to establishing the platform for effective partnering, not just assuming this as a given.

Partnerships are not always an easy option for community services, and not all partnerships work. In the early stages there are likely to be teething issues that need to be addressed if the partnership is to work. Partners may need to agree to disband the partnership where additional benefits for the services and for the community are not being realised.

The potential opportunities and risks inherent in partnerships suggest a need for ongoing review of the partnership. An effective partnership will strengthen service providers' capacity to support client outcomes. Because effective partnerships are so critical to integrated service delivery, sufficient time and resources need to be allocated to maintain the partnership. Funding to the sector has focused on service delivery rather than on support of the mechanisms (such as, partnerships) that enable effective service delivery.

## A CLIENT'S STORY

View a short film profiling a Fitzroy Legal Service client's experience of obtaining support from this service at [fclc.org.au/integrated\\_services\\_fund](http://fclc.org.au/integrated_services_fund).



## CASE STUDY: TIME TO CARE – DRUG OUTREACH LAWYER EXTENSION FROM CITY OF YARRA TO DAREBIN

### PARTNERS: FITZROY LEGAL SERVICE, UNITING REGEN, AND YOUTH SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

Clients with alcohol and drug dependence may have legal issues related to their substance use. They may be engaged in theft or similar activities to fund their use, and their alcohol or drug dependence may result in unstable housing or homelessness, financial and health issues.

The partnership between Fitzroy Legal Service (FLS), Uniting ReGen and Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) replicates a successful integrated service that has been offered in the City of Yarra for over twenty years. A drug outreach lawyer from FLS works with YSAS and Uniting ReGen workers in the Darebin community to provide legal support to clients. YSAS is a leading youth health organisation that works with vulnerable young people affected by alcohol, drugs, mental health issues and social disconnection. Uniting ReGen is the leading alcohol and other drug treatment and education agency of Uniting Care.

Short-term funding through the *Integrated Services Fund 2018-19* has enabled the partners to identify what has worked well in the City of Yarra and embed some formal processes and protocols into the new partnership in the City of Darebin. Partner organisations identified the local needs of the community and differences in context between Fitzroy and Darebin, before commencing service delivery, and developed a service model that would address the specific demography and characteristics of clients. For example, the Darebin community has fewer public transport options than Fitzroy, which means flexibility around outreach is particularly important. Patterns of drug use are also different in Darebin, which impacts on client needs relevant to service delivery.

An experienced community development worker has been employed to support and coordinate the partnership and facilitate shared planning meetings. The role helps support regular communication between the partner organisations and facilitates understanding of professional roles across the partnership.

An outreach lawyer is physically located one day per week at Uniting ReGen, working with YSAS workers to support young people, providing outreach support, and participating in team meetings.

Clients are referred by the drug and alcohol counsellors to the drug outreach lawyer if they are identified as requiring legal assistance. Their existing relationship with the counsellors facilitates referral to the lawyer; the lawyer 'borrows on the trust' established in the primary counselling relationship. Sometimes referral is face-to-face as the counsellor may directly introduce the lawyer to the client. Other times the referral to the lawyer will be made with the client's permission, and the lawyer will then call the client to suggest a meeting to discuss their legal needs. The clients maintain their engagement with the drug and alcohol service, and get their legal issues addressed. The drug outreach lawyer works collaboratively with the drug outreach care team to understand the complexities of client circumstances. His engagement with clients has been in an environment where they feel comfortable. When clients feel supported through court and civil law processes, they are likely to experience less anxiety and stress, and address their legal issues earlier on in the process—avoiding further unnecessary stress for individuals, and unnecessary pressure on the justice system.

The drug and alcohol workers have a relationship with the client. They then vouch for the legal service. Understandably [the individuals we work with] often have very negative experiences with the criminal justice system, and they would be reluctant to step through a lawyer's door to get help on their own. The partnership is a conduit for working with them. It's a softer landing for them entering the legal space as they know we have an understanding of where they are coming from.

- CLC DRUG OUTREACH LAWYER





# PERSON-CENTRED SUPPORT – “A SHIFT FROM WHAT’S WRONG WITH YOU, TO WHAT’S HAPPENED TO YOU?”

The need to be client or person-centred was identified by many partner representatives as core to delivering integrated services. This means listening carefully to the clients’ stories, and identifying the decision points and strategies that will best support them.

While each professional has specialist expertise to support the client, the focus is on the client rather than on delivery of a particular service. A community lawyer explained the importance of focusing on the client’s needs, rather than providing a designated service:

The legal issue is only part of the story. If we do not address other issues, we are basically communicating this message to them, ‘We are here today to address your legal need. ... Let’s just sort this out and then you can get on with your life.’ It’s ridiculous and we know that they [the client] will be back if we do not support them with their other issues.

-COMMUNITY LAWYER

## WHAT FACILITATES AND INHIBITS PERSON-CENTRED SUPPORT?

✓ FACILITATORS
Services that are embedded in local communities are best able to respond to particular client needs
Well-developed referral and assessment processes between partners can strengthen the capacity of community professionals to meet the needs of an individual, without requiring them to retell their story to multiple service providers
✗ INHIBITORS
Inadequate professional support and learning opportunities in trauma-informed practice can inhibit the capacity of community professionals to effectively support highly disengaged clients
While a client-centred approach underpins integrated service delivery, a common understanding of the implications of being client-centred may not be shared across all settings.

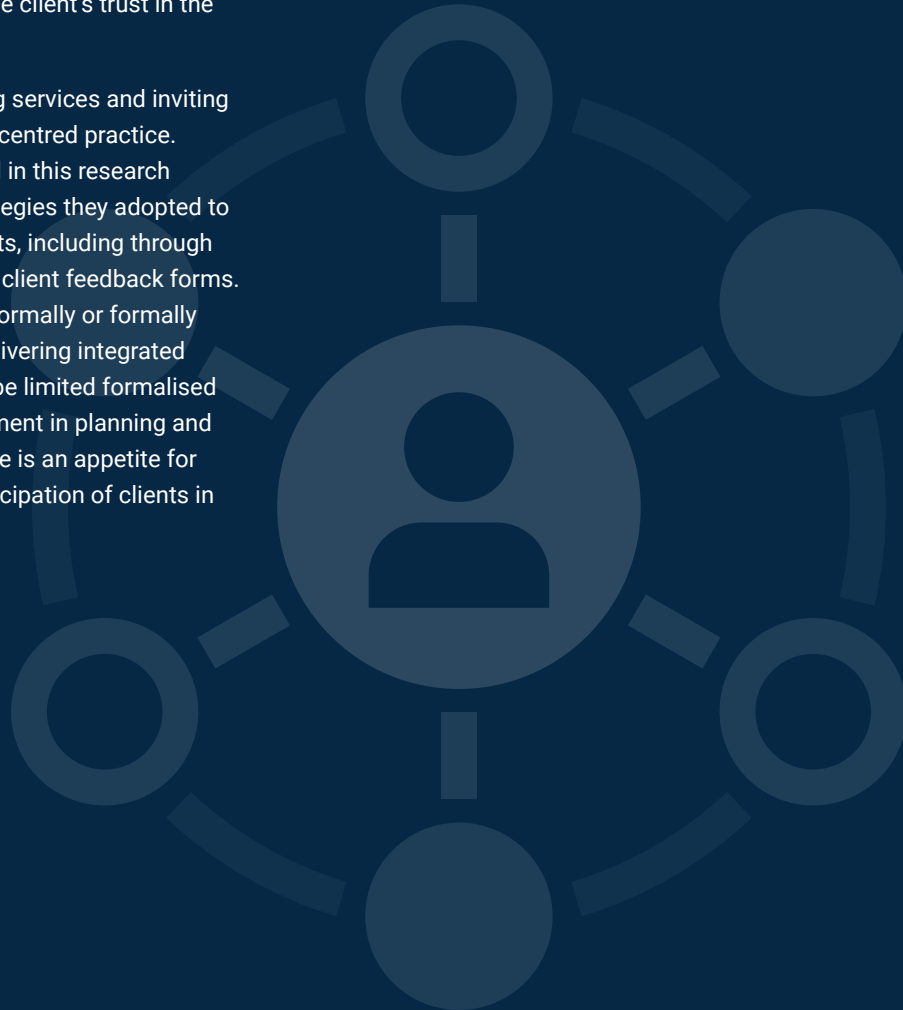
a single issue is unlikely to address other issues that the client is experiencing. Although clients may appear to be resistant, difficult, unmotivated or challenging, these responses may be strategies adopted to manage the accumulative stress of trauma. Unless the social needs of clients are addressed, their legal issues are likely to recur. Integrated service delivery provides a way for professionals to work adaptively to support the client.

Person-centred practice means that the professional is attuned to what has happened to a person, rather than looking only at the behaviour and the presenting issue. It requires knowledge and skills about the impact of trauma. A community lawyer interviewed highlighted the importance of thinking beyond narrow professional boundaries, and listening deeply to the story the client is sharing, realising that the story may shift and become more layered as the client’s trust in the service provider grows.

Involving clients in planning services and inviting feedback supports person-centred practice. Integrated services profiled in this research identified a number of strategies they adopted to obtain feedback from clients, including through convening focus groups or client feedback forms. While client feedback is informally or formally collected by most CLCs delivering integrated services, there appears to be limited formalised and ongoing client involvement in planning and co-design of services. There is an appetite for increasing the level of participation of clients in

service planning, in a manner that is practical and appropriately resourced. Some community services have formal consumer planning and feedback mechanisms (for example, hospitals); CLCs partnering with health services need to be mindful of existing networks and groups to avoid duplication.

The really disengaged client is the most disadvantaged, and their stories are harder to tell because they are not telling their story. My role is to tell that story and represent them. I would not see these clients if it wasn’t for the partnership. -CLC DRUG OUTREACH LAWYER



# CASE STUDY: CLIENT-CENTRED AND TRAUMA-INFORMED A GENDERED APPROACH TO WOMEN IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

## PARTNERS: LAW AND ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR WOMEN AND RMIT'S CENTRE FOR INNOVATIVE JUSTICE

The Law and Advocacy Centre for Women (LACW) is the only legal service in Victoria that has a dedicated focus on providing gender-specific legal services to women who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system. In many cases women are at risk of criminalisation because of social, health and family challenges that they experience because of entrenched disadvantage and family violence.

RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice (CIJ) aims to expand the capacity of the justice system to meet the diverse needs of the community. The centre undertakes research and evaluation, advocates for law reform, and provides education and supervision for law, financial counselling and social work students. Students complete clinical placements at LACW, which builds their understanding of the support needs of criminalised women.

LACW and CIJ partner to provide an integrated service to women who are imprisoned, or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Most of the legal work undertaken by LACW is criminal defence advocacy. A social worker from CIJ works at LACW three days per week, providing dedicated support to clients referred from lawyers at LACW and supervising students on placement. Most clients' initial contact with LACW is with a lawyer - some women are on remand at the women's prison and some on bail in the community. The lawyer makes referrals to the social worker based on an assessment of the level of need or vulnerability. While most of LACW's clients would benefit from social work support, there is a waitlist for case management support due to limited resources.

The combination of social and legal support can influence sentencing decisions and provide a compelling basis to the court that the client is addressing the underlying causes of their criminal charges. In some circumstances, the court will agree to adjourn the matter for a short period of time to allow the client to engage more fully with social work support, or to address other health or social issues that are influencing their capacity to address their legal issues. Addressing the complex support needs of criminalised women has the potential to reduce further contact with the justice system and supports people with less tangible issues such as social exclusion, stigma and marginalisation. A community lawyer explained that the approach to working with clients models a focus on self-efficacy and choice:

(We need to) understand that addressing one issue may not be their priority, but (to communicate to them) we will be here when you want to, and (we will) have the space to deal with the other issues. It's not being 'done to them.' They are an engaged and active participant in the steps taken, and they've been given a fair, balanced understanding of what their choices are and what the implications are. - COMMUNITY LAWYER

The partnership contributes to the objectives of—and is highly valued by—both organisations.

📷 LACW AND RMIT CENTRE FOR INNOVATIVE JUSTICE PROJECT TEAM MEMBER.

# A CLIENT'S STORY AS TOLD BY ONE OF THE TEAM MEMBERS

This client was extremely vulnerable; she was homeless, disconnected from her children which was traumatic, she had a history of sexual assault and... family violence... mental health issues... post-traumatic stress disorder... acquired brain injury... and physical health concerns...

The lawyer and social worker were working together to support this person. Although not serious, the criminal charges meant that she was at risk of going to prison and that was putting her under a lot of stress as well.

Initially it was a matter of putting in place the support needed simply to enable the client to be well enough to provide instructions. Once this basic level of assistance was provided, the social worker then set about putting in place longer-term plans for ongoing services that the client had previously struggled to engage with.

When the court date arrived, the social worker provided a detailed support letter to the court outlining the services that had been put in place, and noting that despite there being lengthy waitlists for specialists support, the client was starting to attend initial appointments and was engaging well. The lawyer... asked the magistrate for an adjournment... so the woman could continue her positive engagement with the services that the social worker had arranged.

The magistrate was satisfied that appropriate supports were in place and said, "Well she's already engaged with everyone that she needs to, so let's get it out of here," and the charges were dealt with in a way that enabled her to continue with this support.

Not only was it a successful legal outcome, with the client avoiding a prison term, but more importantly, the client received support for the underlying causes of her legal issues and therefore was diverted from further entanglement in the criminal justice system stemming from unmet support needs.



# INTERPROFESSIONAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

Partnerships provide opportunities for interprofessional respect and understanding of roles. Interprofessional learning is not necessarily about learning new skills from other service providers, although several interviewees pointed to interdisciplinary learning. Representatives of integrated services highlighted the importance of understanding the roles, scope of practice and professional requirements of professions within the integrated service.

Both roles are separate roles, but the connection is the client  
- ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG WORKER – PARTNER TO CLC

There are numerous examples of inter-professional learning within integrated services. In the LACW and CIJ partnership, lawyers within CIJ formalised reflective practice into the law curriculum as a result of its centrality in social work practice.

## WHAT FACILITATES AND INHIBITS INTERPROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

✓ FACILITATORS
Leaders within organisations who champion and model inter-professional learning better enable different professionals to work together
Creative approaches to service delivery emerging from professions across different disciplines working together can have a positive impact on job satisfaction and service provider capacity to more effectively advocate for systemic reform
Leveraging off the strengths of different professions to address clients’ diverse needs facilitates effective service delivery
✗ INHIBITORS
Hierarchies between different professions within a partnership can inhibit transparent collaboration
Time pressures and heavy client caseloads may inhibit formal opportunities for interprofessional learning

For Social Security Rights Victoria, working together with the Financial and Consumer Rights Council enhances the capability of financial counsellors to address social security issues experienced by their clients and extends the capability of social security lawyers to respond to finance and debt issues. Working from an advocacy framework has enhanced that partnership, and there is a focus on mutual learning and professional respect:

We have financial counsellors using knowledge they've developed for the benefit of other clients and future clients. This results in client needs being more effectively met. Waiving a client's debt through the legal system is greatly enhanced through working with financial counsellors who can provide an assessment and report (as to legal merit) on the financial situation of the client. -COMMUNITY LAWYER

The knowledge that the client's health, social, legal and other needs are being addressed allows each professional group to focus on their role in the partnership. If other services are not available, clients will often not be asked the relevant questions. CLCs in this research had confidence that their partner had the knowledge and skills to support clients. A community lawyer commented:

The pressure is taken off as you know these other issues are being addressed. As a lawyer you can listen with empathy, but if you don't have the expertise to address the issues, nothing changes. -COMMUNITY LAWYER

Many CLCs have a history of working collaboratively with professionals from other disciplines. While not one of the ten partnerships funded under the Integrated Services Fund 2018-19, West Heidelberg Community Legal Service is a small generalist practice that has been providing an integrated service within the City of Banyule for over 40 years. When the CLC merged with Banyule Community Health in 2014 it became a program within the health service working alongside other programs. One of the lawyers provides an example of the

benefit of collaborative problem solving that can be realised by working closely with colleagues within the service:

In our service we were aware that parents were often coming to legal consultations with their children, which in some cases wasn't really appropriate. The early childhood education team and I started having a conversation about it with the question focusing our discussion, "how can we support clients with children to get the most out of our service?"... That led to a new approach we are trialling, where we jointly support the client and children. The early childhood team spend time with the children in play and learning activities, while we are working with the client. -COMMUNITY LAWYER

Interprofessional understanding is unlikely to occur within a context of competition or hierarchy. The ability of different professions to work well together can be hampered by different perspectives arising from professional terminology, values and beliefs, ethical and practice standards.<sup>12</sup>

When you do integrated practice you learn different skills. It's hard to know what a family violence advocate would do or a social worker would do but you see it in practice and see the value of it and what could look different. When we don't know, it's harder to understand why we would work that way. -COMMUNITY LAWYER



## CASE STUDY: INCREASING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN VICTORIA

### PARTNERS: CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE AND VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE

Consumer and debt issues were identified as priority areas of legal need in a 2013 report on the Civil and Family Law Needs of Indigenous Victorians.<sup>14</sup> However, a lot of Aboriginal people do not seek legal help for these issues, either because they are not aware of their rights, or because other intersecting legal or social issues such as criminal law proceedings, or family violence are being addressed with higher priority.<sup>15</sup>

The Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC) increased its capacity to reach Aboriginal communities across the state by appointing a Koori Engagement Manager, whose role focuses on building community engagement and fostering effective partnerships with key stakeholders, including Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations and the Aboriginal community. Formally partnering with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) was the next step to enhancing the existing relationship between the two organisations. They joined to deliver consumer, credit and debt legal services to Victorian Aboriginal communities, building on a formal MOU and referral pathways that were already in place.

The integrated service provides a multifaceted approach to service delivery and advocacy. A lawyer employed by VALS, who is also embedded in the CALC team once a week, works with other CALC lawyers to resolve individual consumer credit and debt issues facing Aboriginal clients. Cases are evenly allocated between the organisations for resolution.

At a broader level, the employment of a policy officer within CALC, as part of the campaign team, identifies and escalates

systemic issues that are identified by VALS' consumer lawyer as having a negative impact on Aboriginal communities.

Victorian Aboriginal communities know about legal services when they come in crisis because they've been charged...but linkages with consumer, credit and debt lawyers helps communities exercise their rights in an area of law they are not as familiar with... Companies or businesses have not always done the right thing and community have the right to access justice and gain compensation...My clients have said to me, 'I can't believe it, we are getting the banks! I didn't know this could happen - blackfella's winning!' - COMMUNITY LAWYER

Community engagement activities are organised in areas of high need. These activities build on existing programs that are well established and popular within each community. The Koori Engagement Manager from CALC works with VALS Client Service Officers to ensure community events are well promoted. These community events enhance community access to services, and provide a forum for issues and concerns to be documented systemically. The partnership enhances staff capacity to address legal and social issues, but also supports service provision that is more holistic and culturally appropriate.

It's giving lawyers the space to change the way they [work] ... they understand what it means to go out and meet with people... they have built rapport and broken down those barriers that exist between communities and the justice system. - COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE REPRESENTATIVE

## A CLIENT'S STORY

Allan (name changed), a single father of two, sought assistance from VALS after struggling for around six years to repay a car loan. Allan had purchased a car from a car yard in 2012 using linked credit of over \$36,000. From enquiries that VALS assisted Allan to make, it appears that the finance provider failed to conduct an accurate and robust financial suitability assessment before giving the loan to Allan. Furthermore, it appeared that two types of unnecessary car insurance had been sold to Allan (thereby increasing the loan amount) without his knowledge or understanding and in arguable breach of the insurance laws.

The financial strain placed on Allan became far greater when he lost his job about a year after obtaining the loan. Allan would sometimes go without food just so he could meet the car repayments. The car was finally voluntarily repossessed in 2018. Because the sale of the car was not enough to cover the outstanding loan repayments, Allan remained in debt to the bank and he continued to struggle under the weight of the alleged debt until VALS was able to provide some relief in the form of legal advice and representation. With the assistance of Consumer Action, VALS helped Allan obtain the documents he needed to understand what happened, and negotiated on Allan's behalf before making a complaint to the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA) claiming responsible lending and other legal breaches. The complaint settled when the bank offered to waive Allan's alleged debt and pay Allan compensation for the fees and charges he had paid. The insurance company also agreed to refund the premiums paid along with penalty interest. In total, Allan was repaid approximately \$27,000. This outcome has allowed Allan to support his family financially and has improved Allan's feelings of financial security as he had previously been struggling on Centrelink payments.<sup>13</sup>



📷 CALC AND VALS PROJECT, RUMBALARA INFORMATION NIGHT



# EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE

Organisations involved in the partnerships participating in this research valued **evaluation**. For integrated services, evaluation is useful in informing and improving implementation, and for generating an evidence base about program effectiveness.

## WHAT FACILITATES AND INHIBITS EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE?

✓ FACILITATORS
Monitoring and evaluation plans provide a framework to measure funding accountability, learning and local level service improvement
The Federation's Outcomes Measurement Framework supports organisations to contribute to a consistent, state-wide evidence base
Sharing monitoring and evaluation resources with other CLCs delivering integrated services can promote effective service delivery amongst new service models
Client feedback and case studies provide a rich source of evidence about service effectiveness
✗ INHIBITORS
Disparate evaluation approaches to measuring integrated service models' effectiveness and impact inhibit the potential for meaningful synthesis at the state level
Lack of dedicated resources for CLCs and integrated services to implement sector-wide evaluation tools such as the Federation's Outcomes Measurement Framework
The tendency to over-emphasise successes can inhibit the potential for valuable lessons to emerge from understanding failures, setbacks and limitations
Failure to measure the value of the partnership itself, or of information sharing between professionals through secondary consultations inhibits the potential for integrated services to demonstrate the breadth of their social and economic impact

Quality evaluation can:

- ▼ determine the effectiveness of services in reaching clients with complex needs;
- ▼ document outcomes for clients to inform planning for different types of client need;
- ▼ inform the continued improvement of programs; and
- ▼ generate evidence that can be used to inform value for money assessment of integrated services over time.

All integrated services profiled in our research indicated that they had developed a monitoring and evaluation plan. Services gather and report qualitative and quantitative data to document processes and report on outcomes. Client feedback and service level feedback was a core element of most evaluations. Many CLCs developed logic maps or theory of change diagrams with partners to clarify outcomes of the service. For some, the process itself was useful not only for shaping the evaluation, but in improving shared ownership of outcomes between partners.

Some partnership projects have adapted effective evaluation mechanisms and tools from other complementary projects and are using consistent measures to generate a strong evidence base across multiple services over time. For example, Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre and Inner Melbourne Community Legal have a strong history of monitoring and evaluation, with a dedicated specialist role in evaluation and have both developed tools and measures to track clients over time, and to communicate the outcomes of the service.

Good examples of evaluation measures used over time exist in several services and potentially could be shared with other partnerships to reduce duplication of effort. Several organisations expressed their willingness to share evaluation methods and approaches with other CLCs.

*We use evaluation evidence to learn, to be accountable and to establish an evidence base for our work. We are nothing without it.*  
- COMMUNITY SERVICE

In 2017 the Federation developed an Outcomes Measurement Framework to guide monitoring and evaluation across the sector. The framework was the result of 18 months of consultation across the sector and includes tools to support CLCs in generating an evidence base. Dedicated resources are required to implement these tools and reporting mechanisms within individuals CLCs, and it is envisaged that the framework and the tools will need to be adapted for use by those CLCs delivering integrated services. For example, integrated services may require support in evaluating governance and partnership outcomes in addition to direct service delivery. An audit of existing capacity may be useful to establish the basis for further work.





## CASE STUDY: BUILDING ON EVIDENCE OF WHAT WORKS: INTEGRATED CLC IN REGIONAL VICTORIA

### PARTNERS: LODDON CAMPASPE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE AND MARYBOROUGH DISTRICT HEALTH SERVICE

Downturns in agriculture, manufacturing and rail, and high levels of unemployment have resulted in many Maryborough residents experiencing disadvantage. Maryborough's population and location between the major centres of Ballarat and Bendigo means that many community services are 'drive in and drive out', which influences accessibility, continuity of service provision, and trust within the community.

Maryborough District Health Service (MDHS) has a reputation within the community as a one-stop-shop; a community hub for health and social issues. Many of the clients who use the health service have a range of health, social and legal needs. However, it can be very challenging for individuals living in the region to address their legal needs. The Court House was closed between January and May 2019, and the Registry is also only open two days per week, which significantly impacts accessibility. Many clients do not have access to a car, or a licence; buses are few and far between and there are lengthy delays for individuals in getting to other towns.

The Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre (LCCLC) joined with MDHS to offer an integrated social work and legal service to support clients experiencing disadvantage. A therapeutic justice social worker (TJ social worker) makes referrals and schedules legal advice consultations

through LCCLC for people presenting with health and legal needs, and attends the Maryborough Magistrates Court to provide support for clients. A dedicated room within the health service is available for legal consultations. The referral process goes both ways: the lawyers also use the TJ social worker to engage clients with other health and support services, many of which are provided through MDHS.

This integrated model builds on earlier work the LCCLC and partner agencies have undertaken, including the Bendigo Health Justice Partnership, the Therapeutic Justice Project (TJP), and the Tipping the Scales project. Involvement in these projects had made the partner organisations aware of local needs in the area, and assisted aligning the service to identified local needs.

Monitoring and evaluation has been incorporated into planning for all key initiatives, led by an experienced evaluator employed by the LCCLC.

The partner organisations are part of a regular service providers network, which convenes monthly meetings, strengthening service providers' knowledge of what other services do and maintaining momentum for the continued work of the partnership. In regional areas this is a particular strength as there are a number of strong networks that have

developed over time. The group shares ideas for addressing some of the more complex issues in the community through discussion, collaboration and joint problem-solving. One of the community lawyers explained:

It's been a good conduit in terms of getting to know the services that people might refer or be referred to, in terms of the client base. We've been to doctors and we've been to schools. We have been to ... other agencies. This is a strength of a regional centre where relationships and networks are strong, which facilitates referral. If you were in the city you wouldn't even get your client in to see someone without an existing relationship within a reasonable timeframe, whereas here we can build on those networks.

- COMMUNITY LAWYER

The lawyers meet with the TJ social worker from MDHS and the Tipping the Scales community development worker every week to discuss existing clients. Team meetings are held bi-monthly with the entire staff team—lawyers, TJ social workers, a community development worker, the Principal Lawyer (who manages both the Tipping the Scale and Therapeutic Justice Partnership projects), and the monitoring and evaluation specialist—to facilitate communication, and clarify roles and responsibilities.



# SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This research has identified a range of approaches to integrated service delivery. The themes and examples illustrate lessons learned from partnering to support clients' needs.

Some of the services examined in this research were just beginning their journey; others had been offering integrated service delivery for several years. Effective partnerships have the potential to extend services that support the most vulnerable Victorians, but they require long-term commitment and sustained resourcing to maximise successful outcomes for clients, and for the partner organisation.

The legal assistance sector in Australia is modelled around throughput, and that's having bums on seats, and seeing clients walk through the door. And that's one of the key challenges for services that are being funded; they are not being funded to scope and build effective partnerships. - GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDER

Short-term grants or funding provide opportunities for services to strengthen existing partnerships, and scale or replicate services in new contexts. For example, SMLS received short-term funding to establish a partnership with Pakenham College to deliver a legal education program tailored for students, replicating a successful collaboration with another school in delivering the program; and FLS used short-term funding to establish a new drug outreach lawyer service in the City of Darebin, replicating its successful model in the City of Yarra. However, reliance on short-term funding poses a level of risk to the integrated service. The need to pursue short-term grants creates a level of instability within the service, influences continuity within staff roles and relationships, and impacts on the cost of integrated service delivery.

Partnerships that have stood the test of time may be more effective and efficient in their delivery of services, because they have had the time to 'bed down' processes that support the partnership. Newer partnerships may still be working through the logistics of the relationships. The stage and structure of the partnership should be taken into account when assessing partnership and client outcomes.

The research highlights a number of implications for community service providers, for peak bodies and for government funders. These are presented briefly below. They are framed not as prescriptions, but to inform further conversation and action.

© MARYBOROUGH THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE PROJECT TEAM OUTSIDE THE MARYBOROUGH COURT



## A CLIENT'S STORY

### AS TOLD BY ONE OF THE TEAM MEMBERS

We worked with a mother who was charged with a breach of an intervention order and unlawful assault against her partner. The client was in a complex family violence dynamic, where she had been the victim of violence for many years, until she then also began to use violence against her abuser. The TJP lawyer was able to adjourn the mother's matter, pending her engaging with various social supports to deal with her ice addiction, family violence and mental health issues. At the same time, DHHS removed the children and placed them in out of home care due to the family violence incidents. The social worker was able to arrange and coordinate all of the social support services that the mother needed, to address her social issues including: alcohol and other drugs treatment and counselling, family violence specific counselling and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy to address trauma and mental health issues.

The TJP also advocated with DHHS to have Care Team meetings in Maryborough, ensuring that all the services who were engaged with the mother, attended those meetings to work in collaboration. The mother engaged well with services and the children were returned to her care on a 6 month Family Preservation Order. The mother has a family violence intervention order in place against her former partner and the TJP has provided advice about obtaining a Parenting Plan for ongoing child contact arrangements. The mother went on to receive an undertaking for her criminal matters without conviction. Without a coordinated approach to the mothers' social issues, that were leading to her interact with the justice system, it's unlikely that the outcome for the mother and children would have been as positive.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

### 1. IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO DEMONSTRATE VALUE FOR INVESTMENT:

Demand for services is high and current funding does not adequately address community need. Services need to demonstrate the economic, social and cultural value of integrated services to mount a compelling case for funding in the longer term.

Services will need to build on existing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (for example at the local and state level) to ensure the evidence base is strengthened. The Federation has a key role to play in supporting monitoring and evaluation through the Outcomes Measurement Framework, and capacity building across the sector.

### 2. PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR PERSON-CENTRED PRACTICE:

Person-centred practice appears to be a key principle underpinning integrated services. Associated with this is the need for diverse professionals who work in integrated services to possess the knowledge and skills in trauma informed practice. Opportunities for further professional learning for staff who work with integrated services may be required, particularly strategies to support very disengaged or disenfranchised clients.

### 3. IMPROVE COORDINATION OF INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:

Coordination at the service level provides additional support to the partnership and may streamline administrative and professional requirements. A dedicated role may ensure that priority is given to building and sustaining the partnership.

## PEAK BODIES

### 4. SUPPORT THE SECTOR TO BUILD A ROBUST EVIDENCE BASE:

The Federation released an Outcomes Measurement Framework in 2017 to provide guidance to the sector on monitoring and evaluation. It is envisaged that improved evaluation across CLCs will generate a robust evidence base about the impact of CLCs. Services have different levels of capacity and resources to implement monitoring and evaluation.

Continued support by peak bodies and at the organisation level is critical in progressing implementation. Practical support that may be offered may include capacity building in the form of professional development workshops, and resources to support evaluation. Existing integrated services with particular strengths in evaluation could be resourced to work with peak bodies to take the lead in supporting the sector.

### 5. CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE FOR INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:

There is a growing evidence base about the effectiveness of integrated service delivery across a range of sectors. There was strong support for integration from all stakeholders that participated in this research. The Federation has a key role to play in coordinating effort across integrated CLCs, and an important role in advocating for their work.

## GOVERNMENT FUNDERS AND PHILANTHROPIC ORGANISATIONS

### 6. RESOURCE PARTNERSHIPS:

Partnerships are key to integrated practice. Interviewees in this research indicated that the partnership should be recognised, resourced and reviewed as a critical component in contracts and funding. Partnerships take time to build, and time and resources to maintain.

Allocating funding to the development of partnership resources (for example, tools to develop MOU, licence agreements, identifying scope of practice, monitoring and quality processes) is likely to support community organisations to lay appropriate foundations for integrated practice. Ongoing funding is also required to maintain and sustain partnerships. It may be equally important to fund coordination, support and advocacy at the state level to bring together the work across the sector, and continue advocacy for integrated services.

### 7. SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY:

While short-term or one-off funding may enable projects to be launched, and approaches trialled, it limits the capacity to build relationships, trust and continuity, which are key to successful partnerships. CLCs have become proficient at tempering change from insecure funding, but uncertainty inhibits innovation. Uncertainty about whether funding will be renewed affects providers' ability to attract and retain staff, which in turn may negatively affect service delivery and client outcomes. Stable and longer-term funding may facilitate continuity in service delivery and staffing within CLCs delivering integrated services. The implementation of flexible funding models that support innovation, nurture and extend promising practices and prioritise learning for improvement and accountability has the potential to extend the capacity and reach of services.

### 8. DEVELOP SHARED FUNDING MODELS:

The current funding streams for CLCs delivering integrated services are narrow, often aligned within a single government department. Shared funding models and shared accountability across government agencies (for example, health, child protection, justice, and education) represents an explicit commitment at the macro level of the potential value of integrated service delivery.

Funding from government partners at the macro level is required to support partnerships occurring at an organisation level so that there is equal buy-in from different partner organisations due to shared levels of resourcing and mutual recognition of the importance of integrated service delivery.

### 9. SUPPORT SERVICE AND CLIENT LEVEL MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

Funding and reporting requirements will ideally support accountability and learning about what works, where it works (and what doesn't work) in integrated practice.

The direct casework, secondary consultations and advocacy involved in integrated services needs to be captured in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Contractual and reporting requirements that are appropriate to the level of funding and risk is required.



# CONCLUSION

This research has highlighted the components of integrated service delivery with reference to the ten CLCs delivering integrated services with partner organisations as part of the Integrated Services Fund 2018-19. Examples from the wider CLC sector have also been included where relevant, either to highlight principles that underpin their work, or to illustrate examples from practice.

The CLC sector has for many years recognised the importance of integrated services for clients with complex needs. However, funding for integrated practice has often focused on outputs of service delivery, and neglected the importance of funding and supporting an effective partnership platform.

**Integrated service delivery requires attention be paid to the partnership as well as to outputs and outcomes of service delivery. There is a need to acknowledge and fund the partnership as a component of service delivery, not just as an adjunct to it.**

CLCs will continue to work collaboratively with other agencies to address client needs. And, as part of their commitment to clients with complex needs, they will continue to advocate for just outcomes for individuals and groups in Victoria. Integrated service delivery provides opportunities for services to strengthen their capacity to achieve these outcomes, reduce economic and social costs to individuals and to the community, and continue to be responsive to emerging community needs.

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6

A cold referral is where the client is referred to another service, without any communication between the two services, for example, by providing the client with details of another service that may be able to assist them.

7

Productivity Commission of Australia, Access to Justice Arrangements Inquiry Report No 72 (September 2014), p 178.

8

Ibid, p 666.

9

Ibid, p 107.

10

The survey was offered as a strategy to engage the wider sector in the research. The findings from the partnership survey are not formally incorporated in this research report. However, open-ended comments are used in presentation of themes in this report.

11

Quotations are included to reinforce key claims made in this report. Reference to professional background is included to limit identification of individuals.

12

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15

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# APPENDIX A INTEGRATED SERVICES FUND 2018-19

In 2018, the Victorian Government committed \$1.8 million through the Integrated Services Fund 2018-19 for Victorian Community Legal Centres (CLCs) and Aboriginal Legal Services (ALSs) to apply for grants of up to \$200, 000 to deliver integrated services within their communities. The Fund was established to provide CLCs and ALSs with the opportunity to: extend or enhance an existing integrated service; establish a new integrated service; or build capacity to explore the possibility of a new integrated service.

The Federation was invited to administer the funding to ensure prompt distribution to the community legal sector. An independent assessment panel selected the following ten applicants to receive grants:

- ▼ Consumer Action Law Centre—Delivering integrated consumer, credit and debt legal services to Victorian Aboriginal communities, in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, which both resolve issues for individuals and ensures that campaign and advocacy attention is given to the systemic issues that are identified as impacting on communities.
- ▼ Fitzroy Legal Service—Extending the Fitzroy Legal Service Drug Outreach Lawyer Program to the City of Darebin in partnership with Uniting ReGen and YSAS to assist community members with legal problems where alcohol and other drug use is an underlying factor.
- ▼ Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre—Policing Family Violence: Changing the Story - providing collaborative legal casework, complaints and advocacy support to survivors of family violence, in partnership with Flat Out, the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women, Inner Melbourne Community Legal and St Kilda Legal Service.
- ▼ Inner Melbourne Community Legal Centre—Health justice partnership with Royal Melbourne Hospital to provide advice, casework, community legal education, and strategic policy work.
- ▼ Law and Advocacy Centre for Women Ltd—Providing pathways out of the justice system for socially and economically disadvantaged women who are in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system, with social work support from RMIT’s Centre for Innovative Justice.
- ▼ Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre—Health justice partnership: integrated legal-health service to clients with complex needs and enabling early intervention support for clients who are at risk of coming in contact with the criminal justice system, in partnership with Maryborough District Health Service.
- ▼ Peninsula Community Legal Centre—Tackling out-of-control toll fines postcode by postcode, an early intervention approach, in partnership with Connect East.
- ▼ Seniors Rights Victoria at COTA VIC—Supporting those who have been recently diagnosed with dementia to plan ahead and to make informed choices about their future financial, health or care arrangements, and to put those choices into an appropriate legal format, in partnership with Dementia Australia.
- ▼ Social Security Rights Victoria—Designing, implementing and evaluating an integrated service bringing together social security law specialists and financial counsellors in order to work more effectively and improve client outcomes, in partnership with Financial and Consumer Rights Council Inc.
- ▼ Springvale Monash Legal Service—Sporting Change: empowering and educating diverse young people to engage constructively in society by using sport to teach them about the justice system, and increase access to justice through an integrated school lawyer, in partnership with Pakenham Secondary College.

# APPENDIX B RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

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