



End the addiction

INTERIM REPORT OF EVALUATION  
**FIRST STEP LEGAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECT**

Year 1 of 2

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First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the many hours of assistance provided by Associate Professor Bebe Loff, Director of the Michael Kirby Centre for Public Health and Human Rights, in advising and preparing this report.

I would also like thank all those involved with our work and who have been instrumental in creating this evaluation. My colleague, Janine Perlman, for her unique blend of compassion and legal skill in assisting our clients. Gayle Wood and her administrative team who work so hard to keep everything running so smoothly. Bess Smallwood, our previous Case Manager, and Emma Buckley Lennox, our current Case Manager, whose individual contributions to the legal service have now made this role a fundamental and essential part of it. Thanks also to our hardworking and committed volunteers, William Kelly, Dylan Dexter and Tom Creedon.

Without Patrick Lawrence, we wouldn't have a purpose-built database for the legal service and we are grateful for his continuing efforts to make it work as effectively and efficiently as possible.

We acknowledge the support and assistance which Anton Hermann and his team at Minter Ellison Lawyers continue to provide to the increasing numbers of our clients whom we refer with their infringements court matters. And Gideon Super of Super & Super Lawyers for his many hours of work, advice and representation, generously performed *pro bono* in relation to family law matters. We thank our health practitioners whose skill and dedication are the backbone of the organisation. And most importantly, we thank our clients, for their courage and determination to improve their lives.

Tania Wolff  
Principal Lawyer

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to determine whether First Step (FS) Legal has implemented the program set out in accordance with the funding agreement with the Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner (LSB) Major Grants Program Funding of 2014. The objectives set out in the project plan were to:

- Expand the legal service to include, in addition to criminal law advice and representation, an assistance, advice and warm referral program in relation to other legal matters such as housing and tenancy, family law and infringements;
- Introduce a Case Manager and follow-up program; and
- Introduce an evaluation program.

The agreed milestones for Year 1 of the Project were:

1. Expansion of the legal service to address greater legal needs (beyond criminal law matters) so as to better support clients' health and recovery.
2. Introduction of a case management and follow-up program, including data to demonstrate any impact on periods of client engagement in treatment and wellbeing, and any recidivism<sup>1</sup>.
3. Collection of data in terms of client surveys and outcomes to feed into the evaluation report.

On review of the cases managed

by FS Legal during the relevant period as compared with the previous year, there has been a 50% increase in the number of files managed by FS Legal over the first 12 months of the funding period. This 50% increase is attributable to the support provided by the Case Manager who is present three days per week. There has been no increase in paid hours for the part-time lawyers (one of whom is employed for three days a week, and the other for one day).

The presence of the Case Manager has also resulted in a 44% increase in the number of clients able to be assisted by FS Legal over the first 12 months of the funding period. In addition, there were 1040 secondary consults during the evaluation period.

It is clear that the Case Manager has allowed FS Legal to significantly increase the number of clients and cases the practice can engage, and has supported service expansion into new types of legal matters. The service effectively manages and advises on matters outside of criminal law – in particular, debt and infringement matters, which cause significant stress and anxiety to patients of the clinic.

FS Legal also commenced a volunteer program – run over the course of the year, engaging three part-time volunteers.

The list of lawyers and firms

to which matters may be referred has been updated, new relationships formed and existing relationships strengthened. A purpose-built database for the legal service was designed and established, and historical data has been systematically uploaded. This has been a time-consuming process, enabled in large part by the work of volunteers. There have been some technical issues in the operation of the database, and there has been difficulty in the collection of data retrospectively – that is, collecting data from past clients. As data collection takes place more consistently with current and prospective clients, and as corrections and modifications to the database are made, these difficulties should ease and the database should produce more helpful statistical data.

The introduction of a Case Manager, able to perform her role as intended, was instituted within a remarkably short space of time. The role has traversed practice management, client and clinical liaison and evaluation, and follow-up responsibilities. Clients have been unambiguous in their appreciation of the role she has performed in ensuring that they understand what will happen and that they do all that is required of them in advance of their hearings. Clinicians of the health practice have similarly expressed support for, and appreciation of, the role.

<sup>1</sup> As may be expected, any impact on recidivism will be evaluated in Year 2 of the Project.

# INTRODUCTION

## WHO ARE WE?

**First Step is a not-for-profit drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation service located in St Kilda.**

The First Step model of care involves an integrated, multidisciplinary and holistic approach to rehabilitation and recovery, developed and refined through a long-term association with St Vincent's Department of Addiction Medicine. Its services include medical and mental health services, hepatitis C treatment, legal services and employment support. By providing a range of services under one roof, First Step provides a unique, wraparound support for clients in their recovery, dealing together with what is often a range of mental and other health and wellbeing issues contributing to ongoing addiction. First Step clients come predominantly from lower socio-economic groups; have backgrounds of deprivation and disadvantage; are survivors of child sex abuse; are homeless or at risk of homelessness; and include the long-term unemployed, cognitively impaired and those living with mental illness.

## WHAT IS FIRST STEP LEGAL?

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FS Legal is a community legal centre (CLC) established in 2008 and is co-located with First Step. This health-justice partnership was conceived with the understanding that legal issues create stress and pose a significant risk of compromising rehabilitation and destabilising the recovery of those dealing with mental health and addiction issues. This is detrimental not only to the individual, but also the wider community with the associated implications of relapse, mental health deterioration and a heightened risk of reoffending. FS Legal is a predominantly criminal law focused CLC that receives no state or federal government funding. It provides *pro bono* legal advice and representation to clients actively engaged in treatment with First Step.

The FS Legal model is more than a 'co-location' of services. It involves an integrated and

coordinated approach to case management, enabling greater awareness of relevant issues and a more effective use of resources. Integrating legal services into a healthcare setting not only provides a direct referral pathway between health professionals and legal practitioners but also serves to bolster patients' attainment of better legal and health outcomes. FS Legal aims to ensure that clients are well informed and supported throughout the legal process, utilising, with patient/client consent, three-sided (trilateral) conferencing between the lawyer, client and treating professional/s.

Referrals are made by the treating health practitioner when a patient/client is actively engaged in treatment and has disclosed a potential legal concern. Being co-located, the referral process is simple,

comprising an initial, general, de-identified discussion between the lawyer and the clinician. Then, if appropriate, a meeting is arranged with the patient/client. This can often occur on the same day. The referring health practitioner physically accompanies and introduces the client to the lawyer, facilitating an important confidence and trust-generating component of the ensuing triangular model of care.

FS Legal commenced operations providing *pro bono* criminal law representation to clients who were facing criminal proceedings, intending to plead guilty and engaged in rehabilitative treatment with the First Step program. Prior to 2015, FS Legal only had the capacity to provide assistance to clients in other areas of law on an *ad hoc* basis.

# TRIANGULAR MODEL OF CARE

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FS Legal lawyers work closely with the treating professionals. This enables the lawyers to gain an understanding of the rehabilitation process and to be a part of that process both through the provision of legal services and the support they offer. They form a part of the therapeutic team. It also ensures that treating professionals are aware of the legal proceedings and are able to provide

additional support to the client if required. This becomes even more important where pending charges cause increased anxiety and stress to the client as the court date approaches. It also means that the treating professionals have sufficient warning of upcoming dates enabling the preparation of useful reports and evidence to support submissions to the courts.

## FS LEGAL STAFF

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**Tania Wolff**

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**Principal Lawyer**

**Bess Smallwood**

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**Legal Case Manager**

January 2015 –

January 2016

**Janine Perlman**

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**Lawyer**

**Emma Buckley Lennox**

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**Legal Case Manager**

January 2016 –

Present

First Step (medical clinic) is staffed by three general medical practitioners, five accredited mental health nurses, one registered nurse, a clinical nurse consultant from the Victorian Infectious Diseases Service, two psychologists, a psychiatrist and an administration team.

A significant proportion of the staff are employed on a part time basis.

## LSB FUNDING

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In May 2014, FS Legal applied to the LSB for funding through its 2014 Major Grants Program. The initial application was for a two-year proposed project with a cost of \$473,904. The purpose of the proposed project was to increase access to justice through an expansion of legal services over the two-year period, contemplating a full-time, increased legal service offering. (In 2014, FS Legal had funding to operate the service part time with a lawyer employed 24 hours per week, over four days). The initial application to the LSB also included the creation of a case management and follow-up program to be managed by a full-time case manager, and the provision of forensic reports.

In September 2014, FS Legal was advised by the LSB that its application for funding had been partially granted. The grant would be a one-year grant in the amount of \$147,000. Following negotiations with the LSB and amendments to deliverables, a final grant amount of \$72,500

per year for two years was awarded to FS Legal in respect of a revised project to be completed over those two years.

The revised deliverables still included an expanded legal service offering. However, as a result of a reduction to the core funding for FS Legal at the end of 2014, FS Legal was only able to self-fund a 15-hour service per week, or a two-and-half-day service. In other words, it had lost the ability to self-fund a four-day-per-week service with a lawyer operating the service on those days. With the new LSB grant however, FS Legal was able to continue to operate uninterrupted as it had in 2014 – as a four-day-per-week service, managed by a lawyer, over four days, in any given week. The expanded legal service in the revised deliverables for the LSB grant, therefore, was offered within existing hours of operation of the service.

Additionally, the LSB grant facilitated partial funding for

a new part-time Legal Case Manager role, to administer the new case management program. FS Legal was subsequently advised that it had also been successful in an application to the Ross E Trust in respect of an application for partial funding of a part-time Legal Case Manager, and, as a consequence of a combination of the LSB and Ross E Trust funding, was able to employ a part-time Legal Case Manager, working three days a week. Funding was also provided through the LSB grant for evaluation and reporting.

Bess Smallwood started in this new role as Legal Case Manager in January 2015. While FS Legal remained a predominantly criminal law practice, the Case Manager's presence enabled an expansion in legal services FS Legal could offer, including infringements, tenancy issues, debt and family law. Where FS Legal could not manage the matter directly in-house, further referrals to external agencies were facilitated.

# NEW INITIATIVES

## CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The case management program was designed to assist in the practice management of the legal service and facilitate regular case conferencing with clinical staff and clients, enabling timely communication between the health and legal services, and the client, regarding issues of relevance and concern to the welfare of the client. It was hoped that this would support the recovery of the client.

On a day-to-day basis the Case Manager juggles a variety of responsibilities, including: corresponding with the Courts in relation to upcoming Mentions, listings and adjournments; requesting briefs and further evidence from police informants; participating in conferences with clinicians about client progress, wellbeing and upcoming legal dates and processes; speaking to, and meeting with, clients to advise about upcoming hearings; obtaining further information; communicating with external partners in relation to support to be offered to clients; following up with past clients in relation to wellbeing with the intention of redirecting them into treatment as appropriate; calling and emailing the principal lawyer about various matters, queries and issues on any given day.

## ADVICE AND REFERRAL PROGRAM (INCLUDING *PRO BONO* ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER FIRMS)

In addition to providing criminal law advice and representation to clients, FS Legal initiated the advice and referral program. This was directed towards providing clients advice in relation to infringements, family law and landlord and tenant issues. Where FS Legal was unable to directly advise the client, we intended to make warm referrals to other law firms with whom we had existing or new *pro bono* arrangements. The firm of Super & Super has assisted FS Legal during the first year of the LSB Funding with family law matters, including representation in the Federal Circuit Court on three separate hearing dates. In addition, Minter Ellison has assisted FS Legal with representation for infringements matters, assisting and appearing in relation to 11 separate matters where applications were made for special circumstances applications in the first year of the grant period. FS Legal has advised internally in relation to landlord and tenant issues.

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

After a brief advertising campaign, a review of applications and then an interview process that spanned two weeks, three legal service volunteers were introduced to the practice. Once the induction process had concluded, the volunteers were able to assist both the lawyers and Case Manager with various tasks, including data entry, file management and administration, follow-up calls to clients and conducting surveys.

Volunteers have continued to make a significant contribution to the practice, assisting in essential follow up work for client updates and surveys.

## THE EVALUATION

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This document reports the results of what is primarily a “fidelity of implementation” evaluation, in that it seeks to determine whether FS Legal has fulfilled the goals set out in its application to the LSB as amended in subsequent discussion with the LSB. We include some preliminary outcome and impact data.

**The evaluation covers a period of 12 months from 1 February, 2015, to 31 January, 2016.**

## METHODS

Client demographic information was collected. Data was gathered on the types of matters for which assistance was rendered and the outcomes of these matters. Client comments and testimonials that have not been the subject of analysis and case studies are also reported.

A survey was administered to current clients, and a similar survey administered to clients whose matters had concluded. Current clients were surveyed differently because clients whose matters had concluded prior to the Case Manager commencing would not be in a position to comment on the perceived benefit or otherwise of the Case Manager's role.

Survey tools may be found in Appendix A. The survey adopted a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Questions addressed aspects of the legal service, the relationship between the health and legal service, the role of the Case Manager and health and social status of the client.

A survey of current clients and clients whose cases concluded in 2015 (past clients) was conducted between November 2015 and February 2016. Nineteen current and 26 past clients were approached, out of a total of 56 clients assisted during the evaluation period. Some clients whose cases were closed shortly after the start of evaluation period had little to no contact with the Case Manager. They were not asked if they wished to participate in the evaluation. Similarly, clients whose cases were opened shortly before the end of the evaluation period were not contacted. Following liaison with clinical staff, we determined it was inappropriate to seek to survey clients whose mental health had deteriorated or who were in residential rehabilitation. Some clients were unable to be contacted (see section headed "Limitations", p.12). We were able to survey 13 of the 19 current clients, and 21 past clients of the 26 who formed our sample.

As many of our clients were also lost to follow up (see section headed "Limitations", p.12),

"client engagement/wellbeing" surveys were also administered to clinicians so that they might judge the impact of the legal service on patient treatment and wellbeing. Again, a five-point Likert survey was employed, and clinicians were asked to respond to four statements:

- Having the legal service involved has assisted with the client's attendance/engagement.
- Having the Case Manager involved in particular has assisted with the client's engagement/attendance.
- Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their treatment.
- Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their stress levels/overall wellbeing.

Clinicians completed wellbeing surveys for 25 of 26 past clients and 17 of 19 current clients.

Interviews were conducted with 12 staff members of the health clinic to gauge their impressions of the legal service and of the Case Manager, in particular.

## CLIENT GROUP

The FS Legal client group includes the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the Victorian community; they suffer from mental illness, cognitive impairment, disability and addictions. Our clients have personal histories marred by physical and sexual abuse. As a patient group, they are highly likely to experience legal problems, particularly criminal legal issues and

overwhelmingly, have prior criminal convictions.

Their organisational capacity is limited and there is a significant likelihood that they will fail to attend appointments, adhere to medical advice or observe instructions that require even a basic level of administrative capacity. They lack the wherewithal to find or access help on their own.

## LIMITATIONS

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FS Legal client characteristics mean that they pose practical and ethical difficulties for evaluation. Practically, they may be difficult to contact. Ethically, their competence to agree to participate in an evaluation may be questionable, and sensitivity will exist around what is and is not appropriate to report.

This evaluation is thus subject to a number of limitations. Numbers are small and some clients have been lost to follow up. Clients may be in prison, hospital or participating in residential rehabilitation programs. If a client's legal files are closed and the client

is no longer attending the clinic, FS Legal may not have a current contact number. FS Legal clients frequently move address and change their phone numbers or lose or break their phones, so they are unable to be contacted for follow-up of any kind. These factors have posed difficulties for comprehensive recording of demographic information, and the administration of surveys.

In addition, due to the complexity of our clients' mental health and addiction presentation, a client's wellness fluctuates. There were times when a client's mental health

situation had deteriorated and their attendance at the clinic to access clinical support was therefore a priority. It became apparent through the course of the project that some of the survey questions, although thought necessary for statistical purposes, may have been inappropriate and/or insensitive to ask certain clients. There was some risk that the questions themselves might reinforce the difficulties of the client's position in relation to family, health, employment and other indications of wellness, functionality and wellbeing, and have a potentially harmful effect.

# THE RESULTS

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic information is missing for 11 of 56 FS Legal clients assisted during 2015. This is because although FS Legal used standard collection of data for all files, it did not capture the same demographic data for advice-only matters until some months into that year. FS Legal has attempted to collect this information retrospectively, however this has proven difficult for reasons outlined in the “Limitations” section (see above).

The 37 out of 56 clients for whom information is available ranged in age from 19 to 56, and were fairly evenly spread across this age range. Eleven of the 56 were female, indicating a preponderance of male clients. The reasons for this are unclear.

Ten clients achieved post-secondary training, mostly through TAFE. Twenty had some level of secondary school education, with seven completing their secondary education. One client had primary level education only. No information was available regarding education for 17 of 56 clients, as some clients were unwilling to provide it or the questions were not asked as clients were seen prior to the implementation of the standard data collection process and the information was not required for the provision of assistance.

Nine clients had full-time employment and two worked part-time. Eleven received the Newstart allowance and 14 another form of pension. One

client stated that they received no income.

Thirteen were in private rental accommodation and five in government rental accommodation. Eleven lived with parents, others with family or friends. Six lived in boarding houses. One client was a homeowner and one was institutionalised.

The figures indicate a pattern of disadvantage that might be anticipated in this client group.

# FILES MANAGED AND CLIENTS REACHED

With the appointment of the Case Manager there has been a significant increase (50%) in the number of files opened and managed and clients and represented, assisted and advised (43.6%) as compared to the previous year. Between 1 February, 2014, to 31 January, 2015, 56 files were active during this period (this number

includes files opened and already open during the relevant period) and 39 clients assisted. Between 1 February, 2015, to 31 January, 2016, 84 files were active during this period and 56 clients were assisted. These figures are reflected in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: TOTAL FILES AND CLIENTS 2014 AND 2015

## FIRST STEP LEGAL 2014 and 2015

TOTAL FILES  
TOTAL CLIENTS

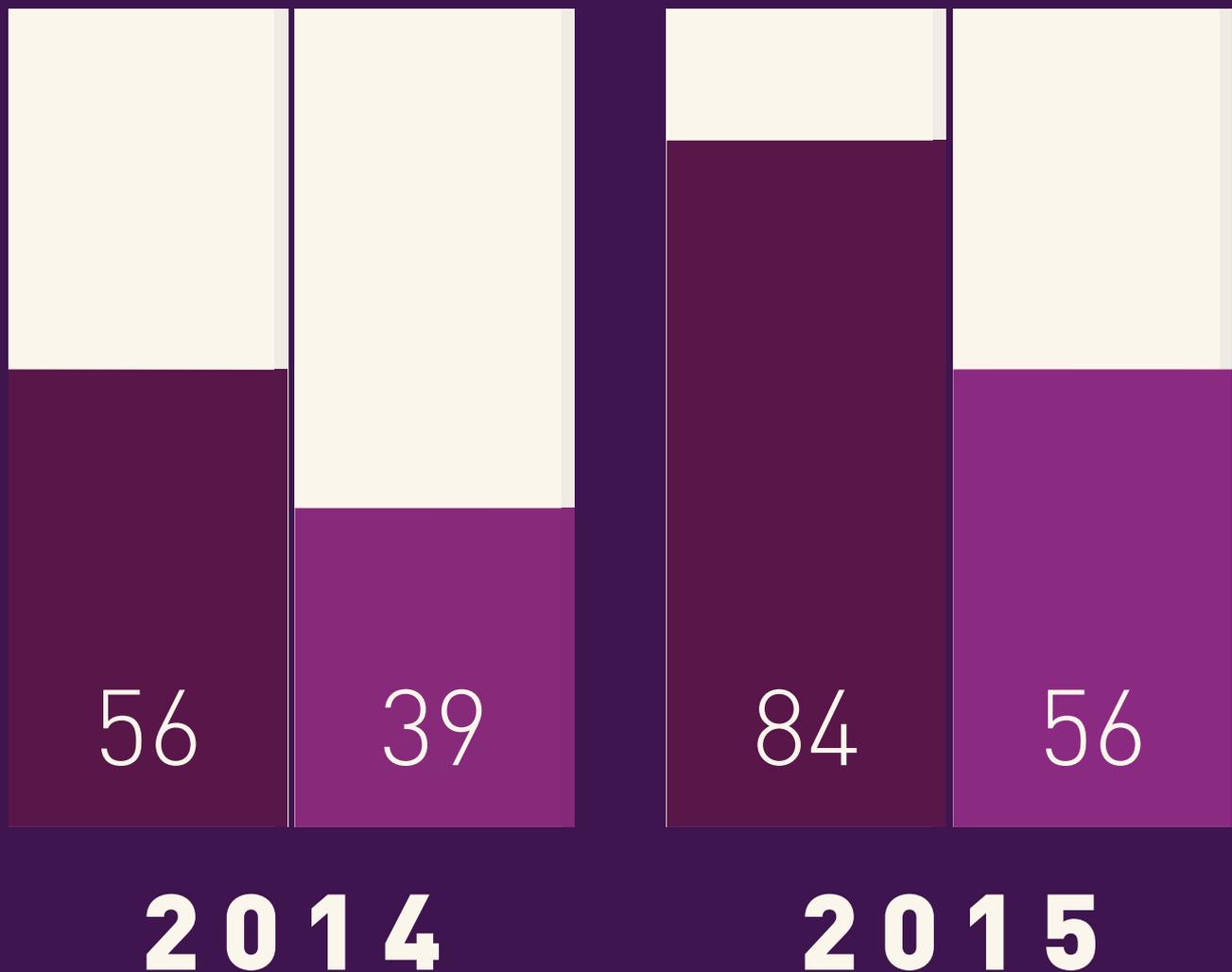


Table 1 summarises the type and number of matters handled from 1 February, 2014, to 31 January, 2015, and 1 February, 2015, to 31 January, 2016. As is evident, FS Legal has greatly expanded its

assistance to clients in non-criminal matters. There has been a 260% increase in assistance of this kind when compared with the previous year.

**TABLE 1: FILE TYPES 2014 AND 2015**

FILE TYPE	TOTAL FOR 01/02/2014 – 31/01/2015	TOTAL FOR 01/02/2015 – 31/01/2016
Criminal	46	48
Financial	2	4
Tenancy	1	4
Family	1	3
Infringement	5	20
Other	1	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>84</b>

**FIGURE 2: FIRST STEP FILE TYPES 2014 AND 2015**

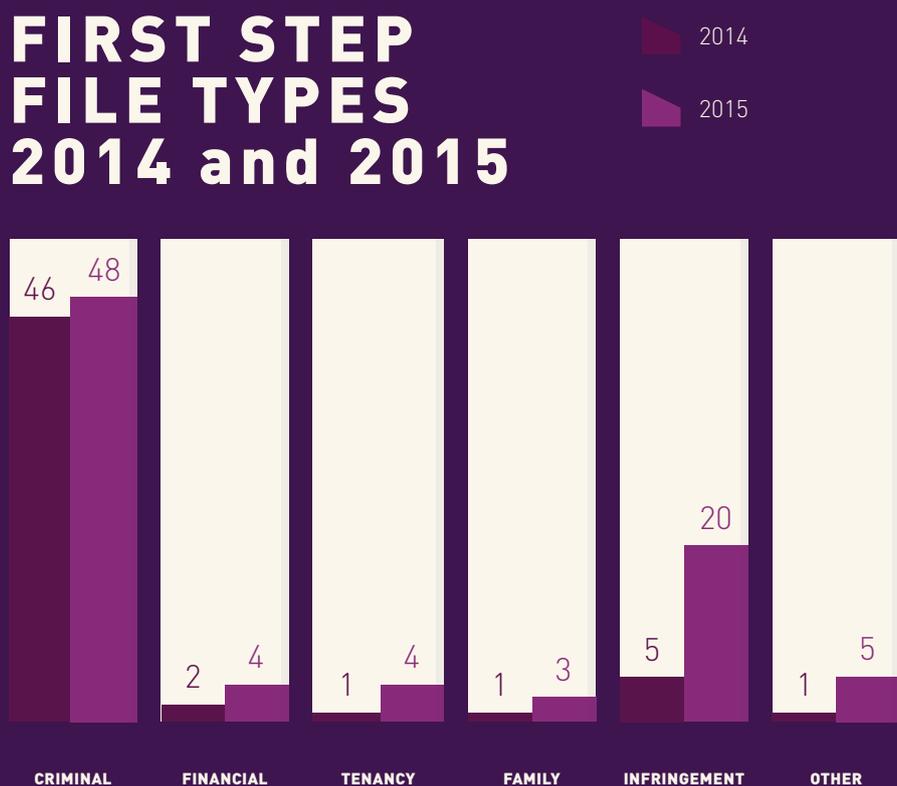


Figure 2 provides a visual representation of these figures, making it clear that numbers rose in every category.

A 'legal needs' survey conducted with First Step patients in 2014 indicated that family law was an area of legal need. In 2015, FS Legal expanded the legal offering to include family law advice and has made a number of appearances in the Federal Circuit Court in relation to family law matters. Initially, it had been anticipated that *pro bono* assistance would be provided by local family law practices, however this did not eventuate. Instead, a Sydney-based colleague of the principal lawyer

has provided advice and has come to Melbourne to appear in a number of the Federal Circuit Court hearings.

The needs survey conducted also identified housing issues as an area of concern. One of the FS Legal lawyers with experience at VCAT agreed to provide assistance on these issues and it was anticipated that this would form a large part of the expanded legal offering provided under the grant; however, the level of need was not as great as anticipated.

In contrast, provision of assistance in the areas of debt and infringements has been of significant benefit. This is an area that causes enormous stress to FS Legal clients who fear potential incarceration and, to a lesser degree, a sheriff seizing their limited belongings. FS Legal responds directly and through its partnership with Minter Ellison, who have provided support and representation regarding special circumstances applications.

## OUTCOMES

**TABLE 3: OUTCOME OF CRIMINAL MATTERS 2015**

OUTCOME	#
Imprisonment	1
Acquitted	2
Discharge	2
Charges never brought	2
Charges Withdrawn	4
File transferred	1
Community corrections order	3
Undertaking/bond	7
Fine	4
Diversion	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>

Table 3 indicates the outcomes of the 27 criminal matters heard in 2015, and Table 4, the conviction rate.

In Table 4, "N/A" is more significant than may be first appreciated. It indicates that: the client was either acquitted after pleading not guilty; charges were withdrawn; charges didn't eventuate after further investigation and FS Legal intervention; or the charges were discharged (akin to removed) pursuant to an order of the Assessment and Referral Court. In our case, 40% of criminal matters resolved in this way.

**TABLE 4: CRIMINAL MATTERS - CONVICTION RATE 2015**

CONVICTION RATES	#
N/A	11 (40%)
Conviction	8 (30%)
Non-conviction	8 (30%)

The latest available Magistrates Court statistics are for 2013. These indicate that ordinarily convictions are recorded in 50% of cases, a non-conviction disposition is recorded in 34% of cases and 16% of cases are adjourned for diversion or are dismissed. As indicated in the Demographic Information above (see p 14), FS Legal clients have a background of

disadvantage and addiction with corresponding prior criminal histories. If it is assumed that FS Legal clients represent cases in which conviction would be more likely to be recorded, this is a very good outcome. (During the first year of the grant period, 70% of clients whose criminal legal matters were handled by FS Legal had prior criminal convictions).

# SECONDARY CONSULTS

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During the reporting period there were 1040 secondary consults between First Step staff and FS Legal.

Secondary consults occur where staff of the clinic, in an unscheduled manner, ask questions and seek on-the-spot advice from the on-site legal team. This can occur directly or through the Case Manager. These may relate to current FS Legal clients (in relation to new matters) or to non-FS Legal clients.

Questions are most often asked by clinicians who are consulting with a patient at the time, and a matter is raised during the course of that consultation that is troubling or causing stress

to the patient. For example, secondary consults included queries for advice about re-licencing and driving issues, alcohol interlock requirements and periods of alcohol interlock installation, debt concerns, Centrelink queries, and sheriff-related questions, often concerning wheel-clamping. By being able to address the issue of concern there and then, either by way of direct answer or referral, the clinician is able to help the patient move forward with something that may have been on their mind.

Below is a sample of secondary consultations that took place over the year, 31 January, 2015, until 1 February, 2016:

- *Lawyer was asked by mental health nurse to assist him to advise client regarding the process for applying to become re-licensed. Lawyer directed him to the relevant page of the relevant website, with documents, and information and advice and fact sheets with regard to Re-Applying for Your Licence.*
- *Mental health nurse sought advice for a client who didn't want to attend court on a minor matter.*
- *Social Worker asked lawyer to come to his office to see a patient he was consulting with at the time, in respect of a friend of the client's, who was a hoarder and who had filled the client's entire house (bar her bedroom and bathroom) with so much stuff it was impossible to get into most of the rooms. Client wanted advice as to her legal rights to get rid of the friend's "belongings", and also practical advice as to how she could clear her house of mountains of stuff, without having to pay an unaffordable amount to have it cleared and removed.*
- *Mental health nurse requested advice on behalf of a patient who wanted to make a complaint against police (for mistreatment).*
- *Mental health nurse requested documents required by client as proof and confirmation of court orders, and other documents retained on the client's legal file, required by the client to obtain her licence and to make other applications (for employment and study).*

# FIRST STEP CLINICIAN SURVEY DATA

These surveys report the impressions of First Step clinicians of the impact of FS Legal assistance on medical treatment and patient stress and wellbeing. The survey administered to First Step clinicians is likely to be more reliable than data collected from FS Legal clients. This

is because clinicians are easily contacted and unlikely to experience the pressure that clients might, to produce responses favourable to FS Legal. Table 5 provides clinician responses on past patients, Table 6 on current clients and Table 7 combines past and present clients.

**TABLE 5: CLINICIAN SURVEY DATA – PAST CLIENTS**

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	N/A
Having the legal service involved has assisted with the client's attendance/engagement		1 (4%)	7 (28%)	8 (32%)	9 (36%)	
Having the Case Manager involved in particular has assisted with the client's engagement/attendance		1 (4%)	4 (16%)	13 (52%)	6 (24%)	1 (4%)
Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their treatment	4 (16%)	3 (12%)	4 (16%)	10 (40%)	3 (12%)	1 (4%)
Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their stress levels/overall wellbeing		4 (16%)	3 (12%)	13 (52%)	5 (12%)	

The results indicate clinicians believe FS Legal assistance has improved the attendance and engagement with treatment of around half of the patients seen by FS Legal, they were unsure of the impact for a third, and do not believe it assisted 10% of patients. They consider the Case Manager's involvement has assisted a similar proportion of patients with their attendance and engagement with their treatment, though

there was a shift from the 'strongly agree' to the 'agree' category. Clinicians believe that dealing with patients' legal matters assisted marginally more patients with their treatment compared with those for whom it had a negative impact or an impact they could not discern. Around 60% clinicians thought that dealing with a patient's legal matters had a positive impact on patient stress and wellbeing.

TABLE 6: CLINICIAN SURVEY DATA – CURRENT CLIENTS

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Having the legal service involved has assisted with the client's attendance/engagement		3 (18%)	8 (47%)	6 (35%)	
Having the Case Manager involved in particular has assisted with the client's engagement/attendance		3 (18%)	9 (53%)	5 (29%)	
Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their treatment		4 (24%)	3 (18%)	9 (53%)	1 (6%)
Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their stress levels/overall wellbeing			8 (47%)	8 (47%)	1 (6%)

TABLE 7: CLINICIAN SURVEY – PAST AND PRESENT CLIENTS

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	N/A
Having the legal service involved has assisted with the client's attendance/engagement		4 (10%)	15 (36%)	14 (33%)	9 (21%)	
Having the Case Manager involved in particular has assisted with the client's engagement/attendance		4 (10%)	13 (32%)	18 (44%)	6 (15%)	1 (4%)
Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their treatment	4 (10%)	7 (17%)	7 (17%)	19 (46%)	4 (10%)	1 (4%)
Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their stress levels/overall wellbeing		4 (10%)	11 (26%)	21 (50%)	6 (14%)	

# PAST CLIENT SURVEYS

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Of the 21 past clients who completed the survey almost all agreed or strongly agreed that if their clinician hadn't referred them to FS Legal, they wouldn't have made an appointment to see another lawyer. Clients agreed that they benefitted from the convenience of having medical and legal services available at one location.

They felt well supported by their First Step team, knowing the team was working together in their interests. Clients strongly agreed that they understood what was happening in their legal matter. Clients appreciated the contribution of the Case Manager who ensured clients were doing what they needed to do in order to ensure the best possible outcomes. Consistent

with this, overall clients were happy with the outcomes of their cases, which most agreed were better than they had expected.

Clients agreed that they were motivated to adhere to their treatment regimen, including keeping medical appointments, following medical advice and taking medication as instructed. Most were "using" less and felt that, generally, their prospects had improved. They agreed that they felt better than they had before their cases and that they were able to move on with their lives.

Results also indicate that around one-third of clients had relapsed since the conclusion of their cases. Around one-third

of clients were employed and a smaller fraction were looking for work.

Some clients made written remarks in the margins. One client noted that the relationship between their lawyer and clinician was "crucial" to achieving the "best result". The same client wrote that, because of First Step, the Case Manager and team, they no longer "used", and were also able to find a job. One client wished to stress that they were not using "at all". Similarly, another client noted that they had been sober for "6 months". On the other hand, one client indicated they felt like they could have had more support. This comment was, however, associated with an otherwise positive survey.

# CURRENT CLIENT SURVEY

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This survey included 13 clients. Survey questions concerning the nature of the service itself were identical to those asked of past clients. As these clients' cases were ongoing, they were not asked questions relating to the outcomes of their cases or their status since the conclusion of their matters.

Survey responses were indistinguishable from those reported by past clients. Clients felt well supported and valued the on-going assistance

provided by the Case Manager; liked the fact that the medical and legal teams worked together, believing it to be beneficial to their matters; and appreciated the convenience afforded by co-location. Again, most indicated that if it had not been for FS Legal they might not have sought legal advice.

Comments were also made in the margins of the survey by some of these clients, one noting that their alcohol intake had decreased. One client

wished to stress that they were not using "at all". Another client wished to emphasise that they stuck to their treatment in their own interests rather than being motivated by not wanting to let the team down, and they were now linked in with an employment service. A client added a smiley face next to the comment "having the Case Manager involved is helpful". The same client's written remark on the survey is copied below in its original form:

I love working with these guys they are all helpful, friendly, Supportive and I will always recomend them to anyone that need help. Jess Tania and Janine Saved my life literally along with Sally -  
Thankyou Very HAPPY 😊

# INTERVIEWS WITH STAFF

Interviews were undertaken with 10 of 16 staff members (including administrative staff members). To save funds, interviews were carried out by an FS Legal intern inexperienced in undertaking qualitative research. Thus, the focus of questions has not been entirely consistent; in certain instances, matters raised have not been probed but accepted at face value, and saturation (where questioning additional participants will not elicit new responses) has not been reached. Nonetheless, on analysis, some interesting responses were noted.

The main focus of the interviews was the impact of the Case Manager. Responses were positive. The Case Manager

is seen as an accessible resource for health staff and patients. Lawyers are often engaged or not present, so the Case Manager serves as the focal point for communication between the health and legal service providers and clients; coordinates actions in the client's interest (such as ensuring that medical reports are available when needed); and provides a knowledgeable source of information. The availability of the Case Manager means that the anxiety clients may have about what will happen and what they ought to be doing is minimised.

The Case Manager is also seen as a cost-effective resource, able to undertake the

administrative aspects of the lawyers' work at a fraction of the cost, including following up matters that "may have fallen off the radar". As an individual, the Case Manager is regarded as intelligent, personable and respectful of the clients, many of whom have cognitive impairments and/or are dysfunctional. Prior to the appointment of the Case Manager, health staff state it could be difficult to obtain information from the lawyers who were consistently under pressure and in court. With the appointment of the Case Manager, communication has markedly improved, with health staff and clients able to obtain answers to questions in a timely manner.

## A MENTAL HEALTH NURSE STATES:

*"I think it speeds up care, or at least it speeds up the information getting through and the client getting some sort of logical education back. That could take a week or more a couple of years ago when we only had a lawyer two days a week or on alternate days, it could take a week longer to get the right information back to the client, and I think if you're waiting a week for information*

*it's really concerning to you but in actual fact isn't that much of a concern once the lawyer has explained it to you – it avoids a week of anxiety. So I think it significantly improves clinical care but also the flow of care for the client. ...*

*"Bess [the Case Manager] can actually get a lot of things started, get an explanation of the process for revocation of*

*finances, or any sort of various legal-related processes, Bess can run through a lot easier than I can explain to the client. I think that's one of the key roles; she engages really well with the clients, so the clients have another person they can contact if need be, and she's always liaising between me and the client and the legal team. So, yeah, that's been really helpful."*

Some staff addressed the challenges of working in a legal-medical partnership and note the importance of maintaining communication. Another mental health nurse addressed the differences that exist in professional goals:

*"I think sometimes when we're nurses and doctors treating people, we're looking at the long-term goals and it sometimes feels as though ... the shorter term goals of a court appearance is driven by the legal team; and I think having honest and frank discussions about what our goals are [is] really important."*

Similarly, a staff member in an administrative role notes:

*"Sometimes some people inside the business are anxious that the legal service push too hard around their expectations when it's a very, very busy practice with very difficult customers that often we are just trying to keep alive. So there's challenge around expectation, but usually, if we communicate effectively, those challenges fall away."*

One mental health nurse describes how legal requirements might prove a challenge for optimal treatment:

*"... [T]he challenge for me has always been whether something is clinically appropriate to start then or wait until they are more stable. For example using psychology, starting medication, going into detox. Whereas for the legal service side, it's the more the better to put in front of the magistrate, so I suppose it is reconciling the best clinical approach to taking things to the Magistrate, rather than just saying we've got all these things we are doing right away. Which is a challenge, but the more I work with the legal service, I find they are getting a lot more of a sense of why I choose to do things certain ways, and we collaborate a lot better now."*

*"... [F]rom a clinical perspective, we need to know absolutely all the issues that a person's facing at that time, whether it be relapse, whether it be re-offending due to a relapse, those sorts of things, and once we involve the legal service I think the dynamic can change a little bit whereby they will maybe withhold information so as not to impact on the legal representation."*

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

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The primary purpose of this Interim Report of Evaluation was to determine whether FS Legal has implemented the project set out in accordance with the funding agreement with the LSB. As set out in the Executive Summary, it is clear that FS Legal has not only faithfully implemented the project set out in the funding agreement, but has exceeded its targets and objectives in Year 1.

In summary, as compared with the previous 12 months, there has been a **50% increase in the number of cases managed** by FS Legal over the first 12 months of the funding period. In addition, there has been a **44% increase in the number of clients assisted** by FS Legal over the first 12 months of the funding period. There have also been 1040 secondary consults.

This has occurred without any increase in paid hours for the lawyers in 2015 and 2016 and on the basis of FS Legal having a Case Manager who works three days per week.

The successful introduction of the Case Manager role has been a key achievement of the project. It has facilitated the effective management of legal files and advice on matters outside of criminal law – in particular debt and infringement matters, which cause significant stress and anxiety to patients of First Step and has allowed the service to meet a greater legal need. As the surveys have indicated, clients have been unambiguous in their appreciation of the role performed by the Case Manager in ensuring that they understand what will happen, and that they

do all that is required of them in advance of their hearings. Clinicians of the health practice have similarly expressed support and appreciation of the role.

During the first year of the project, a new purpose-built database for the legal service was designed and established and historical data has been systematically uploaded. While there have been some technical issues and teething difficulties in the operation of the database, these should improve with scheduled modifications to the database. Other outcomes of the project include the initiation of a new volunteer program, through which FS Legal has engaged three law students. Each volunteer has been trained and inducted into the practice and, in a part-time capacity, supported the

practice administratively, and, as required, with client liaison and support.

As part of the expansion of the practice into other areas of law, the list of lawyers and firms to which matters may be referred has been updated and new referral pathways have been created. In respect of debt and infringement matters, we have strengthened our relationship with Minter Ellison's *Pro Bono* Department who currently advise and represent our clients in respect of special circumstances applications for infringements matters. We are expanding our relationship with DLA Piper into debt and other areas of potential assistance. While we have not been as successful as hoped for in enlisting support from local family law practices, we have enjoyed considerable assistance in a *pro bono* capacity from Sydney based family law practice, Super and Super.

Clients appear to have been more positive in their responses about the overall impact of FS Legal than clinicians. This might be expected given that clients have benefitted from free legal service. Nonetheless, the uniformity of the positive responses suggests that they may truly represent client experience. This evaluation demonstrates that clients believe that the co-located partnering of medical and legal services enhances their experience of both services, and results in a better legal outcome. It is difficult to prove objectively that outcomes are better than they might have been if these or a similar client group had sought advice from a lawyer external to First Step, as there is no comparison group. On the other hand, and significantly, as most of the

clients surveyed state they would not have sought legal advice if they had not been referred to FS Legal, their outcomes are highly likely to have been better than they might otherwise have been. For some clients who struggle to maintain any organisation in their lives, mere attendance at court on the correct day is an achievement. It is also clear that clients are satisfied with the outcomes they achieve.

The results of the survey administered to clinicians, although equivocal on some other matters, shows that they believe that the service offered by FS Legal reduces stress levels in their patients. The response of treating clinicians to interview questions is most interesting and demonstrates the direction that future efforts must be taken to improve services in the interest of the patient/client. Some clinicians identify a tension between the requirements of FS Legal lawyers to be able to demonstrate treatment progress for advocacy purposes and client medical needs. Clinicians perceive that there may be a mismatch between the pressures created by imminent court dates and preferred clinical approaches. Strategies to deal with this may extend beyond improved communication between clinicians and the legal service, to a broader conversation that involves the judiciary.

Clinicians further indicate that there is a temptation to withhold information about relapses knowing that this will have a negative impact on a patient's court case. Ongoing discussion of these and other problems, as well as mutual education about what is regarded as optimum practice for each profession

involved is critical; this is especially so when optimum professional practice appears to run counter to the patient's/client's best interests.

Overall, FS Legal has fulfilled the objectives set out in its project plan. It has also identified directions for development in lawyer-clinician relations that extend beyond the cultural differences identified in earlier writings produced by other medico-legal partnerships. Discussion about how to manage the necessarily different priorities of each group in the interests of the patient/client will, no doubt, produce outcomes that are truly reflective of a holistic model of care.

## CASE STUDIES AND TESTIMONIALS FROM PAST CLIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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Clients and families of clients who were pleased with the services provided to them by FS Legal since the implementation of the Case Manager offered these statements. They do not form part of the evaluation and are included for information.

# CASE STUDY 1

## “Jack”

Jack is a 26-year-old man who was raised by his single mother. He had ADHD as a child and struggled with school. His introduction to drugs came early, being prescribed Ritalin at the age of two. He then dabbled with his mother’s medications in his early teens. In his late teens he became enmeshed in the club scene and his drug use became a daily occurrence. Jack sought treatment at First Step in 2013, initially in relation to an ice addiction when he was in the early stages of ice withdrawal. He had a large number of criminal charges, including driving charges (excessive speed, driving under the influence of drugs, etc), possession of offensive weapons and drug trafficking.

FS Legal applied to have all Jack’s matters moved to the Assessment Referral Court (ARC) list (a specialist court list dealing with mental health issues). Over

the course of nearly two years Jack attended weekly appointments at First Step with his mental health nurse, engaged with other treating professionals, appeared monthly at court mention dates and ceased all drug use. His matters were finalised in court in 2015. At finalisation we were able to tender reports from all First Step and external clinicians involved in his treatment and other references. Our ultimate submission was that his charges should be discharged entirely, i.e. wiped clean, as a consequence of his compliance and commitment to his recovery and rehabilitation, and the work he had done while on the ARC list. It was a bold submission, but, the Magistrate, thankfully, acceded to it.

Significantly, at the end of the sentence (which discharged all charges, including a number of fines)

the Magistrate addressed him personally and directly. She complimented him on what he had achieved, and remarked that he had a number of strengths and qualities that she had observed in him, which he probably didn’t realise he had. It was an extraordinary and moving moment to witness. Her engagement with Jack directly was encouraging and validating. He had never heard those words said about him before, let alone from someone who he admires and who is held in such high esteem. For a young man who had felt invisible and unexceptional most of his life, to be told that he was impressive, and that he had gifts even he was unaware of, will be something none of us who were in court at the time will ever forget.

Jack continues to struggle, but feels his future has prospect and possibility.

## CASE STUDY 2

### “Kate”

Kate is a 23-yearold woman with a long-term history of alcohol abuse and low self-esteem, resulting from neglect and deprivation – particularly due to her parents’ own drug use and incarceration during her childhood and adolescence. She presented to FS Legal with charges of driving under the influence of alcohol -- with a blood-alcohol reading over three times the legal limit – criminal damage in the course of a motor vehicle accident, and leaving the scene of a crime.

FS Legal was able adjourn her matters to allow her time to engage, for the first time, in treatment. We were able to negotiate to have a number of her charges withdrawn,

and achieved for Kate a non-conviction disposition with a 12-month undertaking to be of good behaviour and the minimum mandatory period of licence disqualification. This result assisted Kate by reducing a significant amount of stress from her life. In addition to her criminal matters, we also assisted Kate in stopping her bank from illegally withdrawing loan repayments from her account, which consisted only of Centrelink funds.

Kate is now feeling much more positive about her life and future, and has recently started a course in administration.

## CASE STUDY 3

### “Billy”

Billy was referred to FS Legal as an 18-year-old man with significant drug-trafficking charges following a police search of his home. Due to the significant quantity of drugs found during the search, he was facing a real possibility of immediate imprisonment.

Billy had been struggling with addiction issues for over a year and had been unable to maintain any extended period of abstinence on his own. He was also at risk of not being bailed, as he had no surety and residence to which he could be bailed.

Following frantic efforts to organise an immediate detox hospital bed and a more long-term place in residential rehabilitation for him, FS Legal was able to arrange that he be bailed, immediately after

his police interview, to a hospital for detox, followed by immediate transfer to Windana Therapeutic Community at Maryknoll. FS Legal adjourned his matter twice, stayed in regular contact with Billy and received regular updates from his treatment team. To his credit, Billy remained engaged and committed to his rehabilitation program. Prior to his Court matter being determined at the end of June 2015, he had completed nearly six months of residential treatment and abstinence.

In a lengthy plea, all references, reports and evidence of Billy's rehabilitation and commitment to his recovery were presented to the Court and ultimately formed a compelling justification for the Magistrate to allow him

to continue his recovery in the community. The Magistrate went to great lengths to explain that this was an unusual exercise of his sentencing discretion for a case involving such high quantities of drugs.

Billy was sentenced to an 18-month Community Corrections Order, without conviction, and ordered to continue treatment and rehabilitation as directed and to perform 200 hours of unpaid community work. This was an exceptional result under the circumstances, and a credit to Billy's own determination towards his recovery.

Billy is about to commence his first year of university. He lives independently, has maintained his abstinence and continues to do very well.

## CASE STUDY 4

### “Sue”

Sue came to First Step with a long history of substance abuse, including a nearly 10-year heroin addiction. She was on parole when she presented to FS Legal with new charges: two driving-while-suspended charges; and one for driving while unlicensed. She was terrified of the prospect of having to go back to prison.

We managed her matters and adjourned the ultimate plea date.

The following is an extract from our reporting letter. It sets out the court outcome but also the statements made by the Magistrate in open court and the consideration given to Sue's efforts at rehabilitation as submitted and placed before the Court by FS Legal.

“His Honour examined closely your prior criminal and driving history, submissions made by myself, and a report provided to the Court by your treating psychologist. After hearing all matters in mitigation, His Honour placed you on a 12 month adjourned undertaking, with conviction, to be of good behaviour until 11 November 2016, and only to attend court if you receive a notice to do so. His honour made no order against your licence.

“His Honour emphasised your excellent rehabilitation to date, stating that he was impressed with you and encouraged you to maintain your treatment and commitment. His Honour noted that whilst another person with your

circumstances could have expected a term of imprisonment, his decision to place you instead on an adjourned undertaking was based on the work you have put in to your rehabilitation.”

Sue later sent a text message:

“ Thank you janine for today - I'm wrapt great outcome. my mum is so happy said to thank you too. Much appreciated”.

And later: “.....thanks [again] janine u have been great I will drop your name as the best mouth piece I've ever had because u come across like u actually care...”

## CASE STUDY 5

# “Anthony”

Anthony is a 33-year-old man with a long-standing addiction to heroin and other substances.

He presented to FS Legal with charges relating to theft, however his significant prior relevant criminal history had the potential to result in a far more serious sentence. We were able to have his matters moved to the ARC List with monthly hearings before a Magistrate. Anthony attended court for his monthly progress hearings, complied with treatment as directed by the First Step clinicians and consistently attended appointments at First Step and with other service providers.

Over this extended period, Anthony was able, for the first time, to interrupt his long-standing pattern of relapse and re-offending. This was a significant achievement.

When his matters were finalised at ARC, he was given a full discharge of his matters. Anthony's situation has continued to improve. He has completed work-related courses and has been in regular, stable employment for more than six months. He is also in a relationship for the first time in a long period.

Anthony has a positive forward focus and is genuinely optimistic about his future.

## CASE STUDY 6

# “Gabriel”

Gabriel came to FS Legal with charges emanating from an alleged assault, as well as a driving-while-suspended charge. Gabriel was on parole. A finding of guilt in relation to either of these charges would have breached his parole, resulting in his parole being revoked and him returning to prison.

Gabriel denied the alleged assault. In addition, he instructed that he did not know his licence had been suspended. On further investigation, his licence was suspended as a result of an accumulation of demerit points. Gabriel was adamant that he had no idea of this fact and there was no way he had acquired so many demerit points.

A few months prior to the suspension of his licence, his cousin – with whom he was living – incurred fines for speeding while driving Gabriel’s car. Gabriel tried to nominate his cousin as the driver of the car but was too late. As a consequence

of a failure to deal with this in a timely and appropriate way, Gabriel lost his licence and subsequently became suspended from driving. He insisted that he had not received the correspondence from Vic Roads informing him of his licence suspension.

After some six months of time and effort by FS Legal, including multiple communications with Civic Compliance, requesting copies of all correspondence, then applying to the Court and then to the Infringements Court to submit an application for revocation and driver nomination out-of-time, arranging the necessary statutory declarations, negotiations and discussions with the Prosecution and submissions in open court, the application for revocation of the fines was granted.

In the meantime, the criminal charge of driving while suspended had to be adjourned. Ultimately, with the revocation granted, the driving-while-suspended

charge was able to be withdrawn.

In relation to the alleged assault, after a Contested Hearing in April, during which FS Legal briefed Senior Counsel, Gabriel was acquitted of the charge with costs awarded against the Prosecution.

This was not only an exceptional outcome but a huge relief to Gabriel who had worked very hard to turn his life around over the past several years through prolonged abstinence and sustained employment, and faced a real risk of losing everything he had achieved.

Since the hearing of his criminal charge, together with support of a specialist family lawyer, FS Legal has been assisting Gabriel through a Federal Circuit Court proceeding to re-connect with and spend time with his children, from whom he has been estranged for two years. Gabriel continues to do well.

# TESTIMONIALS

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## CLIENT 1

“First Step helped me because instead of having different appointments, sometimes you’d have to go to two or three totally different places, everyone I needed to see was combined in the same place. My mental health counsellor, the legal team and my doctor, everyone communicates really very well. I wouldn’t have been able to keep all the appointments if it wasn’t combined like that, I really wouldn’t have been able to do it. The legal service were amazing, I honestly thought I would go to jail,

but my lawyer achieved an amazing result. I’ve used legal aid before, but my solicitor was amazing. She took the time out to get together all the supporting documents, and knew everything about me and my history and she explained everything perfectly to the judge. Bess explained everything to me also in the lead up to court and helped me keep my appointments. I want to say thanks to everyone at the First Step team for helping me get my life back on track.”

## CLIENT 2

“First Step Legal has helped me focus on my recovery by not having to stress and worry about my criminal charges. That was very important and helpful to me, because stress like that and constant worrying can trigger my delusions and have a really bad effect on my mental health. I felt very supported from the beginning and throughout

the process. I knew everything would be all right because Tania and Bess were always on top of everything and looking after it for me. I felt great about my result, I was so happy to receive a good behaviour bond, because it would have been very hard for me to complete a Community Corrections Order. Thanks to the legal service for all your help.”

## MOTHER OF CLIENT

“I cannot speak highly enough of the professionalism, compassion and creativity demonstrated by Tania Wolff and First Step Lawyers in dealing with my son’s matters over the past year. Tania went far beyond what lawyers normally would do to ensure my son had care and attention, to ensure that he was not left alone and confused, that he obtained urgent residential rehabilitation when everything looked very desperate. She travelled long distances to visit him and reassure him, and this was so much appreciated by my son and by myself. It was only through her intervention that he is where he is today. She demonstrated genuine concern

for the person, and never treated him as merely a client. Tania was extraordinarily well prepared for all instances of meetings with authorities, including the justice system. She made certain that my son had the best possible representation by being rigorous in her attention to detail, by being thorough and punctual, and by always being ready with an alternative strategy. Most importantly, she used her gentle and engaging sense of humour to keep everyone at ease. I cannot express how eternally grateful and appreciative we are of all her work and that of the First Step Clinic. Thank you.”

## MOTHER OF CLIENT

“Thank you so much for all you help with [...]. He is now so good and if not for your efforts on his

behalf he may well have fallen through the cracks.”

## MOTHER OF CLIENT

"I am writing to you to show my immense gratitude for the service you offer most notably by Janine Perlman. I hope you can continue with the great work you are doing because it just so important.

"My son, [...], found himself in dire straits and were it not for Janine's commitment to his case he would not be where he is today. Because of his substance abuse issues he had given up on himself that is until he made the decision to attend First Step.

"He was given the psychological and legal support he so desperately needed.

"Janine has engaged with [...] on such a deep

level that he has been able to lift himself out of the hopeless mess he had got himself into. She has led him through the court process and negotiated on his behalf so well he has managed to avoid a conviction.

"He is now living in Tasmania and is happy and productive. There is now talk of his long term girlfriend joining him there. She was not prepared to do this until he had sorted himself out.

"I wish you and your team a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year from the bottom of my heart."

## CLIENT 3

"I was a recipient of the legal services at First Step in December 2014 with an array of very serious charges. I can't thank Tania and the guys at First Step enough for the service they provided. Tania in particular went above and beyond with our initial interactions in which she was incredibly compassionate, understanding, caring and supportive. She was always incredibly informed and was sensational with the steps she took into getting me into a rehabilitation facility. She was always available for a listening ear and could always ease my projections. In conjunction with a mental

health nurse I was seeing, the service provided was absolutely outstanding as I was catered for in all facets of my matter. Tania was punctual and well prepared. I have Tania and the team at first step for making my rehabilitation possible and I have gained an outcome that was a million times better than I could have ever expected. I honestly can't express my gratitude enough in words but I owe the guys so much for always sticking by me and helping to make the right decisions for me when I probably couldn't make them myself."

## CLIENT 4

"I was very happy with First Step. I had dealt with Legal Aid a few times and they couldn't help me so they referred me to First Step Legal. They were amazing, always completely professional – they listened, took notes and for somebody like me it was an absolute godsend... I couldn't speak

more highly of them. They work really close with the doctors and share vital information. They got me to speak to a counselor [sic] and they were in constant communication about my case which helped me so much in the end. They were very nice and I was very happy with them."

**APPENDIX**

**First Step Legal  
Past Client Survey**

Date:  
Participant ID#

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Please rate your agreement with the following statements by placing an "X" in the appropriate box after each statement to indicate if you Strongly Disagree, Disagree, are Not Sure, Agree, or Strongly Agree.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
	<b>General</b>					
1.	If my mental health nurse/psychologist hadn't referred me to FSL, I wouldn't have made an appointment to see another lawyer					
2.	I felt like I had a team of people supporting me to deal with all my problems					
3.	Having Bess involved was helpful					
4.	Bess kept me informed about my case					
5.	Bess made sure I was doing what I needed to do to ensure my case went as well as it could					
6.	Not having to go to another location to see the lawyer made it easier to keep my appointment					
7.	The relationship between the lawyer and my mental health nurse/psychologist was useful for my legal case					
8.	I liked the fact that my health team and legal team were working together					
9.	I was happy that my health and legal teams were in one place					
10.	I felt more supported knowing that my lawyer and mental health nurse/ psychologist were work together in my interests					

	<b>Preparation</b>					
11.	The information the lawyer gave me helped me understand what was happening					
12.	The information from the Case Manager helped me understand what was happening					
13.	I was happy with the answers I received to my questions					
14.	I was happy with how I was treated					
15.	I felt well supported					

	<b>Outcome</b>					
16.	I was happy with how my case went in court					
17.	The outcome was better than I expected					
18.	The lawyer and health staff working together made a positive difference to the outcome of my case					
19.	I feel motivated to stick with my treatment because I don't want to let the team down					
20.	I have not had a relapse since my case					
21.	I have been following medical advice					
22.	I have been taking my prescribed medication					
23.	I've been using less					
24.	I have been coming to medical appointments at First Step.					
25.	I feel like my prospects have improved					
26.	I have not re-offended					
27.	I am now looking for a job					
28.	I now have a job					

29.	I have had positive contact with my family					
30.	I feel like I can move on with my life					
31.	I feel better about life than I did before my case					
32.	I feel motivated to get over my problems and do well because I don't want to let the team down					

## FIRST STEP LEGAL CLIENT ENGAGEMENT/WELLBEING SURVEY

Date:

Clinician:

Client:

**Scale:**

**1**

Strongly  
Disagree

**2**

Disagree

**3**

Not sure

**4**

Agree

**5**

Strongly Agree

Having the legal service involved has assisted with the client's attendance/engagement.

1

2

3

4

5

Having the Case Manager involved in particular has assisted with the client's engagement/attendance.

1

2

3

4

5

Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their treatment.

1

2

3

4

5

Dealing with the client's legal matters has assisted with their stress levels/overall wellbeing.

1

2

3

4

5

**FIRST STEP LEGAL ON-GOING FOLLOW UP SURVEY**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **POST CODE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GENDER:** Male / Female / Intersex **DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_

**IMMIGRATION STATUS**

Australian Citizen  Permanent Resident  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INDIGENOUS STATUS:**  Aboriginal/TSI  No

**ENGAGED WITH FIRST STEP PROGRAM?** YES / NO  
**TREATING PROF/S:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CURRENT HOUSING**

Owned accommodation  Renting – private  Boarding House / Shelter  
 Staying with friends/family  Renting - govt  Homeless / In Transition

Details: \_\_\_\_\_

**LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

Year 10  VCE – Year 11  VCE – Year 12  
 TAFE (Certificate/Diploma)  Undergraduate  Postgraduate

Details: \_\_\_\_\_

**CURRENT EMPLOYMENT/INCOME**

Employed Full Time  Unemployed - Newstart  Studying  
 Employed Part Time  Unemployed - Pension

Details: \_\_\_\_\_

**CURRENT DRUG USE**

Abstinent \_\_\_\_\_ days  Occasional  Monthly  
 Fortnightly  Weekly  Daily

Details (type of drug, method): \_\_\_\_\_

**HAVE YOU HAD ANY LEGAL ISSUES SINCE WE LAST SPOKE?**

- |   |  |                                |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Charges | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenancy       | <input type="checkbox"/> Debt  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Law Issue | <input type="checkbox"/> Infringements | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Details:  
**Legal Assistance Required?**      YES / NODetails:  
**K 10 TEST SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
HIGH / MODERATE / LOW**REFERRED BACK TO FSP?**      YES / NO

Details:

## CLIENT EXIT FEEDBACK SURVEY

<b>How satisfied were you with the legal or court outcome?</b> 1= Extremely unsatisfied, 5= Extremely satisfied				
1	2	3	4	5

<b>How satisfied were you with the legal process?</b> 1= Extremely unsatisfied, 5= Extremely satisfied				
1	2	3	4	5

<b>How satisfied were you with the process of on-site referral from the clinical team to legal team?</b> 1= Extremely unsatisfied, 5= Extremely satisfied				
1	2	3	4	5

<b>Were you aware of the legal and clinical team communicating about your case?</b> 1= Not at all, 5=Extremely				
1	2	3	4	5

<b>How supported and listened to did you feel by the legal team?</b> 1= Not at all, 5=Extremely				
1	2	3	4	5

<b>How well did you feel the legal team understood your overall circumstances?</b> 1= Not at all, 5=Extremely				
1	2	3	4	5

<b>How would you compare your experience at FSL to other previous legal experience?</b> 1= Much Better, 3=The Same, 5=Much Worse				
1	2	3	4	5

<b>Any other feedback, comments or suggestions for improvement?</b>				

<b>Will you continue to engage the services of the various practitioners of the FSP?</b>	
YES	NO

If no, why not?

**K 10 TEST SCORE:**

HIGH / MODERATE / LOW

**REFERRED BACK TO FSP?** YES / NO

Details:

# FIRST STEP

— End the addiction —



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St Kilda, 3182



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