

VICTORIAN COMMUNITY LEGAL SECTOR OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

PHASE 1 DRAFT MARCH 2017

Welcome to Phase 1 of the Draft Sector-wide Outcomes Measurement Framework. Led by the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic) and assisted by Lirata Consulting, the Draft Framework has been developed through a process of consultation with over 40 Victorian Community Legal Centres (CLCs).

Phase 2 of the Draft Framework, including indicators and data collection tips that will assist CLCs to measure the outcomes, is under development and will be released by mid-2017.

The outcomes in this Framework are draft. They were developed and refined through a consultation process with the sector. Further consultation will be held with the sector during 2017 which may result in further changes. The Framework will be finalised and presented to the sector in November 2017.



**Federation of Community
Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc**

Level 3, 225 Bourke St,
Melbourne Vic 3000

Telephone: 03 9652 1500
administration@fclc.org.au

ABN 30 036 539 902
Registration A0013713H

For more information:
www.communitylaw.org.au

OVERVIEW OF THE OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

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| IMPACT | Fair and Just Society | | | | |
| THEMES | Access to Justice for All | Empowered Communities | Holistic Responses to Needs | Fair Laws and Systems | Effective CLCs |
| HIGH LEVEL OUTCOMES | People experiencing disadvantage have increased access to justice | Community members have increased capability to understand and address their legal issues | CLCs and stakeholders have increased capability to provide integrated responses to the needs of people experiencing disadvantage | Decision makers address systemic injustices | CLCs are capable, sustainable and able to respond to the legal needs of people experiencing disadvantage |

ABOUT THE OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

IMPACT

The Impact Statement - Fair and Just Society - describes a longer-term result to which multiple outcomes contribute. An impact is likely to come about by the work of many different CLCs as well as many other organisations and broader processes of social change. Versions of this impact statement were voiced consistently through the consultations, and many CLCs have told us this is what they ultimately work towards.

THEMES

The Themes each describe an important principle that CLCs have told us orients effective practice. The Themes themselves are not intended to be measurable, but they reflect the sector's language and the focus of the High Level Outcomes.

HIGH LEVEL OUTCOMES

The High Level Outcomes each articulate a broad, positive change that most or all of the Victorian Community Legal Sector works towards. The High Level Outcomes can be measured by identifying intermediate outcomes and indicators, which break them down into elements that CLCs can measure and use to assess their effectiveness. These will be provided in the Phase 2 Draft Framework. For now, we have provided brief explanations of each High Level Outcome to clarify its meaning and scope.

ABOUT THE HIGH LEVEL OUTCOMES

The explanations accompanying each High Level Outcome were developed based on the inputs provided by the Victorian Community Legal Sector during consultation, and with reference to literature on legal assistance services and outcomes measurement.

Across the framework, *people experiencing disadvantage* are identified as a key group that CLCs assist. Disadvantage arises from the structural inequalities and barriers that exist to exclude people from exercising their rights and accessing the same opportunities as the broader community, such as educational opportunities, employment, housing and safety. Legal, social and economic structures often exclude and create disadvantage for people from diverse cultural backgrounds, people with a disability, those on low-income and women, among others.

People that receive assistance from CLCs are usually at higher risk of experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion. As a result, many CLCs focus their service delivery on working with particular client groups and the specific legal problem types that most commonly affect these groups. Further definition of disadvantage and associated indicators for measuring it will be provided through the Phase 2 draft Framework.



Theme: Access to Justice for All

High Level Outcome 1: People experiencing disadvantage have increased access to justice

Access to justice is a core guiding principle for the Victorian Community Legal Sector. CLCs assist people to access justice through formal and informal mechanisms. CLCs seek to ensure people have their voices heard and their rights protected in their engagement with legal, government and private institutions.

Access to justice does not mean that CLC clients will always have disputes resolved in their favour. Rather, it means that CLCs assist clients to get access to fair process, which increases the likelihood that matters will be resolved in a fair, sustainable and timely manner, allowing people to move on with their lives.

People experiencing disadvantage face many barriers to having their rights and interests considered in the legal outcomes they experience. These barriers include lack of access to legal assistance (in part due to inability to afford private legal services), lack of knowledge of legal rights and responsibilities, and a lack of confidence and capacity to navigate the legal system and effectively present their case.

The information, advice, casework and representation provided by CLCs assist people to overcome these barriers to experiencing equality before the law.

Direct legal assistance services and community legal education play a key role in achieving this High Level Outcome.



Theme: Empowered Communities

High Level Outcome 2: Community members have increased capability to understand and address their legal issues

CLCs have a strong capability building ethos, aiming to empower community members to take appropriate and positive steps towards resolving their legal issues.

Increasing capability is fundamentally about increasing people's knowledge, skills, confidence and resilience in responding to legal problems. CLCs assist people to: identify when they have a legal problem; access timely legal

assistance; and, understand their legal rights, responsibilities and options for responding to legal issues. CLCs also support people to put this knowledge into action, thereby building their skills and confidence to engage with the legal system.

This capability building contributes to the effective and timely resolution of legal issues, as people come to understand their legal

problems and take steps to seek assistance or advice, or to self-advocate. Capability building also assists people to avoid, or to minimise, the escalation of future legal problems.

Both community legal education and direct legal assistance play a key role in achieving this High Level Outcome.

Theme: Holistic Responses to Needs

High Level Outcome 3: CLCs and stakeholders have increased capability to provide integrated responses to the needs of people experiencing disadvantage

For people experiencing disadvantage, legal problems are often only part of a combination of issues that affect wellbeing. CLCs seek to address the range of legal and related issues for people experiencing disadvantage across such areas as debt, mental health, housing and family violence.

To achieve the most effective legal assistance, avoid the recurrence of legal problems and address the complex needs that people experience, a holistic response is required. CLCs provide this by developing integrated service delivery models and creating partnerships with agencies in other sectors to provide the support people require to experience long-term improvement in their wellbeing.

These holistic and integrated service delivery models include: employing non-legal staff in CLCs; creating strong referral networks through the development of inter-agency partnerships; conducting outreach programs; co-locating services with other community agencies; and, combining with other agencies to create new multidisciplinary organisations.

These approaches are fundamental to CLCs ways of working and facilitating client access to appropriate legal and non-legal assistance.

The work of CLCs in community legal education, partnership building and developing holistic and integrated service delivery models plays a key role in this High Level Outcome.

Theme: Fair Laws and Systems

High Level Outcome 4: Decision makers address systemic injustices

The legal system, government agencies and other institutions create barriers to just outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage, which result in their needs and goals being marginalised or overlooked.

Therefore, fair laws and systems is a key goal for CLCs in responding to current legal, need as well as preventing future negative impacts on people experiencing disadvantage.

Many CLCs actively work towards this outcome by creating a context in which decision makers have an increased understanding of injustices and the ways in which they impact people and communities; knowledge of evidence-based options to reduce injustices; and increased motivation to act to reduce injustices.

Increasing community awareness of and building community support for these issues, along with holding institutions and decision-makers to account for their actions, are also important elements of this outcome.

CLCs' community legal education, strategic litigation, advocacy and law reform activities play a key role in this High Level Outcome.



Theme: Effective CLCs

High Level Outcome 5: CLCs are capable, sustainable and able to respond to the legal needs of people experiencing disadvantage

There is a high level of legal need within the communities served by CLCs. Legal need includes the expressed and unexpressed legal needs of individuals, and systemic issues that impact whole populations.

To respond effectively and sustainably to the legal and related needs, CLCs need to be robust, capable and well-resourced.

This outcome focuses on strengthening organisational capacity and performance over time. This involves increasing the skills, knowledge, confidence and resilience of CLC board members, staff and volunteers. It also involves CLCs having sufficient ongoing financial and other resources to meet the legal needs of their communities.

For a CLC to be effective it also needs strong governance and management systems, with the organisational policies, culture and systems in place to support continuing high performance.

CLCs' internal quality improvement, monitoring and evaluation processes, along with their advocacy and partnership development activities, play a key role in this High Level Outcome.

If you have **any questions** or would like **more information**, please contact, Project Manager, Rohan Thwaites, by email rohant@fclc.org.au or phone **03 9652 1511**.



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