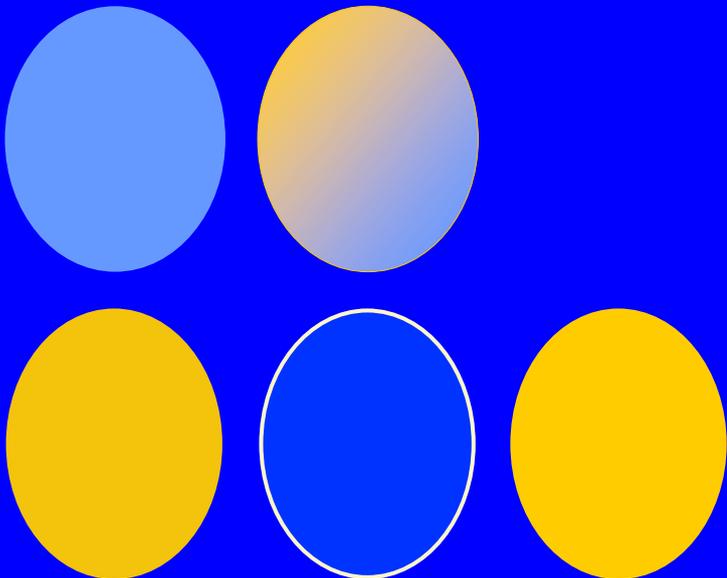


Eastern Community Legal Centre

Annual Report

2006-2007



Mission

The Eastern Community Legal Centre is committed to reform that achieves equality and social justice within the legal system for disadvantaged members of the community.

Aim

To work with our community to identify and address issues of inequality and injustice in the legal system.

Objectives

To provide free and accessible legal services that empower clients to meet their legal needs within a community development framework.

To identify the legal needs of disadvantaged people in the Eastern Community Legal Centre region through conducting research.

To provide an organisational structure and policies and procedures to support the above objectives **that specifically includes processes for strategic planning and evaluation of the Centre's activities.**

To engage in collaborative partnerships and networks of agencies to assist in meeting the objectives of the Centre.

To promote awareness of the Centre and its activities within the community.

To encourage the community's involvement in the Centre's activities with a particular emphasis on a proactive membership.

Eastern Community Legal Centre Inc.



Reg No. A4904N
ABN 89 833 124 364

Box Hill Office
Suite 3, Town Hall Hub
27 Bank Street
Box Hill 3128

P: (03) 9285 4822
F: (03) 9285 4833
E: eclc@eclc.org.au
W: www.eclc.org.au

Hours of operation
Monday to Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm
Tuesday-Thursday evenings

Boronia Office
Suite B, 6 Floriston Road
(PO Box 747)
Boronia 3155

P: (03) 9762 6235
(Regional): 1300 79 70 88
F: (03) 9762 9751
E: outereast@eclc.org.au

Hours of operation
Monday to Thursday 9:00am – 5:00pm
Tuesday Evenings

ECLC assisted over 2240 clients in 2006-2007. Over 82% of these were first time clients to the Centre. In addition to the day advice sessions held at both offices and at outreach locations across the region, over 150 sessions of night service were held, staffed by volunteers.

Acknowledgments

Eastern Community Legal Centre would like to sincerely thank the following people and organisations for their support and service throughout the year.

Our Wonderful Volunteers!

Donations to ECLC

Thank you to everyone who has made a donation to the Centre in the past year.

Funding Partners

Victoria Legal Aid
Victorian Government
Commonwealth Government
City of Whitehorse
Knox City Council
City of Boroondara
Rotary Club of Balwyn

Legal Firm Partners

Jones Hepworth Johns
Mercader
Moores Legal
Robinson Gill
Roman Lawyers

Project Partners

Anchor
Box Hill Citizens' Advice Bureau
Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
Council on the Ageing (Victoria)
Eastern Access Community Health
Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Service
Family Access Network
GordonCare
Inner East Community Health Service
Knox Community Health Service
Knox Infolink
Louise Multicultural Community Centre
Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre
Public Interest Law Clearing House
Regional Extended Family Services
Ringwood Magistrates' Court
Victoria Legal Aid Ringwood
Migrant Information Centre (Eastern)
Women's Legal Service Victoria

Pro bono support

Holding Redlich



Mr Ian Gray, Chief Magistrate of Victoria & Patron of ECLC, presenting long time volunteer, Tony Daquino with a Certificate of Appreciation

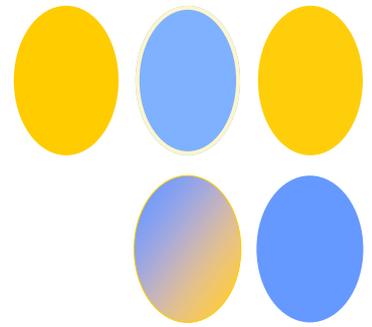
Family Law Education Project

ECLC and Women's Legal Service

Victoria developed a three day family law training module after an approach from Regional Extended Families Services. This was then piloted with a group of indigenous community workers as part of a broader (15-day) community mediation training program delivered by REFS and funded by FACSIA.

Board of Management 2006/07

Helen Killmier - Chairperson
Sue Carlile - Deputy Chairperson
Gerard José - Secretary (until June 07)
Lance Wilson - Treasurer
Helen Evenden
Kate Hamond
Karen Jones
Marie Casey
Maryclare Machen



Staff Team 2006/07

Manager
Michael Smith

Principal Lawyer
Jenni Smith

Inner East Co-ordinator
Leonie Burnham

Outer East Co-ordinator
Deborah Handley (to Feb 07)
Denise Budge (from Mar 07)

Financial Administrator
Cathy Oliver

Community Lawyers
Danni Baylis
Eve Bodsworth
Ann Lightowler

Community Development
Kate Johnson

Administration
Denise Budge
Naomi Milnes
Armita Yares
Craig Rossi
Kate Bennett
Stephanie Ng
Janerose Okello
Noel Stubbs

Patron

Mr Ian Gray
Chief Magistrate, Magistrates' Court of Victoria.

After completing Year 12 I joined ECLC in early December 2006. I have gained such valuable knowledge in many areas. ECLC has provided me with an understanding of the law from a different perspective and a thorough knowledge of the community and the different agencies within it. It is rewarding to know we are helping the local community by allowing access to the legal system.

I would like to take this chance to publicly thank ECLC for the wonderful opportunity they have provided me with. Currently I am employed as an Administration Trainee. It has given me the chance to gain a certificate in legal administration along with priceless on the job training with the nicest group of people I have ever met.

Is it what I expected? No.
It has been so much more.
It's been fantastic.
- Naomi Milnes

"For the last few months an ECLC lawyer has been my guardian angel. That's the way I can describe her, she has given me the support and the legal advice that at that time was needed.

It is good to know that the system works. I just want to say thank you for having people like her so dedicated **and so nice!!!"**

Volunteers

ECLC wishes to acknowledge and thank each person who volunteers at our Centre

Adele Katzew
Amber O'Brien
Amruta Bapat
Anthony Rasso
Barbara Osafo-Kwaako
Bill Boucher
Bree Solomon
Cameron Grant
Carol Barton
Caroline Smith
Caroline Stephens
Carolyn Cheng
Cherry Fuller
Chiara Auteri
Chris Cowin
Chris Groszek
Chris Shelley
Clair Lindsay-Johns
Clare Parsons
Craig Halfpenny
Craig Rossi
Cristina Rivero
Danni Bayley
David Thompson
Denise O'Shannessy
Dheepna Benoit
Donna Askew
Edwina Olver
Ellie Delafield
Emily Shafto
Emily Stothers
Erin Varker
Fe Mercader
Frank Clarebrough
Grace Kelly
Helen Evenden
Helen Gay
Hubert Fong
James Beeston
Janerose Okello
Jaqui Haslem
Jarred MacAvoy
Jenny Finn
Joyi Li
Judy Stephens
Karen Jones
Karin Costenoble
Kate Dluzniak

It provides the community with assistance which they **wouldn't otherwise be able to** receive. Working with great volunteers makes it enjoyable & a great learning experience.
—ECLC Volunteer



Some of ECLC's wonderful volunteers assisting Boronia with reception duties, administration and information referral



I enjoy giving back to the community, especially those who are less able to afford legal assistance. Putting into place what we have been studying for. Working with really great staff makes it a very worthwhile commitment.
—ECLC Volunteer

Keleigh Robinson
Kelvin Legg
Kirsty Vella
Lauren Hills
Liam O'Connor
Lisa Chesswas
Liz Hamilton
Louise Page
Lucinda Murdoch
Malcolm Bennett
Mark Fitzgerald
Mark Strong
Melinda Verlin
Melissa Rizzo-Magee
Michael Ma
Michael Paton
Nadine Daniel
Natasha Andrews
Nigel Ross
Peter Milford
Petra McHugh
Petru Roman
Phillip Duffy
Reannon Hemmings
Rebecca Thomson
Rhonda Goodall
Richard Bartram
Richard Edmonds
Richard Grossi
Sanaz Naimi
Santina Della Rossa
Sarah Attril
Seung Baek
Sheryl Barker
Stephanie Ng
Sue Yen Wee
Sunil Rao
Sylvia Young
Tanya Murugan
Tara Kenny
Tarnya Grey
Thomas Mah
Tony Daquino
Vicky Doufa
Victoria Roberts
Wendy Wan
William Ho

Code of Conduct

ECLC is committed to reform that achieves equality and social justice within the legal system for disadvantaged members of the community.

It aims to work with the community to identify and address issues of inequality and injustice in the legal system.

It has developed this code of conduct to ensure and encourage the highest qualities of integrity and behaviour across the organisation.

It applies to all members, volunteers, Board members and staff of ECLC.

In my participation within ECLC, I undertake to:

CLIENTS

- Provide timely, accurate and easily understood information and advice.
- Exercise care and diligence in accordance with professional standards set by relevant bodies.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

- Ensure that all personal information (whether of clients, volunteers or staff) is treated with respect and sensitivity, is stored safely and securely and only accessed by those authorised to do so.
- Use information collected from clients only for the completion of the work required and with the express consent and clear instructions of the client.

CONFLICT

- Actively avoid using my position for personal or professional benefit.
- Ensure that all clients receive independent referrals (with a range of options) avoiding any actual or perceived self-referral.
- Ensure a separation of professional and personal relationships.

DIVERSITY

- Promote and implement anti-discrimination and equal opportunity principles.

INTEGRITY

- Behave honestly and with integrity, working within all applicable laws.
- Operate within the lawful structures, systems and policies of the Centre
- Seek and respond appropriately to direction from people in leadership and designated roles.

MEDIA

- Direct all media enquiries immediately to an authorised spokesperson.

QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Develop and maintain my skills in order to fulfil the role with high competence and sensitivity, acting within my area of expertise
- Provide quality services in a respectful, non-judgmental manner.
- Utilise Centre resources and facilities effectively and efficiently for best possible practice and in order to implement the Centre's mission.
- Welcome feedback and review mechanisms as an opportunity to improve the service quality.

RELATIONSHIPS

- Interact respectfully, fairly, impartially and courteously without harassment and be sensitive to cultural, linguistic and other diversity.
- Treat all members of the community equally and fairly and in a way that does not cause offence or embarrassment.
- Conduct myself so that my attitudes and actions **positively reflect the Centre's commitment** to providing a free, accessible, quality service.

SAFETY

- Act to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all Centre participants and clients.

"I wish to record my appreciation of the professional services rendered by (an ECLC lawyer) in a recent legal matter. Her thorough, prompt and in the event, effective resolution of this dispute was not only reassuring but reflected well on the calibre of your **legal Centre and its operation.**"



'When you are through changing, you are through'. ~ Bruce Barton

The last 12 months at Eastern Community Legal Centre have again involved lots of change, which has meant that the organisation is continually evolving and growing. There have also been important opportunities for consolidation and reflection on the future. These pauses in an otherwise demanding environment provide moments to take a breath and allow room for creative and innovative thinking.

I would like to thank Michael Smith for his strong leadership of the organisation and the dedication and commitment that he brings to his role. There have been staff changes throughout the year that provided opportunities for some restructuring of the organisation to ensure that it is well placed to meet the challenges of the future and to provide the staff team with opportunities for career development. Throughout these times of change, the staff team have continued to provide high quality legal services to our community, and I thank them for their professionalism and hard work.

Probably the most significant change took place in November 2006. This was the move of Eastern Community Legal Centre from our offices in Blackburn to brand new totally refurbished premises in the Box Hill Town Hall Hub. Our new offices are still well located in terms of public transport access and the hub also accommodates 14 other community organisations, so there are plenty of opportunities for networking and joint partnerships.

Whitehorse Council held an Open Day in March where residents were able to view the new and improved Town Hall, including the hub. ECLC developed and hosted a stall, with an information and education focus. The move to the Town Hall Hub marked the commencement of a new era in the history of the organisation and I sincerely thank the staff team involved, in particular Denise Budge for her superb organisational skills and attention to detail.

The year 2007 commenced with the establishment of two outreach services, one in Lilydale with Eastern Access Community Health and one in Ashburton with Inner East Community Health's Craig Centre. ECLC also successfully participated in the Statewide tender for the expanded Youth Referral and Independent Person Program, and has been working on partnership development to tender for a **community legal centre focused on older people's** issues, particularly elder abuse, across Victoria.

Some excellent policy and research work has been produced by the staff team throughout the year including a report on volunteer diversity and a model of community development. With such a large catchment area to serve, community development and engagement is critical to the ongoing work of the centre, and **our volunteers remain one of the Centre's most** important resources.

ECLC is fortunate to have a wonderful, committed team of volunteers that give generously of their time. In order to celebrate their contribution and thank them, an inaugural Annual Volunteers Dinner was held in May with over 50 volunteers, Board members and staff in attendance. We were fortunate that our Patron, Ian Gray, Chief Magistrate of Victoria was also able to attend and be part of the celebration. Several volunteers were presented with awards for service and an enjoyable evening was had by all.

From a governance perspective, the Board has had a busy and productive year. Due to organisational stability, Board meetings were made bi-monthly and governance training was conducted with the Board early in 2007 along with a skills audit. The Board composition has remained relatively stable, with the exception of Gerard José, whose move interstate made his ongoing involvement impossible. I would like to sincerely thank the Board for their involvement and input throughout the year, in particular members of the Executive for their support of me in my role as Chair.

As always, ECLC has some challenges ahead in the coming year, however due to the tremendous collective effort of staff, volunteers and Board members, we are in a positive position to move forward confidently into the future.

Helen Killmier
Chairperson



Helen Killmier, Chairperson, at the ECLC Volunteers Dinner 2007

Manager

"On for Young and Old!" The theme for ECLC's Annual General Meeting this year is most apt for a whole range of reasons. The young and old will be **fairly obvious as you read this year's report but the key word in the phrase is the first – On!** The teams of ECLC staff, volunteers and the Board have been **"On" for the full year, working very hard with a range of great achievements to be acknowledged and celebrated.**

The year has been one of consolidation alongside substantial development through partnerships and projects. This has been possible due to strong organisational stability and great efforts of hard work from all involved with ECLC. The legal services, both day and night, have had a highly productive year, with stable and highly skilled staff, both paid and volunteer. This has enabled advice and especially case work services to grow significantly on the previous year, as well as key quality improvements.

Again, the year has been marked by a series of events and milestones – **our "What's On" perhaps!** In August 2006 the Outer East team hosted our launch with over 100 friends and supporters of ECLC in **attendance. The next thing "On" was the big move** – after 32 years ECLC moved from Blackburn to Box Hill to our outstanding new Inner East facility in the Town Hall Hub - a constant hive of community activity. An AGM and a Christmas event introduced the new space and brought the year to a close.

The Access for Ashburton outreach set 2007 On to a flying start then a Town Hall Open Day in March launched both the Town Hall Hub and our Festivals Team. The inaugural Volunteers Dinner in May was a major highlight of the year bringing together and thanking many volunteers for their commitment to their community through the Centre. As well as these events, many projects - great and small - have been embarked upon.

In all that, we have had little time to stop and reflect as the demand and needs of our communities remain great. Despite over 30 years of proud service, the vast population in the many communities from Kew to Warburton, from Lysterfield to Healesville, have a range of legal and related needs and there remains much more to be done. As will be clear from the report, the Centre is active geographically on a regional basis, but also within municipal networks and partnerships and sometimes very locally, with specific projects. Some communities are based on demography, with significant work focusing on the needs of young and older people through the year.

The Centre has continued to focus on the five key strategic directions adopted in late 2004:

1. Partnership development
2. Improving volunteer & staff collaboration
3. Strategic & intentional approach to the Outer East

4. Quality, targeted & integrated casework, community legal education & law reform
5. Strategic focus (being well-positioned & ready to seize opportunities)

Partnerships

ECLC continues to emphasise a partnership approach to much of its work, to improve access, provide higher quality programs and encourage inclusivity and understanding in different areas. Last year our report listed a dozen project partners, agencies with whom we have a formal or structured relationship. Over the last year, through various projects and initiatives, that number has increased to about twenty and this trend will continue.

Partnerships themselves do not automatically ensure good practice or success. Time, trust and often increased work is required to develop partnerships into effective and efficient tools. As always the focus remains on developing and ensuring the best outcomes for clients and community members.

Private law firms remain key partners, particularly through the Intervention Order Support Service and some who release staff during the day. The Centre is keen to develop its pro bono partnerships further with geography potentially being as much a barrier for this support as our clients experience.

While the Town Hall Hub has made some new links at least convenient, many others have been forged across the region and indeed beyond.

We thank all of our partners for their support and collaboration through the year and look forward to developing these relationships even further in the year ahead.

Volunteer and staff collaboration

With thirteen distinct volunteer programs, collaboration between staff and volunteers remains a high priority for the Centre. The festivals team has been an enthusiastic new addition to assist in the promotion of the Centre. The volunteers role in the Centre cannot be underestimated or appreciated as it provides both an excellent service to clients through a wide range of assistance and also provides the Centre with flexibility to pursue key priorities.

Within the staff team, Denise Budge joined the **team to 'help us out' with some projects and her efficiency, expertise and diligence were quickly welcomed to the team.**

The appointment of Jenni Smith as Principal Lawyer in September brought legal experience, leadership and passion to this vital role.



Manager (continued)

In December, Naomi Milnes joined the Box Hill team as Administration Trainee and quickly brought skills, depth and professionalism with a maturity beyond her years.

In February Deborah Handley secured a senior management role in a local agency and the Centre reluctantly farewelled her after her excellent efforts in establishing the Outer East CLC in all of its breadth. The Centre reviewed its staffing structure with Denise replacing Deborah and Leonie Burnham joining the leadership team as Inner East Co-ordinator, bringing her extensive legal sector, volunteer, management and development skills to this new role.

In February Eve Bodsworth was awarded a PhD scholarship but we were delighted to retain her skills on a part-time basis to support the Ashburton project. The skilful and delightful Stephanie Ng completed her law degree and after four years with ECLC also left the service. This resulted in the creation of a new outer east team, being Armita Yaresh (Administration), Ann Lightowler (Community Lawyer) and Denise Budge. Ann provides quality legal advice and casework in a very sensitive and caring manner to a breadth of clients while Armita combines her welcoming and dedicated administrative skills with creative projects and a commitment to social justice.

In March, Noel Stubbs concluded his dedicated service as bookkeeper and Cathy Oliver joined the team as Financial Administrator. Cathy has brought financial stability and growth to the service and her professional demeanor makes talking finance a pleasure. Kate Bennett, a school-based apprentice, concluded her placement after more than two years to further develop her career with our best wishes and many stories to tell.

Danni Baylis, Inner East Community Lawyer, is always available to all staff and clients in need of help and her flexibility to pitch in with any task from answering the phone to community legal education talks is greatly appreciated. Craig Rossi wears several hats in the office but his administration support and Information Technology knowledge has helped us solve many a problem.

Kate Johnson, our Community Development worker, continues to inspire with her enthusiasm, professionalism and passion achieving enormous results for our communities.

The Outer East

In looking back on earlier reports and plans, the goal of an **'intentional approach'** has clearly been greatly surpassed by the operation of a vibrant, dynamic and growing service, drawing on local volunteers and supporters and increasingly integrated with the community.

With some staff turnover at the start of 2007, the new team has quickly built on the existing base with a range of new initiatives and developments. The night service in particular is now well established and working closely with the excellent day services provided. All involved with the Outer East through the year should be most proud of their efforts. The demand for services in this catchment is still great and further opportunities continue to be explored to meet these needs.

Quality, targeted & integrated casework, community legal education & law reform

As indicated above, the legal services delivered a considerable expansion on the previous year. The fact that the number of cases (files opened beyond first interview) is up 24% - 100 cases more than the previous year – and yet overall client numbers also rose 15% is a great testament to all the lawyers and other staff. Of course, client numbers tell only part of the story and both new and improved outreach services enhanced the assistance to community members in need right across the East.

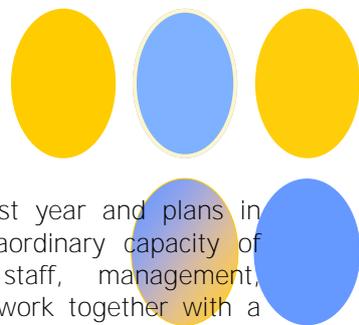
The community development activities of the Centre were reviewed and a new policy framework established. As reflected in the strategic direction, the integration of different activities under this banner and the integration of community development with direct legal services is the key outcome of this process, as well as a mandate for all staff to have an involvement with this work.

Late in the year, the State Government through VLA made funds available to expand the legal services in relation to family violence, particularly at court. ECLC was pleased to gain funding to expand its legal team and improve our services at the Court, that until now have been provided as a priority of the Centre rather than with specific resources. Reflecting the region, Ringwood Court has a very large IVO list and improved service responses are certainly required at a range of levels.

Strategic focus

The Board has worked very effectively based on a range of outstanding skills and a diversity of experience and perspective. A largely new Board has worked together on a range of issues, emphasising a governance model.

The Manager and Board initiated an external Financial Systems Review that led to a number of key changes in the management and operation of those systems. Key policies regarding advice and casework, promotion, communication and community development were reviewed and adopted.



In the previous year the Centre had received funding to expand the number of volunteers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds involved with the Centre. As this project was undertaken it became apparent that the current programs raised a number of barriers to the level of participation that was hoped for. The project gained a strong research and partnership development focus and a series of recommendations for program and other changes were adopted to encourage this involvement through a variety of approaches.

Following significant work in establishing improved organisational systems and processes, particularly around governance and management, including the new Rules (Constitution) and membership systems, the Board established a Task Group to develop a Code of Conduct to outline clear expectations of behaviour and relationships. This group worked quickly and the Code was adopted by the Board.

Two major projects have been a focus throughout the year. Each are strategic developments for the Centre not least as they relate to and impact on each of the five strategic directions.

The recently commenced YRIPP project is a welcome addition as it connects with the target group of young people with an emphasis on diversity and builds on many existing networks and partnerships.

ECLC has also focused on the response to the needs of older people in its community, especially where there are concerns regarding elder abuse. Recent research has highlighted significant numbers of older members of the community who are vulnerable and exploited by family members or others. Unfortunately, many of these problems are hidden for a variety of reasons. ECLC has a significant number of older clients across all of its programs, particularly its wills service, but was keen to go further and develop its expertise and response in this area. Using a range of partnerships this has occurred and is set to develop further. Recently the City of Whitehorse awarded ECLC a community grant to develop an information guide and forum for older people.

The Centre also developed a major partnership with PILCH (Public Interest Law Clearing House), Loddon Campaspe CLC and the Council On The Ageing (Victoria) to develop a tender proposal for the state-wide Elder Abuse Prevention Community Education and Older Persons Legal Centre. This was a massive effort by all of the partners and an innovative and complex model was developed and proposed through excellent collaboration. A response is awaited with great interest.

In the coming year ECLC will review and redevelop its strategic direction and plan for the years ahead. As always, the input of members and supporters will be welcomed in this process.

Overall

The achievements of the last year and plans in place demonstrate the extraordinary capacity of ECLC when volunteers, staff, management, supporters and partners all work together with a common aim. That aim remains the assistance in whatever form to people with legal and related vulnerability, whether individually or in groups and communities. The results this year speak for themselves - while there was considerable consolidation that leaves even further potential for the years ahead!

I would like to thank all of the staff - both paid and volunteer - for their sensational efforts throughout the year. It has been a pleasure to work with enthusiastic and dynamic teams of people who are absolutely committed to offering the best for our clients and community.

Special thanks to Helen Killmier, the Executive and the Board for their leadership, support and insight in a year that contained some challenges amidst the constantly changing broader environment.

I would also like to thank each of our funding partners for their contribution, including and beyond the financial support. Special mention must be made to the City of Whitehorse for both conceiving the vision of the Town Hall Hub and continuing the labour to bring it to a superb reality, as well as lending us Helen along the way! Victoria Legal Aid have continued their extensive partnership with ECLC, along with the ongoing support of the Cities of Knox and Boroondara who expanded their support further.

A year ago I argued that ECLC people are not interested in being amateurs. *The people of the East deserve the best legal advice and casework services and the best integrated community development work we can deliver, from the best staff and volunteers in a timely, professional and highly ethical manner.*

I believe the last year has delivered on this vision and demonstrated that this can indeed be done very well. The work of course is not finished - we will continue to develop and deliver highly professional, ethical and innovative services for our communities, working passionately to improve access to and understanding of the law for all of the communities we serve. We look forward to working with you.

Michael Smith
Manager



Legal Services

Developments

The last year has seen significant changes in Family Law which have impacted on a large proportion of our client base. A massive third of the clients that we see are seeking advice regarding family law matters and a further 20% of clients in relation to family violence issues.

The legislative changes that came into effect in July 2006 have generally meant a stronger focus on the issue of family violence and the right of a child to have a substantial relationship with both parents. Many in the family law area were concerned that the best interests of the child would be lost in the rush of non-primary care parents seeking shared time with the children. However, there is no anecdotal evidence from this service that this has been the case. Another significant development was the introduction of compulsory mediation in July 2007. It has been pleasing to observe that nearly all of our clients seeking family law advice where there is a dispute have been referred to local mediation services long before this compulsory date.

ECLC is now a VLA Family Law panel member which has meant that we are able to obtain quick grants of aid to provide for clients in the most urgent circumstances where there is not the opportunity to refer clients to the private sector or where the client because of their very high need may not be picked up by the private sector.

For example, we have been acting for a client who speaks a rare language and who arrived at this Centre with a court hearing in 2 days time, having fled from a very violent situation. We were able to get an interpreter and appear for them within this very short time frame. The matter is still proceeding.

Casework and advice - areas of law of the last year

In early 2007, casework guidelines were reviewed in terms of client need as well as staffing expertise and the National Risk Management Guidelines (ECLC participates in a national Professional Indemnity Insurance scheme.) ECLC guidelines exclude areas of law such as employment law and personal injury where clients are well served by the private sector and specialist legal services.



ECLC opened over 420 cases throughout 2006-2007 and provided over 2300 advice sessions

Intervention Order Service

ECLC has been working over the last year more closely with all the family violence stakeholders in the East including VLA, the court, EDVOS and the family violence services, to produce a better service for victims of family violence. The result has been better communication between the court and the dual duty lawyer services.

For example on duty list days, meetings are now held each morning to discuss the court lists and any issues arising with the other services and the registry staff.

ECLC also observed growing court lists that were placing an increased burden on particularly our volunteer legal staff. The number of clients ECLC has seen has in this program increased by a significant 46% from the previous year.

As a result, ECLC has reluctantly determined to change its policy regarding seeing clients at the Crimes Family Violence Court days. The Centre no longer assists clients listed for stalking matters at the Court. However, we encouraged the Court and the police to refer these clients to our Centre prior to the Court date. This has happily resulted in many more clients attending the centre before the court date and being properly advised and ready without disadvantaging the real victims of violence.

Fortunately, we were also able to lobby for further funding than was initially advised in relation to new family violence lawyer positions and now have funding for a 0.5 position. Currently we are recruiting for a new lawyer position which will be based at Boronia.

Staff lawyers met with volunteer lawyers of the IVO service to discuss concerns that had been identified by the Principal Lawyer regarding the impact of family law changes on the advice that is given to our clients.

Staff lawyers have attended training in family violence law and advocacy and will continue to do so particularly in the face of proposed changes to the Crimes (Family Violence) Act. Significant in the proposal is the broadening of the definition of family violence to include financial and emotional abuse. The proposals also include the restraint on defendants appearing in person to cross-examine victims.

Jenni Smith
Principal Lawyer

Outreach Services

Access for Ashburton Project

The Access for Ashburton commenced in March to improve access for this small yet diverse community with significant socio-economic and educational disadvantage. The project is undertaken in partnership with the Craig Community Health Centre with the financial support of the City of Boroondara and the Rotary Club of Balwyn.

Ashburton outreach is located at the Craig Community Health Centre twice monthly. This service is increasingly patronised as ECLC builds links and partnerships with local agencies.

While the outreach service is the key element to the project, community legal education workshops and working with existing services are also vital to identify the local legal needs, build links with residents in the public housing estate and surrounds and ensure an integrated response.

The most common issues ECLC assists clients with at Ashburton have been family law, motor vehicle accidents, neighbourhood disputes and traffic infringements.

ECLC assisted over 270 clients at Ringwood Court with Intervention Order matters in 2006-07

Hawthorn

Hawthorn outreach is situated on the very noisy Burwood Rd in Hawthorn at the Inner East Community Health Centre. A Community lawyer from Eastern Community Legal Centre attends every fortnight to give legal advice. Three to four clients are booked in at one time.

The clients come from surrounding suburbs which arrange from the leafy to less leafy! The main issues we cover are Crimes Family Violence, Family law, Criminal law and infringement notices. The proportion of clients with mental health issues appears higher than the clients presenting at Box Hill.

ECLC gives advice to clients from a range of backgrounds and no one is turned away. A few clients are in a position to obtain private solicitors and these are referred. They are in the minority and most of the clients are in urgent need of the service we provide.

Lilydale & Yarra Junction

The outreaches are held in Lilydale and Yarra Junction on a monthly basis at the EACH offices. Lilydale is very accessible, close to the business and shopping centre and a short stroll from the railway station. Yarra Junction is situated in the Yarra Valley about halfway between Lilydale and Warburton. As the bus is the only public transport, it is less accessible. However, for those people near the bus route or in town, the outreach is conveniently located in the main shopping strip **and held at the aptly named "purple church"**. Because of its colour it is very hard to miss!

We usually see four clients per session but this will expand as the service grows. Currently each service is booked out well in advance. Although we see clients with a diverse range of legal problems, the majority have motor vehicle accidents and family law enquiries. We have also had several dog seizure cases, which corresponds with the Shire of Yarra Ranges' recent determination to get tough on the owners of roaming dogs.

The highlights of both outreaches are always the people that one meets and the satisfaction derived from assisting them. While we don't expect to be thanked, our clients are always very appreciative, **a common remark being "Thank you, you've taken a great weight off my shoulder."** It's gratifying to know that our service has made someone's day a little brighter and easier.

Volunteer lawyers have seen 1115 clients for legal advice and casework in the last financial year. Around 22 paralegals support volunteer lawyers at night services over both offices.

Rowville

This outreach has been running for many years at the Knox Council building within Rowville Shopping Centre.

Karen Jones, long time valued volunteer and Board Member, has diligently been seeing Family Law clients once a month and sees four clients each session.

On behalf of the staff and clients of the Centre, we sincerely thank Karen for her dedication over the years in keeping this outreach operational.

Danni Baylis and Ann Lightowler
Community Lawyers



ECLC assisted over 2240 clients in 2006-2007. The Outer East office has experienced a 48% increase in the number of clients seen over the past 12 months.

Centre Activity Summary

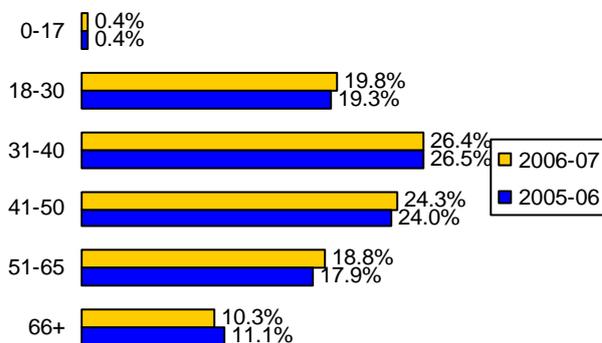
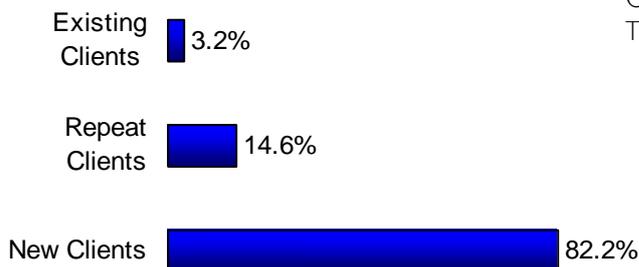
For the period 1 July 2006—30 June 2007

Activities

Advice	2325
Cases	422
Files open at period start	73
Files opened	349
Files closed	302

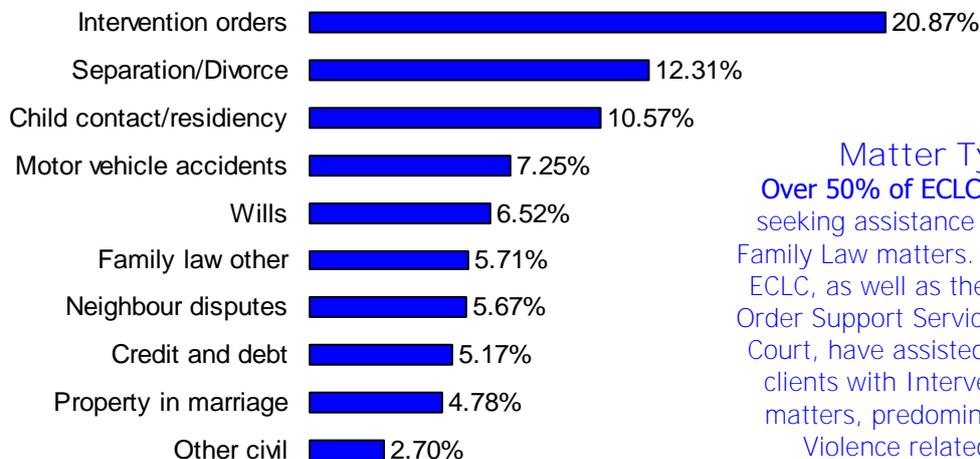
Clients

Total Number of Clients	2248
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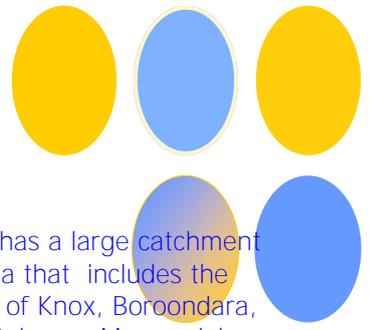
Age of Clients

It is pleasing to see an increase in 18-30 year old clients, as well as a rise in clients aged between 51-65 years. ECLC anticipates that clients of the 66+ age bracket will increase as the Centre undertakes new projects and services aimed at assisting older persons

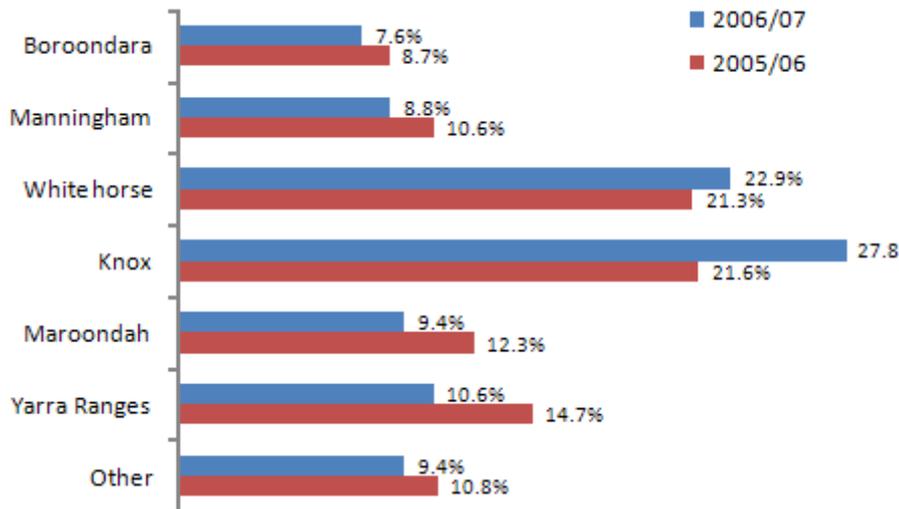


Matter Types

Over 50% of ECLC's clients are seeking assistance in relation to Family Law matters. Both offices of ECLC, as well as the Intervention Order Support Service at Ringwood Court, have assisted over 20% of clients with Intervention Order matters, predominantly Family Violence related Orders.



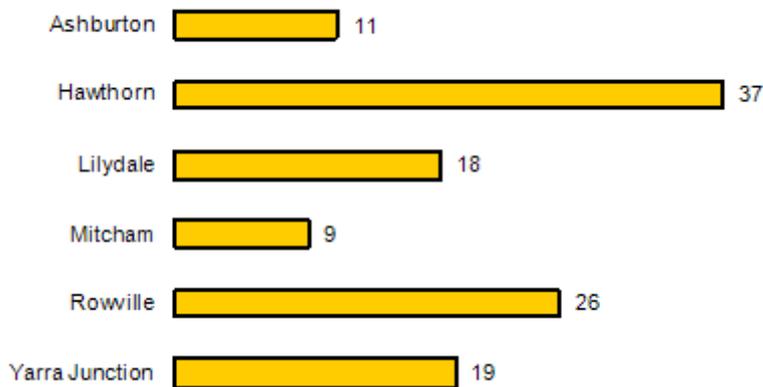
Location



ECLC has a large catchment area that includes the Cities of Knox, Boroondara, Whitehorse, Maroondah, Manningham and Shire of Yarra Ranges.

ECLC is happy to see a rise in clients accessing the service from the Knox region. ECLC is also pleased that the number of clients accessing the service from Whitehorse has increased with the move to the Box Hill Town Hall Hub.

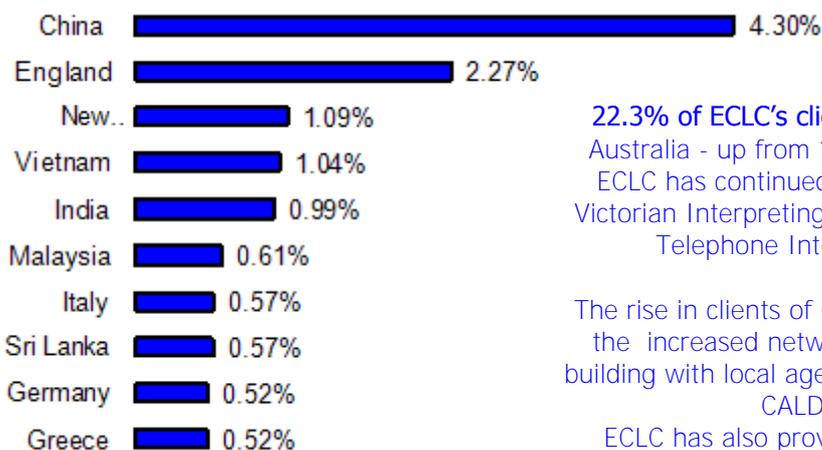
Outreach Activities



ECLC holds numerous outreaches across the Eastern region to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to access the service. Hawthorn outreach continues to be popular this year. As a result of the move to Box Hill, the Mitcham outreach concluded in 2006.

ECLC is thrilled with the establishment and growth in the Yarra Junction outreach and looks forward to building both the Ashburton and Lilydale outreaches in the next year.

Countries of Birth



22.3% of ECLC's clients were born outside Australia - up from 19% the previous year. ECLC has continued to rely heavily on the Victorian Interpreting Translating Service and Telephone Interpreting Service.

The rise in clients of Chinese decent is due to the increased networking and partnership building with local agencies offering services to CALD clients.

ECLC has also provided community legal education to this client group and have translated "How Can ECLC Assist You" into Chinese.

Community Development

In early 2007, ECLC underwent significant change and adopted a fresh approach to the way it carried out its non-case work activities. Many minds worked together to form a new approach which saw Community Legal Education (CLE), partnerships, promotion, publications, advocacy and law reform come under the one banner of 'Community Development'.

So what is ECLC's view on Community Development? ECLC is committed to an integrated approach to community development, with client and broader community input each informing both the direct legal services and broader work. This Community development activity is a primary function of the Centre that adds value to its commitment to providing direct legal services. The priority in this work is on disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community.

A range of activities are undertaken including:

- Community Legal Education workshops
- Publications
- Partnerships and Projects
- Promotion and Communication
- Research and Advocacy

None of these areas stand alone. Each overlaps and is complementary to other modes as well as to the direct legal services. This requires a high level of collaboration and consultation between relevant staff and components of the service. The model ensures that all staff members have the ability and opportunity to educate and empower the community through various avenues. A diverse Volunteer Community Projects Team has also been recruited to assist with major projects.

Prevention is always better than cure and through our Community Development work, we believe that they Centre aims to see clients in the earlier stages of their legal issue, that community professionals will be quick to refer and that the general community can use the education to assist themselves in their situation.



Sarah, helping promote ECLC's services at the Town Hall Hub Open Day 2007

Since this new approach has been adopted, many **projects have been undertaken and ECLC's profile in the eastern region has risen.**

Community Legal Education workshops

- We believe that our role is to empower and impact our community by recognising and responding to their legal needs, providing information and education in a clear, easy to understand format and to ensure that all members of the eastern region know that the Centre exists and is here to assist them;
- Creation of CLE modules and increased delivery of education sessions to CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) groups, family violence survivor groups, young people, older persons and community professionals;
- Approximately 17 CLE sessions have been held across the eastern region and as a result, many participants have sought appointments for legal advice and assistance.

Publications

- **Review of the Centre's self-help kits** and the development of a major proposal to transition **ECLC's Crash Course Guide to an On-line resource.**

Partnerships and Projects

- Increased attendance at network meetings, in particular those relating to family violence, CALD and youth issues;
- Increased attendance at working party meetings and meetings that are driving change in the legal sector and within the greater community;
- Building beneficial partnerships with key services across the eastern region and the State;
- Seeking additional funding to secure innovative programs to service the needs of young people and older persons in our community.

In our Law Week Promotional Project, over 47,000 people had the opportunity to view ECLC materials. As a result, many have booked appointments & the profile of ECLC raised at a grass roots level.

Promotion and Communication

- Four ECLC Newsletters produced and sent to hundreds of individuals and services across the eastern region and beyond;
- Youth focus, promotion and partnership building within the youth sector of the Outer East;
- Promotion throughout the region through the **creation of Youth Posters, "How Can We Assist You?" posters and a Chinese translated poster;**
- Promotional campaigns launched in conjunction with Law Week, utilising local libraries to carry **out promotion of ECLC's services and the opening of the Town Hall Hub;**
- Utilising regional education co-ordinators to assist in promoting services to young people attending secondary college or TAFE institutions across the eastern region;
- Renewed focus on attending regional Festivals to promote the Centre and its services.

Research and Advocacy

- Production of educational media releases to local papers advising of current legal issues being faced by the community.
- Advocacy to funders and key stakeholders to ensure expansion in funding for family violence responses at the Court

Conclusion

ECLC is already seeing wonderful results and clients, professionals and the general community are benefiting from the changes to the approach. ECLC looks forward to continuing and expanding its Community Development activities by introducing new, innovative programs, working with other services to ensure clear legal information for CALD groups and through the redevelopment of its website to transform it into a legal education hub for our community.

I am incredibly proud of and thankful for the wonderful staff team and volunteers who enthusiastically and compassionately deliver community legal education, support promotional **and partnership opportunities and go 'over and above' to see positive change in the lives of clients and our community.** Thank you for your hard work, for embracing change and for your high level of professionalism.

Kate Johnson
Community Development



Michael Smith, Manager of ECLC, with Clare, Community Projects Volunteer, discussing ECLC's services with interested community members at the Town Hall Hub Open Day 2007



Members of ECLC's Volunteer Community Project team assisting the Centre with grass roots promotion at regional community festivals



Inner East

With the strengthening of the Outer East office at Boronia, the Inner East team has been able to concentrate our services on the more workable catchment area of Whitehorse, Boroondara and Manningham, a population of only about 400,000.

Although moving from Blackburn was a sentimental end of an era, in many ways it has been an exciting stage in ECLC history. The move to Box Hill has meant the end of mission brown bricks and constantly providing detailed directions to the many clients who are probably still lost crossing the railway line trying to find our space in Blackburn. Our community roots in Blackburn have not been lost as Blackburn residents continue to utilise our service along with many residents from all the surrounding areas.

Box Hill office provides a professional, well equipped office space offering ground floor access for our clients for the first time in many years and heating and air-conditioning as a bonus for staff and volunteers. Our loyal volunteers relocated to Box Hill without complaint and have embraced our new premises. With the move to Box Hill, we have noticed a change in our client base as Box Hill is not only an important transport hub, but also a more culturally diverse community.

As clients for whom English is a second language increase, there has been a heightened need for interpreter services. Although financially this is a **challenge for our Centre, it is an exciting 'problem'** as it confirms that we are reaching a need in our community that previously may have been neglected.

Being part of the town hall hub has allowed opportunities for important networking and partnership building along with training opportunities. Sharing space with dynamic agencies such as the CAB, MIC and Louise Multicultural Centre has provided valuable partnerships that continue to grow and strengthen our service. All staff are involved in different networks that further spread the word about our services, provide promotional opportunities to raise the profile of our Centre and also contribute to important projects.



Cathy Oliver, Financial Administrator, together with Naomi Milnes, Administration Trainee & Jenni Smith, ECLC's Principal Lawyer

The legal service continues to grow with many clients attending our office day appointment and evening service three nights each week with our loyal teams of volunteers. Day paralegal volunteers continue to be an integral part of our service with administration support to our staff and volunteer lawyers. Many have been with us throughout the year with new faces arriving all the time. Their enthusiasm and dedication is valued by all.

We are fortunate to still have our steady day lawyers who volunteer weekly providing **specialist service**. Denise O'Shannassy provides advice in family law, Richard Edmonds provides a popular Wills service and Carol Barton attends twice a week providing advice in consumer and credit matters as well as Wills and assisting in legal education. Our thanks to all three for their valuable contribution and support they offer to staff and clients.

Finally I would like to thank all the staff at the Box Hill office. The team across the agency is a pleasure to work with and in the past year ECLC have welcomed some wonderful staff. The Inner East office is an exciting place to be as we plan for future projects and continuously improve our services for our clients and the wider community.

Thank you for your support in the past year as we look forward to the future with even more exciting partnerships and projects and further strengthening of our proud community base.

Leonie Burnham
Inner East Co-ordinator

I volunteer at the ECLC because of the opportunity that it gives me to experience the law in action & the exposure it offers to vastly different problems of clients from myriad social backgrounds.
- ECLC Volunteer

Box Hill Relocation

In 2005 the City of Whitehorse decided to redevelop the Box Hill Town Hall into a hub that would house a number of community agencies. Eastern Community Legal Centre and fourteen other agencies were **invited to be part of the new "Town Hall Hub"**. There were discussions about service needs and plans were drawn and re-drawn. By mid 2006, the \$6.5 million renovation commenced and the move date of November confirmed.

To ensure the least impact on ECLC's service delivery it was decided that one person should be responsible for the planning and organising the move. I was delighted to be offered the challenge to make this move as smooth as possible.

Moving to a modern office with less floor space meant it was necessary to reduce the amount of furniture, introduce more efficient file storage and reduce the stored resources. Staff were requested to reduce and recycle. A Compactus unit was necessary to solve our file storage problems but there was still much measuring and staff began to refer to me as **the 'sticky dot' queen** - if they stood still I might put a coloured dot on them to identify if they would be staying, going or being disposed of. Our IT partners Finrea assisted with the logistics of transferring our computer system with a minimum of down time and community promotion plans developed to advise the community of our new location.



Last night service at the Blackburn office



Leonie Burnham & Denise Budge setting up the new, modern reception area



ECLC's new home at the Town Hall Hub

The real countdown began on the 10th October when we had 39 days to go!! The countdown calendar went up in the office and with the **assistance of Leonie Burnham's wonderful team of volunteers**, the mammoth task of archiving and **re-boxing of 33 years' case files began**. The recycling pile in the back corner of the Blackburn office was growing as staff waded through their offices with **the chant of 'reduce, reduce, reduce' ringing in their ears**.

Twelve days to go and the packing boxes delivered, there was no doubt we were moving. Phone system, stationery, post office, all systems were go. Timelines were short, but construction was still happening at Box Hill and we were unable to get access until the day before we moved. There was no room for error. Tensions were rising, was it all going to happen?

Appointments continued at Blackburn until the week before and then the lawyers relocated to Boronia. To the outside world it was business as usual. When moving day finally arrived we co-ordinated the photocopier and furniture removalists, only to find that as they were arriving at the Box Hill office, painters were still finishing off, cleaners still had to come through and the Compactus installer had not finished. By the end of the day all the deadlines had been met and there was an audible sigh of relief.

The following week we continued to operate from Boronia as we unpacked the Box Hill office. On Monday November 27th, the phones and appointments were redirected to the new Box Hill office and we have never looked back, enjoying our new premises and being part of the new vibrant Town Hall Hub.

A huge thank you must go to all the staff and volunteers for their co-operation and support throughout the move. Their willingness to help wherever and however possible, only goes to demonstrate what a wonderful team we have.

Denise Budge

Outer East

The Outer East Boronia office has now been operational for 2 years with the past 12 months experiencing many changes and growth. We have said goodbye in February and March to Deborah Handley, Stephanie Ng and Eve Bodsworth who have played a very important role in the establishment and growth of the new Outer East office. We thank them for all their work and support of the Boronia Office and wish them well in their future endeavours.

This has resulted in the creation of a new outer east team, being Armita Yaresh – Administration, Ann Lightowler – Community Lawyer and myself as the new Co-ordinator. We are excited by the recruitment of a new team of day time volunteers. With such a strong team, we are now able to offer a very responsive service to the many needs of our community. Thank you to all the day volunteers who have made such a huge difference to the smooth running of the service.

To progress the wonderful work that has already been achieved, this past 12 months has been focussing on promotion of the service to raise community awareness. We have seen an increase from 453 clients seen during 2005/06 to 672 for the past 12 months, a 48% increase. This has been achieved through increased community development activities and strong networking in the community.

Of the 672 clients seen in the past 12 months, 58% were family law issues including separation, divorce, property settlement, child contact and parenting arrangements and family violence/ intervention orders. Files have been opened for 22% of clients seen during the 12 month period and lawyers have assisted with negotiations and/ or preparations for court.

I volunteer to engage with my community – assisting people with matters that affect them.

Adds a different human perspective to the practice of law. Seeing the law used in a manner that positively affects the community.

- ECLC Volunteer

The outer east which covers the three local government areas of Knox, Maroondah and the Shire of Yarra Ranges covers a large geographic area. To ensure we meet the needs of our large region, we run monthly outreach services in Lilydale, Yarra Junction and Rowville. Our thanks must go to EACH for providing us office space at Lilydale and Yarra Junction and the City of Knox for assisting with office space at Rowville. With the increasing demand for our service, we will be investigating the viability of providing a night service at Lilydale during the next 12 months.

Over 60 Community development activities have been carried out in 2006-07, including CLE, promotion, newsletters, media releases and partnership development

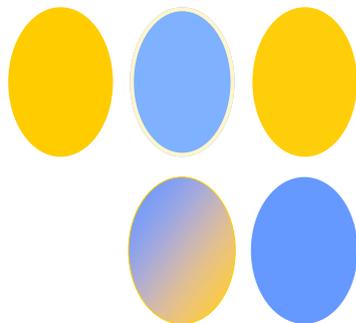
We currently provide a Tuesday evening service from our Boronia office which is run entirely by a wonderfully dedicated team of volunteers. We are able to offer 21 appointments per month in the evening covering matters from family law, intervention orders, criminal, traffic offences to general law. We hope to increase this number of appointments to 27 in the near future. Our sincere thanks must go to all of the volunteers who staff this night service.

To assist night service volunteers and improve the channels of communication, we ran an information session that allowed a sharing of ideas and information. This proved to be very valuable for all who participated. There was an 80% attendance of volunteers which reflects their dedication to ECLC which we greatly appreciate.



Ann Lightowler & Armita Yaresh at the Boronia Office

It is great to be able to volunteer alongside the wonderful staff at ECLC in such a friendly environment. I love the challenges of dealing with different clients & legal issues & knowing that I can contribute to such a valuable community service
-ECLC Volunteer



The Boronia office has welcomed the recent staff restructure, where Kate Johnson has taken on the role of Community Development Worker, allowing ECLC to have a more structured approach to community development activities.



In the past 6 months at Boronia we have participated in the Law Week Library Display which resulted in us establishing permanent displays for ECLC at the 4 local libraries. We have attended 15 network meetings including the Aston Forum and various youth network meetings. We have been focusing on young people and as a result we have participated in a Critical Sharing Session as a panel member, been invited to participate in "Race around Your Community" organised by the Shire of Yarra Ranges Youth Services, presented 2 youth-specific talks and submitted to all the local newspapers a youth-specific press release on the Anti-Hoon legislation.

I enjoy volunteering for two reasons - contributing & receiving. I enjoy contributing to my community in an active way, not a passive way. It gives me an opportunity to use skills that I have attained through study. It is also about receiving. There is so much to be learnt through volunteering - knowledge, general skills and life skills which will hopefully make me a much more sensitive & understanding person & lawyer in the future.
- ECLC Volunteer

In addition, we have submitted 7 other articles to newsletters and newspapers, presented 6 other talks and sent promotional material to a number of community organisations. This is just a snapshot of the community development work that is happening in the Boronia office.

As we increase the profile of the service, so does the demand for our service increase and we look forward to meeting some of this demand in the future with an additional lawyer 2 days a week at the Boronia office.

Gordon Care's "Stand By Me" program that has been operating from our premises 2 days a week since October 2006, has now increased to a 5 day per week program and we continue to enjoy a great partnership with them.



We have a fantastic team of staff and volunteers at the Boronia office and all deserve recognition and thanks because without the strength and dedication of the team we would not have achieved so much in the past 12 months. We will all look forward to another very exciting 12 months filled with new challenges.

Denise Budge
 Outer East Co-ordinator



Volunteers

When asked to reflect on the year that has passed with respect to the volunteer programs at ECLC, as always I am overwhelmed with the generosity of time that all our volunteers give so willingly.

Currently, ECLC conduct 13 volunteer programs across the two offices and outreach services. It is with the success of all these programs that we are able to assist so many varied clients across an enormous catchment area. From the outreach service at Rowville, which has been going for many years, to the weekly night services at each office, the volunteers of ECLC continue to provide a very professional and caring service to our clients.

Many volunteers wear different hats when involved at ECLC, with some being involved in three different programs at times. We hope that this diversity amongst our volunteers not only provides a more comprehensive service for our clients, but also that our volunteers have the opportunity to experience the many areas of work performed by staff in the proud tradition of ECLC.

By volunteering at the Intervention Order Support Service and the night service, for example, the **paralegal is exposed to our clients' experiences** in different environments and will obtain an insight and build their skills with hands on experiences. When our paralegals go out in the world with their practicing certificate, we know they have an **appreciation for our clients' situation enriched from** their experiences at ECLC.

All our volunteer lawyers across the service bring a wealth of experience and knowledge when providing legal advice to our clients, but they also **all contribute to our paralegals' education.** The volunteer lawyers should all take pride when the paralegals finally graduate, knowing they have contributed to their experiences by teaching them the finer points of the profession and inspiring them to pursue their career. Many of our paralegals continue to volunteer as a lawyer and so the cycle continues for the benefit of our clients.

As a profession, lawyers are not only generous with their time and knowledge but remember the days of study and the feelings of disillusionment as our paralegals sometimes struggle to their goal and offer immense support for our students at times when they need reminding of the reason they chose their path.

As ECLC continues to grow with service provision it is necessary to also expand the role of the volunteer. In recent times, new volunteer programs have been developed to include our talented volunteers in assisting staff with events such as festivals, community displays and research for community legal education.

With the support of volunteers, we are able to spread the word about the services of ECLC and encourage more needy clients to access a lawyer and seek help in their disputes within the legal system. We hope to expand this program further and utilise volunteers from many different cultural backgrounds to work towards improving our services, which will impact on the rights of all members of our community.

In recognition of the wonderful work performed by our volunteers, ECLC organised an inaugural dinner to celebrate the role of the volunteer. It was a very successful evening and was well attended. Not only was this an opportunity for ECLC to thank our volunteers but it provided an opportunity for volunteers to meet others involved at the Centre. As volunteers are always so busy doing what they do so well, they are not able to meet other volunteers and share **experiences and time together.** The dinner's success can again be attributed to the character of our volunteers as they mingled and embraced the evening and a fun time was had by all. Many thanks to all who attended and hope that future events will be bigger and better.

The dinner was also an opportunity to acknowledge Tony Daquino and Rhonda Goodall, two of our long standing volunteers. Between these two dedicated lawyers, they have given over twenty years of their time to the night service and provided not only quality legal advice but have both served on the Board of Management. They have both been instrumental in many improvements to service and have supported the Centre through many bumpy periods in the past. Fortunately, Tony is continuing in his role at night service while Rhonda has taken a well deserved short break and will hopefully return to ECLC in some capacity in times ahead. Thank you to all our long standing volunteers as there are many more who will also exceed 10 years service in the near future. Without this generosity and continuity of volunteer staff, the night service would not function as successfully as it does today.

Each and every volunteer is an important part of ECLC and each one provides valuable support to staff and clients and enriches our service. It is a pleasure to work at an agency that reinforces the kindness of others every day by the services we provide and the gratitude of clients when we are able to offer timely and professional advice and assistance to our clients who have often not been treated with kindness in their life.

Leonie Burnham
Co-ordinator

Youth Referral and Independent Person Program

YRIPP (Youth Referral and Independent Person Program) aims to work with and improve the existing system of Independent Person support provided to young people in police custody who are at the initial point of processing as potential defendants in criminal matters. It also aims to divert young people, primarily refugees and newly arrived young people, from progression to higher levels of the criminal justice system, based on culturally appropriate referral at the point of police interview.

YRIPP has been operated on a pilot basis since September 2004 as a partnership project of the following organisations: Victoria Police, Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI), Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), Federation of CLCs, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Crime and Violence Prevention and Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, working with with four local CLCs and one community agency.

State Government funding was been provided in July to expand YRIPP to 103 police stations across the state, including 14 within the Eastern Region. ECLC was delighted to be able to partner with CMYI and the consortium to host the project. Vivianne Gloz commenced as the Eastern YRIPP Regional Co-ordinator in September 2007. YRIPP:

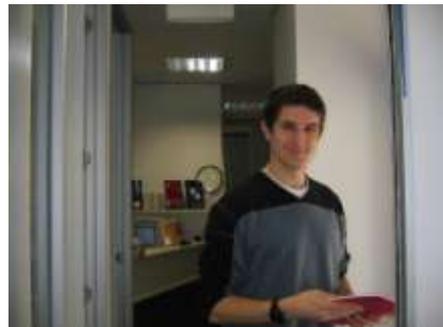
- Provides appropriately trained volunteer Independent Persons to attend police interviews with young people under 18, particularly newly arrived and refugee young people.
- Provides a simple and reliable system for the allocation of Independent Persons to attend police interviews, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- Provides free telephone legal advice (through Victoria Legal Aid) for young people being interviewed by police at police stations where YRIPP is operational;
- Provides multilingual information cards for parents/guardians outlining the purpose of a **parent or guardian's presence at police interviews**;
- Provides referrals for at-risk young people to local welfare, drug and alcohol, education and training, health and other services;
- Works with local networks to ensure that the program complements the existing service system;

YRIPP facilitates the development of strategic partnerships between local police, youth, ethnic and Indigenous communities and welfare services, to reduce youth offending through culturally appropriate diversionary means.

The key priorities as YRIPP is established in the Eastern Region are to:

- Establish the program at the following police stations: Mooroolbark, Ringwood, Croydon, Lilydale, Belgrave, Knox and Boronia. (YRIPP at Inner East police stations will follow).
- Recruit and train volunteer Independent Persons.
- Network with youth service providers to establish referral points for young people at-risk.

Vivianne Gloz
YRIPP Regional Co-ordinator



Craig Rossi, showing off the modern office!



Danni Baylis, Inner East Community Lawyer

History

In 1974 Erskine Rodan, an undergraduate law student had lived in the Nunawading area for a decade. He was aware of social problems faced by local residents and the lack of legitimate legal aid in Victoria. He sought to provide equality before the law by establishing a legal service in Nunawading where lawyers could assist the poor **to access the legal system. In Erskine's words "there was no real structure in Australia to look at which would assist in servicing the community"**.

Erskine received support from the Nunawading City Council and various lawyers who lived locally, who worked to initiate the service. From these small beginnings the service started in May 1974, giving legal advice in the evening from a room in a house in Blackburn Road occupied by the YMCA.

The service aimed to educate the community and co-operate with other helping professions. Some of its early activities included initiating a refuge for women, a duty solicitor scheme at Box Hill Court, and assisting the Spanish community to expose licensing scams.

The demand for the services of the Centre has continued to grow and it now assists people from six local government areas: Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges. ECLC now has two offices – one located in Box Hill, which services the inner east and the other in Boronia, which services the outer east.

ECLC has been very active in its work with all of the local community and, in particular, people experiencing family violence. The Centre has initiated **'outreaches' to provide legal advice at a number of locations across the inner and outer eastern region, including Hawthorn, Ashburton, Yarra Junction and Lilydale.** ECLC also partners with Victoria Legal Aid and Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Service to assist clients with family violence related Intervention Orders at Ringwood Court.

Volunteers at ECLC's old office in Blackburn. ECLC relocated to the Box Hill Town Hall Hub in 2006

ECLC values the contribution volunteers make to the Centre. ECLC currently has 13 volunteer programs in operation across the eastern region

ECLC has always been involved in community development projects and programs and over the years has worked hard to respond to the needs of the community through the creation of self-help guides, providing community legal education to client groups, community workers and the broader community through advocacy projects.

The centre still has a large, committed team of volunteers who not only make its work **possible, but often go 'over and above'** to ensure that clients are seen and receive an **excellent level of service.** ECLC's volunteers have assisted many thousands of people over the past thirty three years to understand and access the legal system. ECLC volunteers assist in a variety of roles throughout the day, at night and at outreach locations, to ensure that all members of the community have access to free legal advice, assistance and advocacy.



Treasurer

The 2006-07 financial year has been another period of growth for the organisation. Income has continued to grow and the Centre has continued to pursue new opportunities to provide services in areas of need.

As shown by the financial reports, certain factors have resulted in the Centre returning an overall deficit for the financial year. Those factors include a number of one off expenses incurred in the relocation of the Blackburn office to Box Hill and additional staffing costs that commenced in the 2005-06 year.

The Centre has revised its accounting and payroll practices on the basis of a review conducted at the beginning of 2007. These changes reflect the growth in size of the organisation as a whole and bring our processes into line with accepted best practice. Cathy Oliver joined the Centre as Financial Administrator in March and has most proficiently led the implementation of a large number of system and process improvements in a short period.

Staff leave entitlement provisions have been improved so that the Centre is better equipped to deal with staff absences (long service leave, extended periods of annual leave). It also prepares us, from an accounting perspective, for the introduction of any improved industrial conditions we may be able to offer.

Another factor that has affected our bottom line this year is the depreciation incurred on the new furnishings and equipment acquired. Much of this has been donated, so there has not been an up-front cost incurred, but we still need to account for the depreciation. As indicated above, the Centre achieved a number of income increases in the year that led to regular budget revision. Significant further income growth has been confirmed for 2007-08 and a balanced, yet conservative budget has been adopted by the Board.

So while the financial reports reflect a deficit for the year, we have actually strengthened the financial systems and reinforced the organisation for the future. With the Centre looking to take on new challenges, such as the *Seniors Advocacy, Information and Legal Centre* joint venture project and further expanding services in the inner and outer east, this strengthening will prove vital in the year ahead.

Lance Wilson
Treasurer

Financial Statements

Auditors Notes

EASTERN COMMUNITY LEGAL
CENTRE INCORPORATED

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR
ENDED 30TH JUNE 2007

NOTE 1 BASIS AND STANDARDS OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

In accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, the accrual basis of accounting has been adopted in the preparation of the financial statements of the Service for the Year Ended 30th June 2007.

To maintain accounting procedures, the balance sheet includes all known liabilities, including Provisions and Creditors.

NOTE 2 DEPRECIATION

In accordance with generally accepted accounting principles adopted for this Service, depreciation on assets has been calculated and incorporated into the financial statements

NOTE 3 EMPLOYEES ENTITLEMENTS

During the year, the Service provided for Annual Leave entitlements and Sick Leave entitlements.

It should be noted that no provision for Long Service Leave has been included in the financial statements this year. However, as employees length of service grows, a provision will be implemented. It is envisaged that a provision for long service leave will be accrued in the next financial report.

Profit and Loss Statement for Year ended 30 June 2007

Income

	2007	2006
Assessable Government industry payment		2,000
CLC Recurrent - Commonwealth	123,325	120,907
CLC Recurrent - State	404,659	333,690
Local government	59,672	71,343
Fundraising/Donations	19,394	188
Donations	5,600	4,800
Consumer & Tenancy		(3,600)
Publication sales		123
Interest received	5,773	5,810
Other Income	91	249
Memberships	223	
Services	2,909	
Grant-Victorian Government		5,000
Rebates - Workcover	37,389	11,406
Rents received	6,000	
Total income	665,035	551,915

Expenses

Accountancy		150
Advertising and promotion	2,177	2,159
Audit fees	4,775	3,070
Bank Fees And Charges	272	340
Cleaning	5,287	4,630
Client Services Costs		1,015
Committee expenses	1,062	518
Computer Expenses	955	7,703
Consultant fees	4,436	
Delivery	299	814
Depreciation plant	15,785	12,160
Filing Fees		37
Hire/rent of Plant & Equipment	3,191	
Insurance	2,128	3,265
Interest-Australia	2,454	
Interest-Taxation Office		1,781
Legal Expenses	(256)	11,632
Library	2,238	2,212
Light & power	4,235	3,352
Office Relocation Costs	3,325	
Postage	2,501	1,854
Printing & stationery	15,763	14,457
Project & Volunteer Costs		618
Provision Annual leave	11,160	2,292
Provision Sick Leave	(622)	522
Rates & outgoings	85	3,579
Rent on land & buildings	56,538	54,613
Repairs & maintenance	1,475	1,656
Replacements	260	1,696
Salaries & Benefit Payments	474,844	315,937
Scrapped Assets	4,370	
Staff amenities	4,452	3,962
Staff training	2,463	1,517
Staff recruitment	376	2,473
Subscriptions & memberships	5,605	3,899
Superannuation	40,047	27,567
Telephone & Internet Fees	8,270	9,130
Travel, accom & conference	8,227	9,558
Volunteer Expenses	2,147	
Workcover	1,514	3,238
Total expenses	691,839	513,406
Net Profit (Loss) from Ordinary Activities	(26,803)	38,509

Detailed Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2007

Services' Funds

	2007	2006
Opening Balance	118,660	80,151
Net profit/(loss)	(26,803)	38,509
Total Services' Funds	91,857	118,660

Current Assets

Cash at Bank – Maroondah Credit Union	12,321	48,565
Cash at Bank – Maroondah Credit Union	5	5
Cash at Bank – Screen Saver Invest. S25	75,673	30,244
Cash on hand - Blackburn	6	45
Cash on hand - Boronia	22	15
	88,028	78,874

Receivables

Trade debtors		836
		836

Other financial assets

Shares in other companies	10	10
	10	10

Other

Short term deposits		148
Term deposit		51,974
Security Deposit	2,350	5,275
	2,350	57,397

Total Current Assets

90,388 137,118

Non-Current Assets - Property, Plant and Equipment

Plant & equipment – at cost	117,392	97,772
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(78,375)	(80,818)
Office Equipment – Boronia	50,603	50,603
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(17,480)	(6,809)
Total Non-Current Assets	72,140	60,748

Total Assets

162,528 197,866

Current Liabilities

Payables Unsecured:

- Trade creditors	1,176	
- Other creditors – PAYG June	4,695	24,038
- Superannuation payable		5,092
- Other creditors - GST Owing	19,428	24,956
- Creditors - Union dues		120
- Amounts Owing- Wages	8,183	
	33,481	54,207

Current Tax Liabilities

GST payable control account		2,347
		2,347

Other

Prepaid income	4,000	
	4,000	

Total Current Liabilities

37,481 56,554

Non-Current Liabilities

Provision for Annual leave	24,190	13,030
Provision for Sick Leave	9,000	9,622
Total Non-Current Liabilities	33,190	22,652

Total Liabilities

70,671 79,206

Net Assets

91,857 118,660

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2007

	2007 \$	2006 \$
Cash Flow from Operating Activities		
Receipts from customers	660,098	558,691
Payments to Suppliers and employees	(679,209)	(448,092)
Interest Received	5,773	5,810
Interest and other costs of finance	(2,455)	(1,782)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities (note 2)	(15,792)	114,627
Cash Flow from Investing Activities		
Payment for:		
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(27,177)	(50,603)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	(27,177)	(50,603)
Net increase (decrease) in cash held	(42,969)	64,024
Cash at the beginning of the year	130,997	66,973
Cash at the end of the year (note 1)	88,028	130,997

Note 1. Reconciliation of Cash

For the purposes of the statement of cash flows, cash includes cash on hand and in banks and investment in money market instruments, net of outstanding bank overdrafts.

Cash at the end of the year as shown in the statement of cash flows is reconciled to the related items in the balance sheet as follows:

Cash at Bank - Maroondah Credit Union	12,321	48,565
Cash at Bank - Maroondah Credit Union	5	5
Cash at Bank - Screen Saver Invest 25	75,673	30,244
Cash on hand-Blackburn	6	45
Cash on hand-Boronia	22	15
Short term deposits		148
Term deposit		51,974
	88,028	130,997

Note 2. Reconciliation of Net Cash Provided By/Used In Operating Activities to Net Profit (Loss)

Net profit (loss)	(26,803)	38,509
Depreciation	15,785	12,160
Changes in assets and liabilities net of effects of purchases and disposals of controlled entities:		
(Increase) decrease in trade and term debtors	836	12,585
(Increase) decrease in prepayments	2,925	(2,500)
Increase (decrease) in trade creditors and accruals	1,176	(277)
Increase (decrease) in other creditors	(17,092)	48,997
Increase (decrease) in employee entitlements	10,538	2,814
Increase (decrease) in sundry provisions	(2,347)	2,339
Net cash provided by operating activities	(15,792)	114,627

**GRAEME F DELANY PTY LTD
CERTIFIED PRACTICING ACCOUNTANT
(A.B.N. 42 007 268 073)**

Governing Director - G F Delany
Director - K M Delany

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AUDITORS REPORT

To the Chairperson and Board,
Eastern Community Legal Centre Inc.

We have audited the financial records of the Eastern Community Legal Centre Inc. for the Year ended 30th June 2007, which have been prepared in conjunction with the Notes to Financial Statements contained herein. The members of the board are responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and the information they contain. We have conducted an independent audit of these financial statements in order to express an opinion on them to the members of this service.

The audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatements. Our procedures included examination on a test basis of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial statements, and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects, the financial statements were presented fairly and in accordance the Australian Accounting Standards and statutory requirements so as to present a view which is consistent with our understanding of the Service financial position.

As the service is in receipt of cash income from various sources, it is not possible to report that all income has been brought to account.

In our opinion, the financial statements present a true and fair view of the financial position of Eastern Community Legal Centre Inc. as at 30th June 2007 and in accordance with the applicable accounting standards.

**GRAEME F DELANY PTY LTD
CPA**

Dated at ELTHAM NORTH this 28th day of September 2007



eastern **community legal** centre

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