

VILLAMANTA DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGAL SERVICE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2017

Mission

Villamanta is a Community Legal Service operating throughout the state of Victoria on disability related legal and justice issues. Our focus is on intellectual disability.

Villamanta's mission is to protect and advance the rights of Victorians with a disability by advising, informing and representing them and acting as an advocate on disability related legal and justice issues.

Vision

Villamanta's vision is to be recognised as a leading provider of legal and justice related services for people with an intellectual disability and through our work, significantly contribute to creating an environment in Victoria in which people with a disability are acknowledged, recognised and respected equally with other Victorians and do not face discrimination.

Core Values

The following core values guide Villamanta as we pursue our mission and conduct our operations:

Inclusivity: facilitating the full and effective participation of people with disabilities in our governance and activities

Accessibility: ensuring that our services are accessible to all those who need and can benefit from them

Excellence: pursuing excellence in all that we do

Accountability: being open and transparent with clients and potential clients and those bodies that make it operations possible

Professionalism: being ethical, honest and courteous in all our internal and external dealings

Improvement: striving to continuously improve the effectiveness of the services we provide and our efficiency

Part 1

Advice, information and referral services

Goal: To provide free advice, information and referral services of people with a disability who have a disability related legal or justice problem

Strategies To achieve this goal we will, in a manner providing for the effective involvement of people with a disability and those employed by or associated with the Service -

1. Maintain a free telephone information, advice and referral services for people with a disability
2. Comply with the Disability Advocacy Standards prescribed by the Commonwealth *Disability Services Act 1986* and the terms of our Service Agreements
3. Respond to any increase in the need for advice, information or referral assistance generated by the establishment of DisabilityCare Australia
4. Regularly review and update where necessary, the legal resources manual

Targets and performance indicators

1. Retention of our free telephone information, advice and referral service
2. A positive response to each audit of our compliance with Disability Advocacy Standards prescribed by the Commonwealth *Disability Services Act 1986* and the terms of our Service Agreements
3. Absence of any unmet demand for advice, information or referral assistance generated by the establishment of DisabilityCare Australia
4. By 30 December each year, review and update, where necessary, the legal services manual

**Part 2
Policy and Law Reform**

Goal: To contribute to policy and law reform debates relating to disability issues

Strategies To achieve this goal we will, in a manner providing for the effective involvement of people with a disability and those employed by or associated with the Service -

1. Continue to actively participate in the activities of the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria), the Law Institute of Victoria, Disability Advocacy Victoria Inc and the Victorian Legal Assistance Forum
2. Monitor and evaluate the operation of the Victorian *Disability Act 2006* and the work of the Disability Services Commissioner and respond to any perceived deficiencies
3. Conduct a survey of clients and others to provide advice concerning whether any area of law is in need of reform to protect and enhance the rights of people with a disability
4. Review and revise where necessary, our publication *People who have an Intellectual Disability and the Criminal Justice System*

Targets and performance indicators

1. Active participation in the activities of the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria), the Law Institute of Victoria, Disability Advocacy Victoria Inc and the Victorian Legal Assistance Forum

2. By 30 June 2016, review the operation of the Victorian *Disability Act 2006* and the work of the Disability Services Commissioner and a response made to any perceived deficiencies
3. By 30 December 2015, conduct a survey of clients and others to identify any area of law that is in need of reform to protect and enhance the rights of people with a disability
4. By, 30 June 2015, review and revise where necessary, *People who have an Intellectual Disability and the Criminal Justice System*

Part 3 Community Legal Education

Goal: To assist people with a disability to know and understand their rights and increase the awareness of the general public of those rights and associated issues

Strategies To achieve this goal we will, in a manner that enables the effective involvement of people with a disability, -

1. Participate in community legal education activities for people with disabilities, members of the legal and other professional groups, and the general public
2. Provide training or training materials for bodies and organisations involved in assisting people with disabilities
3. Distribute to relevant bodies and organisations material informing them of our services
4. Continue to produce and distribute, in print or online, publications that inform people about the rights of people with disabilities and associated issues

Targets and performance indicators

1. Review by 30 June 2015 and publish free online:
 - *The Villamanta Information Booklet*
 - *Your Rights Your Choices*
 - *People who have an Intellectual Disability and the Criminal Justice System*
 - *A Guide for Advocates appearing before the Guardianship List of VCAT*
2. By 30 December 2015, present at, or participate in, at least 20 community legal education conferences, seminars or workshops concerned with the rights of people with disabilities
3. By 30 June 2015 conduct, (if possible in collaboration with other interested parties) a seminar or conference evaluating and framing recommendations about, the operation of DisabilityCare Australia

Part 4 Legal Casework

Goal: To provide high quality legal services to people with a disability.

Strategies To achieve this goal we will, in a manner providing for the effective involvement of people with a disability and those employed by or associated with the Service -

1. Continue to undertake casework about disability related legal issues
2. Provide all staff with the opportunity to undertake relevant professional development
3. Continue to provide a high quality and up-to-date, toll free telephone advice, information and referral service responding to queries about disability related legal matters
4. Continue to supervise the telephone advice service
5. Conduct a client satisfaction survey at least once each year

Targets and performance indicators

1. Undertake each year at least 40 active files
2. Whether a free telephone advice, information and referral service has been maintained and operated between 10:00 am to 12 noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm each work day
3. By 30 June each year, review and revise the legal resources manual used by telephone advice service staff
4. Meet with telephone advice staff at least once per month to provide them with advice and training relevant to the service
5. At least once per week review all telephone service contact sheets and determine if further action is required
6. At least once per month, review the IVO database and ensure that it is operating effectively
7. By 30 December each year, ensure that Villamanta’s lawyers have all completed their legal practice requirements and have undertaken any necessary professional development
8. Receive a client satisfaction survey rating in total of at least 90% on the scales of ‘Good’, ‘Very Good’ or ‘Excellent’

**Part 5
Governance and management**

Goal: To conduct the Legal Service effectively, inclusively and efficiently, thereby maximising our ability to meet the needs of Villamanta’s clients

Strategies To achieve this goal we will, in a manner providing for the effective involvement of people with a disability and those employed by or associated with the Service -

1. Conduct regular meetings of the Service’s Committee of Management and its Continuous Improvement sub-committee and minute those meetings so that they are available to all those associated with the Service
2. Conduct annual performance satisfaction surveys of the Committee of Management and the Continuous Improvement sub-committee and respond to the results
3. Conduct annual performance and planning reviews of all members of staff that set individual performance targets and review performance against those targets

4. Improve the efficient and effective use of the Service's resources
5. Develop an effective training and professional development plan for staff and volunteers
6. Conduct regular health and safety audits and respond to them to ensure that the Service's premises and practices provide a safe and secure working environment
7. Improve the quality and effectiveness of our communications to external audiences and their feedback
8. Maintain efficient and effective internal communications for the dissemination and receipt of information and advice

Targets

1. Conduct each year an Annual General Meeting and at least six meetings of the Committee of Management and its Continuous Improvement Sub-Committee and make the minutes of those meetings available to staff and others associated with the Service
2. Each year, the Committee of Management and the Continuous Improvement sub-committee achieving in its annual performance satisfaction survey a rating totalling at least 90% on the scales of 'Good', 'Very Good' or 'Excellent'
3. Compete by 30 December each year of a performance and planning review for each member of staff and the setting of performance targets for the following year
4. By 30 December 2015, review all aspects of the operation of the Service and determine ways of improving, if this is possible, their effectiveness and efficiency
5. By 30 December each year, conduct a health and safety audit of the services premises and practices and address any issues raised
6. By 30 June 2015, review the Service's web site and develop suggestions for improving its usefulness as a means of external communication and in particular, of providing assistance to persons with a disability; implement the suggestions agreed upon by 30 December 2015
7. Conduct at least six staff-management meetings each year proving for the dissemination and receipt of information to and from staff and report the outcomes to the Committee of Management

Part 6

Resources and infrastructure

Goal: To maximise the efficient use of our resources and secure the long term viability of the Legal Service

Strategies To achieve this goal we will, in a manner providing for the effective involvement of people with a disability and those employed by or associated with the Service,-

1. Ensure that the Service operates in a manner aligning with the prescriptions of its principal funder, the Australian Government
2. Identify and secure additional sources of revenue that can be secured consistently with our mission and the prescriptions of the Australian Government
3. Identify and pursue ways of reducing expenditure without reducing the quality, range or extent of the services we provide

4. Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers are clear and accepted and they are given every reasonable opportunity to undertake professional development thereby improve the quality of the services we provide and their career opportunities

Targets

1. By 30 June each year, review the operation of the Services and ensure that this aligns with the funding prescriptions of the Australian Government
2. By 30 December 2014, identify and pursue at least one potential source of significant additional funding
3. By 30 December 2014, identify and pursue at least one potential means of significantly reducing expenditure that does not involve reducing the quality, range or extent of the services we provide
4. Each year, as part of their annual performance review, assess and respond to the reasonable professional needs of each member of staff