



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**



Annual Report 2019 – 2020

What is in this Report



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Legal Service Inc.**

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Villamanta Staff Members



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

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| Deidre Griffiths | Principal Solicitor & Executive Officer (5 days per week) |
| Stephen Grainger | NDIS/Casework Lawyer (5 days per week) |
| Naomi Anderson | Casework Lawyer (5 days per week) |
| Mae Mactier | Casework Lawyer (5 days per week) |
| Elise Almond | Casework Lawyer (5 days per week) |
| Carol Stuart | Casework Lawyer (3 days per week — left in May 2020) |
| Kate McGrath | Casework Lawyer (3 days per week) |
| Sue Wolter | Royal Commission Advocate (4 days per week) |
| Bianca Failla | Royal Commission Advocate (1 day per week) |
| Sharnee Crain | Para-legal Worker (5 days per week) |
| Baxter Lyons | Royal Commission Advocate (1 day per week) |
| Darrell Harding | Accounts Administrator/Personnel (3 days per week) |
| Viv Nicol | Administration Worker (3 days per week) |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc. is part of the Australian Network of Disability Advocacy Services funded by the Australian Government under the National Disability Advocacy Program. We thank our funder, the Department of Social Services.
- We thank the Victorian Government for our project funding.
- Villamanta also thanks Deakin University for its positive collaboration and generous support in providing us with a home at Deakin Waurn Ponds.



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| Annual General Meeting MINUTES | Wednesday 27th November, 2019 5.00 p.m. Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc. Waurm Ponds Estate, Bellbrae Room, Deakin University Waurm Ponds Campus |
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| 1. Welcome | Philip Clarke, President, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Viv Nicol read out the apologies and Philip asked for any further apologies. |
| 2. Present | <p>Committee Members: Philip Clarke (President), Amanda Millea (Vice President) Dominique Saunders, Andrew Hill (Secretary) Neville Porter, Darrell Harding and Michele Tucker (Treasurer).</p> <p>Staff: Deidre Griffiths (Executive Officer), Viv Nicol (Minutes), Darrell Harding (Accounts Administrator), Stephen Grainger (Lawyer), Kate McGrath (Lawyer), Mae Mactier (Lawyer), Carolyn Stuart (Lawyer) and Sue Wolter (Para-legal)</p> <p>Volunteers: Georgina Collins, Aline Furaha and Sharnee Crain</p> <p>Visitors: Brenda McKenzie, Carol Okai – Barwon Disability Resource Centre, Cameron Bray and Shirley Humphris.</p> |
| 3. Apologies | <p>Staff Members: Naomi Anderson (Lawyer) and Elise Almond (Para-legal)</p> <p>Committee Members: Hank Wyllie</p> <p>Volunteers: Helen Zournazis, Thomas Howell and Molly Augerinos</p> <p>Other apologies:</p> <p>Dr. Kevin Murfitt – Deakin University, Burwood Campus, Beryl Power, Trevor Horsley, Greg Leeson, Deborah Verdon – EO Grampians disability Advocacy, Diana Kambovski, Lynne Haultain – EO, Victoria Law Foundation, Professor Iain Martin, Vice-Chancellor, Deakin University, Melanie Muir – Leadership Plus, Karryn Goode – CEO, RIAC and Claire Humble – Leo Cussen Centre for Law</p> |
| 4. Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting | <p>Philip referred to last year's AGM minutes, which are in the Annual Report.</p> <p>Motion: <i>That the minutes of Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc.'s Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 10th October, 2018, be accepted.</i></p> <p>Moved: Philip Clarke Seconded: Stephen Grainger Carried.</p> |

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| <p>5. President's Report</p> | <p>Philip Clarke, President, commended his report, which is in the Annual Report, to everyone present and asked if there were any questions. Philip provided an overview of his report, thanking Deakin University for their generosity in providing Villamanta with office space, ensuring the service's viability.</p> <p>Philip noted that a significant decision was made late last year to apply for grant/special project funding at the commencement of 2019 and was pleased to report that Villamanta was successful in obtaining several grants. Philip thanked all the staff for their efforts and excellent work, and in particular Naomi Anderson, who was the leading spirit. He thanked Naomi for her sterling work, Deidre for leading the team and Darrell for managing the financial side of the grant applications and subsequently, the funds received.</p> <p>Philip noted the project work is different from our usual work, more systemic, and referred to the need to be mindful going forward about future grants and employment of staff.</p> <p>Philip noted he is resigning from the Committee of Management and thanked staff and Committee Members for their polite, cordial and accommodating friendship and thanked fellow outgoing Committee Member, Andrew Hill, for his long and excellent contribution as Villamanta's Honorary Secretary.</p> <p>Philip also thanked Viv Nicol for her minute taking and dissemination of the Committee papers and the volunteers/Deakin law student/interns for their contributions.</p> <p>Motion: <i>That the President's Report be accepted.</i></p> <p>Moved: Philip Clarke Seconded: Amanda Millear Carried</p> |
| <p>6. Executive Officer's Report</p> | <p>Deidre Griffiths, Executive Officer, invited everyone to read her report in the Annual Report. Deidre thanked all staff, Committee Members and volunteers for their commitment and dedication, which has resulted in some great outcomes; in particular, the grant applications and subsequent Project work, in addition to excellent outcomes for our clients. Staff and volunteers had gone above and beyond for our clients and we had received lots of positive feedback in relation Villamanta's work.</p> <p>Motion: <i>That the Executive Officer's Report be accepted.</i></p> <p>Moved: Deidre Griffiths Seconded: Amanda Millear Carried</p> |

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| 7. Treasurer's Report | <p>Michele Tucker, Treasurer, handed over to Darrell Harding, Accounts Administrator, to outline Villamanta's Audit Report. Darrell referred to the summarised Audit Report in the Annual Report and noted if people wanted to read the full Audit Report, they were invited to take a copy before they left. In summary Villamanta's financial situation is in very good order.</p> <p>There were no questions from the floor.</p> <p>Motion: Philip Clarke, President, formally moved that the Treasurer's Report be accepted.</p> <p>Moved: Philip Clarke Seconded: Stephen Grainger Carried</p> |
| 8. Appointment of Auditor | <p>Motion: <i>That Assur Pty Ltd., Taxation and Business Services, again be appointed as Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc.'s Auditor for the 2019/2020 financial year.</i></p> <p>Moved: Michele Tucker Seconded: Sue Wolter Carried</p> |
| 10. Election of Committee Office Bearers/Ordinary Members | <p>Potential new Committee of Management Members Cameron Bray, Shirley Humphris and Brenda McKenzie provided a summary outlining why they are interested in being on Villamanta's Committee of Management and what skills they would bring to benefit the organisation.</p> <p>Philip Clarke, President called for nominations for the position of President. Deidre Griffiths nominated Dominique Saunders. There were no other nominations.</p> <p>Motion: <i>That Dominique Saunders be elected President.</i></p> <p>Moved: Philip Clarke Seconded: Darrell Harding Carried</p> <p>Philip Clarke, President called for nominations for the position of Treasurer. Philip Clarke nominated Cameron Bray. There were no other nominations.</p> <p>Motion: <i>That Cameron Bray be elected Treasurer.</i></p> <p>Moved: Deidre Griffiths Seconded: Michele Tucker Carried</p> <p>Philip Clarke, President called for nominations for the position of Vice President. Philip Clarke nominated Amanda Millear. There were no other nominations.</p> <p>Motion: <i>That Amanda Millear be re-elected Vice President.</i></p> <p>Moved: Philip Clarke Seconded: Stephen Grainger Carried</p> |

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| | <p>Philip Clarke, President called for nominations for the position of Secretary. Philip Clarke nominated Deidre Griffiths. There were no other nominations.</p> <p>Motion: <i>That Deidre Griffiths be elected Secretary.</i></p> <p>Moved: <i>Philip Clarke</i> Seconded: <i>Michele Tucker</i> Carried</p> <p>Philip Clarke, moved a motion that we elect up to 6 Ordinary members as follow:</p> <p>Hank Wyllie – Remaining as Ordinary Member Darrell Harding – Remaining as Ordinary (Staff) Member Michele Tucker – Resigned as Treasurer – Remaining as Ordinary Member Neville Porter – (Neville Porter advised that he is deferring his membership for 12 months) Shirley Humphris – New Member – Nominated by Mae Mactier Brenda McKenzie – New Member – Nominated by Kate McGrath</p> <p>Motion: That, as there were less nominations than there were nominees, all the above named Members be elected.</p> <p>Moved: <i>Philip Clarke</i> Seconded: <i>Stephen Grainger</i> Carried</p> <p>One Ordinary membership vacancy remains.</p> |
| 11. Other Business | <p>Deidre again thanked all of the Committee Members, including outgoing Committee Members Philip Clarke and Andrew Hill, for their great contributions to Villamanta's work.</p> <p>Philip thanked everyone for attending and invited people to stay for something to eat and drink.</p> |
| 12. Close meeting | The meeting closed at 5.45 p.m. |
| 13. Next meeting | Date of next Annual General Meeting is to be announced. |

Client feedback

"I would like to thank you very much for your time and assistance with our daughter. You were so kind and your expertise is commendable. Thank you. Kind regards Lynne"

About Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc.



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

Our Mission

Villamanta is a Community Legal Centre 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 who have a disability, by advising, informing and representing them and acting as an advocate on disability related legal and justice issues.

Our Vision

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

Villamanta provides these free services to people who have a disability:

- ◆ **Telephone advice, information and referral service**
- ◆ **Legal assistance on disability related issues**
- ◆ **Community legal education**
- ◆ **Policy and law reform**

Some of these services are also provided to people who do not have a disability who are involved in supporting people with disabilities. Villamanta also sells books on disability related legal issues.

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc. is committed to the rights of people who have a disability. Villamanta believes people who have a disability have a right to be treated in ways that are fair and reasonable, and which result in opportunities, freedoms, and a standard of living that are equal to those existing for people who do not have a disability.

Villamanta aims to make it possible for people who have a disability to use the law to ensure that their legal rights are recognised and acted upon by others.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has"

Margaret Mead

Committee of Management Members



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**



Dominique Saunders is the President of Villamanta's Committee of Management and has been a lawyer for almost 30 years, she was previously a social worker. She has held positions as General Counsel at Barwon Health, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and Western Health, deputy president of the Mental Health Tribunal and special counsel in the health and aged care team of a respected mid-tier law firm. For her achievements in the law she has been recognised by Australian Women Lawyers/Women Barristers Association for General Excellence In-House Government Law, as well as by the Law Institute of Victoria for General Excellence in Human Rights and Government Law.

She moved to Geelong in the summer of 2018 and runs a home based legal practice with a focus on health, ethics and diversity.



Deidre Griffiths is Villamanta's Secretary. She is also Villamanta's Principal Lawyer and Executive Officer.

Prior to working at Villamanta, Deidre worked in a mainstream law firm in several areas of law including Family Law, Wills and Estates and Criminal Law. Deidre has worked at Villamanta for 23 years, initially as a casework lawyer, also doing Policy and Law Reform work and Community Legal Education (CLE).

On behalf of Villamanta she has been an active member of Disability Advocacy Victoria Inc. (DAV Inc., formerly VDAN), the Disability Law Committee of the Law Institute of Victoria, the Victoria Police Disability Portfolio Reference Group, working collaboratively on disability rights issues.



Cameron Bray is Villamanta's Treasurer and he has worked in social services and government since the early noughties. He spent over five years in London working to improve the social, health and housing services for disadvantaged people. This included a time working at a not-for-profit agency providing support to people with a disability and those experiencing homelessness.

Since 2008 he has held a variety of executive roles in the Victorian Public Service, with a focus on law reform in the criminal justice system. He has a particular interest in therapeutic justice and finding ways to prevent people – particularly young people – from entering the gaol system.

He is a comparatively new (and very happy) Geelong resident, having moved with his family from Melbourne in 2017.

Committee of Management Members



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.



Amanda Millear, Villamanta's Deputy President, has been a member of the Committee of Management since 1995, 25 years and has been the Deputy President for at least 21 of those years. Amanda is the second longest serving Committee member and longest serving Deputy President and a person who has a disability. In her role as Deputy President, Amanda sometimes chairs the bi-monthly committee meetings, which she enjoys.

Amanda has been involved in other groups and with their activities but, due to COVID, they have been on hold and she has been attending these meetings online. This year has been a new planet. Amanda says: *"Villamanta is a unique service being one of the first organisations to have people who have a disability on their Committee of Management and everyone gets a say."*

Amanda reminds us not to use jargon words and to think about other people's needs at meetings. When she hears a jargon word she always asks for plain English and the meaning of the word.

Amanda attended the 2020 "Having a Say" Conference, run by VALID and likes to represent Villamanta at the Conference in Geelong, which she did for the thirteenth time (since 2008). The "Having a Say" Conference shows that people who have a disability have an important role to play in the community. Groups can present and tell their stories. It is always fun.

Unfortunately it is unknown at this stage if the Conference will be held "face to face" next year due to these uncertain times, but it will certainly be held online.

Amanda says Villamanta is always on the lookout for new members and people who have a disability are encouraged to join. Membership is free.

Amanda has a big interest in the law, human rights and legal issues for people who have a disability. Amanda has been involved in the disability movement since April 1980 and was part of the first self-advocacy group in Australia. Amanda has been a very powerful self-advocate over the many years in the disability sector and is familiar with and has used both State and Federal laws in many legal matters.

Since the lockdown in March, all staff and students and Committee Members have been working from home and still providing a great service to Villamanta's clients. Amanda wants to thank them all for continuing to do such a good job under these extraordinary circumstances.

Amanda hopes you have enjoyed reading her Deputy Chairperson's Report and looks forward to a more "normal" year ahead.

Amanda also barracks for the mighty Cats. Go, Go, Go!

Committee of Management Members



Villamanta Disability Rights
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Darrell Harding is Villamanta's Accounts Administrator and has been an Ordinary Member of Villamanta's Committee for 2 years. Darrell has been responsible for managing the finances and personnel since commencing at Villamanta in 2003. Darrell lives with disability and has an adult son with challenging behaviours. In addition to his position at Villamanta, Darrell also holds similar positions at Children and Young People with Disabilities Australia, Disability Discrimination Legal Service, Disability Justice Australia and Communication Rights Australia.



Brenda McKenzie is an Ordinary Member of Villamanta's Committee and currently lives in Geelong West after moving from Melbourne around six years ago. For 25 years, her professional life involved working with young people and adults who seek support and guidance to achieve their personal, educational and career goals.

Brenda's work has led to the development of strong networks in the youth, education and disability sector. She has worked in the Education and Welfare sectors both in Melbourne and Geelong. Brenda worked in a volunteer capacity for Villamanta for around two years. Brenda's son has complex disabilities so she has a broad knowledge of the disability sector.

In her working life she had a strong commitment to supporting the families of young people by introducing them to options that will improve their relationships and communications and foster a positive way forward for their family. Brenda's interests are swimming, tango, reading, film and walking.



Michele Tucker is an Ordinary Member of Villamanta's Committee of Management. Michele completed her Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Honours) degrees at Deakin University in Geelong in 2007. Michele is a sole practitioner, practising varied areas of law. Michele also teaches at Deakin College and lectures at Deakin University in the School of Law. Michele is passionate about her family, social justice, wine, her hometown Geelong and the mighty Cats.

Committee of Management Members



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**



Shirley Humphris is an Ordinary Member of Villamanta's Committee. Shirley has a young granddaughter who became an NDIS participant in July 2013. Getting the right plan for intense, complex needs has taken two AAT full 3 day hearings and has been an exhausting process for the family. That journey has been an eyeopener into the struggles for disability rights and the battle of bureaucracy.

Shirley recently retired after 29 years as a Radiographer with Barwon Medical Imaging, University Hospital Geelong.

She studied at Deakin University and has a BA major in psychology. Shirley was a stay at home mum with her four children and passionate about supporting new mums and their babies. She was active in the Childbirth Education Association, the establishment of Geelong Montessori kindergarten, formed the Leopold Nursing Mothers' Association (now Australian Breastfeeding Association) and was a qualified breastfeeding counsellor for 9 years.

With a background in the difficulties many parents face without the complication of disability, Shirley has become a disability activist to help enable the support for families who are managing their own and/or their child's disability.

Shirley's particular focus has been on sharing her experiences and learnings online re. NDIS, and seeing the distress of many struggling with lack of support. The imbalance of power dealing with government bodies, for those with intellectual and psychosocial disability, is particularly disturbing.

Shirley hopes to be of assistance to Villamanta's work in addressing the legal rights of people with disabilities.

Client feedback

"I am 100% thrilled with the excellent advocacy I got from Villamanta. With your help, I got everything I asked NDIS for in the AAT appeal - I don't think I would have done nearly as well if I had had to represent myself."

Our volunteers



Ivy O'Dwyer
Law Student/Intern



Sharnee Crain
Law student/Volunteer



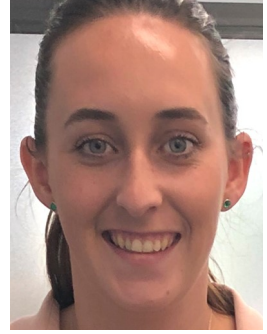
Emily Russell
Law Student/Intern



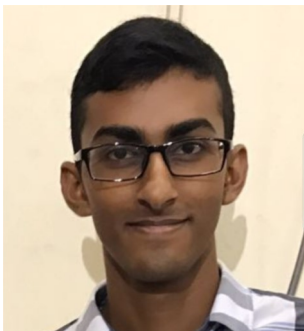
Lauren Heywood
Law Student/Intern



Baxter Lyons
Law Student/Intern



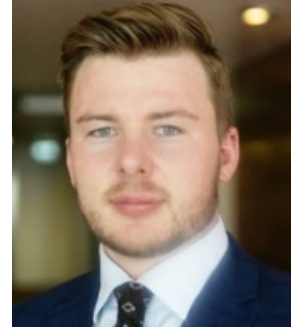
Stephanie Forsyth
Law Student/Intern



Aaron Chandran
University of Melbourne
Psychology Student



Molly O'Hara
Australian Catholic University
Law Student



Tristan Burke
Law Student/Intern

Our volunteers



Alina Furaha
Law Student/Intern



Molly Augerinos
Law Student/Intern



Helen Zournazis
Lawyer



Georgia Collins
Law student/Volunteer



Ram Manpotra
Law Student/Intern



Rebekkah Cranson
Lawyer



Nicole McIntosh
Law student/Volunteer



Tom Howell
Law student/Volunteer



Iresha Hendavitharana
Law Student/Intern



Sophie Capes
Law student/Volunteer



Kate Ammitzball
Law student/Volunteer



Bianca Failla
Lawyer

President's Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**



**Dominique Saunders
President**

Firstly, I want to sincerely thank the Villamanta staff and committee members for their commitment and dedication in these extraordinary times of COVID-19. Their flexibility and endurance at this time is a credit to each person. How could we have anticipated at the AGM in 2019 that we would have faced such a testing time in these months of 2020.

At the last AGM there was commitment made to implementing some changes, aligned with our mission and values and evaluation of these at the committee meetings.

While our work has continued consistently with our mission and values, the identified timeline and targets have not entirely been achieved. This is understandable given COVID-19 and will be established as soon as is feasible.

Another absence for Villamanta at this time was the enthusiasm and work ethic of numerous volunteers and Deakin legal interns, although we have been fortunate to have three past student volunteers and one new volunteer lawyer assisting us.

We welcomed new committee members Brenda McKenzie, Shirley Humphris and Cameron Bray and conducted induction for them to their roles as committee members. Each has made a valuable contribution to Villamanta, as have Amanda Milliar and Michele Tucker both returning members.

As in previous years concerns have been raised by staff around the management of Villamanta's resources in particular its finances, resulting in a carryover of funds to limited but future financial years. A Working Group examined the issues raised by staff, prepared a draft response, consulted with staff and the committee of management then made decisions taking into account the feedback from staff. Much gratitude is due to those involved as a satisfactory resolution has concluded the issues raised.

The Risk Management Sub-Committee, as well as the Committee of Management, continued to meet every second month. Minutes of each committee meeting are prepared and made available for acceptance at the next meeting.

We look forward to even a new normal when we will develop the next Strategic Plan that will guide services for the next 3 years; reactivate the review of Policies and Procedures and plan for Villamanta's 30th birthday on 1 July 2021.

Finally, I wish to thank Deidre Griffiths for her unfailing dedication to Villamanta and the people we are here for. The management team Deidre, Stephen Grainger and Darrell Harding have shown strong leadership in an environment of increasing workload with limited resources and the adjustments necessary during the pandemic. Each and every staff member, volunteer and committee member demonstrate a commitment to working for people with a disability, particularly an intellectual disability, and walking beside them through what is so often an overwhelming legal process, advocating and protecting their rights.

Executive Officer & Principal Solicitor's Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**



Villamanta's 2019-20 year started off uneventfully. Who would have thought that, a little over half way through, it would change so dramatically? With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic we, like the rest of the world, were suddenly faced with the need to make many major changes to the ways we do things. We quickly transitioned from our offices at Deakin's Waurin Ponds campus, to everyone "working from home". By 30th March, 2020, Deakin had closed down our office building, only allowing us occasional access for urgent visits.

This necessitated extensive technology-related changes which our amazing IT consultant, Phil Grace from Grace IT, put into effect over a period of many weeks. This called for upgrades of equipment and systems which we were fortunately able to fund with an additional COVID-19 grant of government funding (from Commonwealth and state governments' Attorneys-General, administered by the Legal Aid Commissions) which we received as a member of the Victorian Federation of Community Legal Centres. We also had to suddenly change from meeting our clients in person to talking with them by phone and participating in various tribunal hearings and meetings by phone or video-conference. For many of our clients, these are difficult and unnatural processes.

Despite the many changes and challenges, throughout 2019-20 Villamanta's Committee of Management members, staff and volunteers - including several Deakin University law students - worked tirelessly and with care, skill, professionalism and dedication, to make sure that Victorian people who have a disability received, and were empowered by, timely, high quality legal advice, representation and access to justice. We have received very positive feedback from clients and constituents that assures us that Villamanta's work is helping to improve the lives of many people who have a disability and is greatly appreciated.

Our free telephone advice, information and referral service (Free call 1800 014 111) – the gateway to Villamanta – provided assistance to many callers. We also provided Legal casework and community legal education for people who have a disability and carried out policy and law reform on several important systemic issues. Villamanta's lawyers also presented training on disability rights topics to others in the community and we sold some publications on disability related topics. More information about the work our staff members and volunteers did is included throughout this report.

We are grateful to our funder, the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) that funds us under the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) - as part of the Australian Network of Disability Advocacy Services - enabling us to provide legal advice and advocacy to Victorian people who have a disability. We continue to receive ongoing benefits from improved practices through our successful eighteen-monthly participation in the Quality Assurance audit against the National Disability Services Standards.

DSS again provided us with additional funding to enable us to assist people to appeal to the Federal Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) against NDIS decisions. We are continuing to develop this area of our advocacy work as the demand for it grows.

Executive Officer & Principal Solicitor's Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

We are also extremely grateful to the Commonwealth and State Attorneys-General, for the special grant of COVID-19 funding mentioned above. In addition to the funding of technology improvements, this grant provides additional funding for our frontline legal advocacy work, with particular emphasis on certain types of legal issues and for rural and regional, diverse communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities.

This year, as another pandemic-related change, CLCs did not participate in the usual annual CLCs Professional Indemnity Insurance/Risk Management cross-check process, along with our colleague community legal centres throughout Australia. We did, however, take part in CLC meetings and training in relation to professional practice and risk management.

Partnerships

As in past years, we are extremely grateful to Deakin University for providing us with office accommodation and for their ongoing friendly and practical support. Our lawyers and administration staff provide practical training opportunities to Deakin law students which we believe will equip them well for the workplace and also increase their knowledge about the circumstances and legal rights of people who have a disability. We are confident that Deakin's law students will become ambassadors for disability rights throughout their careers.

This year we were also pleased to work with University of Melbourne Law School staff and students on an NDIS Clinic which, despite the limitations resulting from the pandemic, was a great success. We believe those students will also be future disability rights ambassadors.

We have continued to work collaboratively with various colleague advocacy, legal and other organisations, networks and individuals to achieve positive results - both for individual clients and at a systemic level - on a variety of important issues. Villamanta greatly appreciates the collaboration, co-operation and support of these organisations and their staff.

2019/20 saw us enter into new collaborative partnerships with:

- Deakin Law Clinic for delivery of the guardianship project
- GDAI and RIAC for delivery of the advocacy project
- VALID to deliver the community legal centre project
- Melbourne Law School (University of Melbourne) - NDIS Clinic

Volunteers

Our volunteers, including many law students among others, contribute many and varied types of experience and skills to Villamanta's work and are extremely generous with their time. We thank them all for their efforts which greatly benefit our clients and constituents.

Executive Officer & Principal Solicitor's Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Our 2019-20 volunteers include our Committee of Management members:

Dominique Saunders (President), Amanda Millear (Deputy President), Cameron Bray (Treasurer), Michele Tucker, Shirley Humphris, Brenda McKenzie and Darrell Harding. At our last Annual General Meeting we farewelled several long-standing Committee of Management members, including past President, Emeritus Professor Philip Clarke, past Committee Secretary, Andrew Hill, and members Neville Porter and Hank Wyllie. Villamanta thanks all our Committee of Management volunteers, past and present, for their great contributions and hard work.

This year our volunteer workers included lawyers Helen Zournazis, Rebekka Cranson and Bianca Failla, Deakin Law students Elise Almond, Baxter Lyons, Emily Russell, Kate Ammitzboll, Iresha Hendavitharana, Ivy O'Dwyer, Nicole McIntosh, Tristan Burke, Alexander Verikios, Lauren Heywood, Ram Manpotra, Stephanie Forsythe, Tom Howell, Aline Furaha, Sharnee Crain, Georgia Collins, Cate King, Sophie Capes, Molly Augerinos and from Charles Darwin University, Alex Fisher, and from Australian Catholic University, Molly O'Hara. They have made a huge contribution to Villamanta's work.

IT Support

In this particularly challenging year we thank Phil Grace, of Grace Information Technology, for providing Villamanta with much appreciated and timely support and assistance with our computer system, and Rohan Mitchell of 1024 Pty. Ltd., and his staff, for support with our IVO data base.

Policy & Law Reform

Our Policy and Law Reform work has continued this year, often in collaboration with colleague organisations and networks. We have observed and commented on various systemic issues affecting people who have a disability, including the impact of the pandemic on them. We have continued our engagement with the Royal Commission into Abuse of People with Disability and to support numerous people to make submissions to it. We have read with great interest the recently released Interim Report of the Commission and hope that it will continue to investigate and shine a spotlight on the many unacceptable experiences of people with disabilities, which will in turn lead to much needed reforms.

One glaring example of this is the appalling situation for children with disabilities in many Victorian schools, including the shocking and outrageous use of restraint and seclusion and the denial of equitable educational opportunities.

Another example is the sickening instances of abuse and neglect of people living in supported accommodation and in other institutional settings. In particular, we expect that the Royal Commission will investigate the exacerbation of some of this accommodation-related abuse as a side-effect of the transition to the NDIS.

Specifically, some residents of disability group homes, who require more intensive support than most, are continuing to be issued by their accommodation services providers, with notices to vacate, despite some of these clients having lived in their house for many years making it, effectively, their "home".

Executive Officer & Principal Solicitor's Report



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

We note, related to the above, the ongoing reality that there is still a huge shortfall in housing accommodation stock and appropriate services, which means that there is nowhere else for these residents to go. Appallingly, some people with an intellectual disability, or other significant cognitive impairment, are currently being held in prison or in mental health facilities because there is no appropriate, and appropriately staffed, accommodation for them. This is a flagrant breach of their Human Rights. There urgently need to be provided high quality “last resort” disability service providers and also disability accommodation providers, and so far these have not eventuated.

The roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) throughout Victoria continues to affect many of our clients. Given the enormous scale of the NDIS, it is not surprising that there have been many teething problems.

Villamanta continues to see evidence of some people struggling to cope with the new system, others finding themselves worse off than they were before, and some falling completely between the cracks that have appeared as side effects of the transition. While many people with disability have benefited, some have in fact been further gravely traumatised by the NDIA's far from perfect processes.

We will continue to closely observe the development of the scheme, and assist people to learn about and navigate the system. We will also continue to work, together with other disability advocacy and legal service provider colleagues, to critique the scheme and transitions, effectively communicate with NDIA staff, and work out ways of coping with the associated increase in demand for advocacy assistance.

Finally, Villamanta notes that as long as there is still a massive waiting list of thousands of people who have an intellectual disability desperately needing appropriate supported accommodation to be built and provided for them, and as long as there are still many Victorian people living in institutions, who wish and should be enabled to *live in the community* with appropriate levels of support, it cannot become reality that **people who have a disability are treated in ways that are fair and reasonable and have opportunities, freedoms and a standard of living that are equal to those of people who do not have a disability** – basic elements of both the Victorian State and the Australian National Disability plans, framework and strategies.

Deidre Griffiths
Principal Solicitor & Executive Officer

NDIS Advocacy Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**



Stephen Grainger
NDIS/Casework Lawyer

This year, Villamanta experienced a significant increase in the number of NDIS matters. In 2018/2019, Villamanta assisted with 40 NDIS matters while in 2019/2020 we assisted with 106 NDIS matters. Thankfully, the decision to reduce our NDIS appeals funding was reversed.

Requests for NDIS related assistance has increased in all areas. Villamanta staff have helped people complete their NDIS application, people who were initially rejected to become participants, assisted people to have plan supports included or increased, people with internal reviews and external reviews and assisted people to make complaints about the NDIS.

The number of NDIS participants appealing to the AAT has increased. The majority of these matters are settled at the conciliation stage, but a small proportion proceed to hearing.

Villamanta has also provided input into NDIS policy and procedure. The Principal Solicitor/Executive Officer has written to Minister Stuart Robert and to the Chief Executive Officer of the NDIA to raise systemic problems. Villamanta also made a submission to the Inquiry into the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, a submission regarding the use of independent assessors and a submission regarding unexpected plan reviews.

A highlight of the year was the outcome ***Ray v National Disability Insurance Agency*** appeal heard at the AAT. The positive outcome for the applicant has led to extensive discussion throughout the sector around the relative usefulness of independent assessments as opposed to evidence from long standing treating medical professionals.

Stephen Grainger
NDIS Appeals Lawyer

Client feedback

"Thank you Villamanta for your assistance with our son's NDIS Appeal. Everyone I spoke to was very obliging and our lawyer was successful in achieving the best outcome for our son."

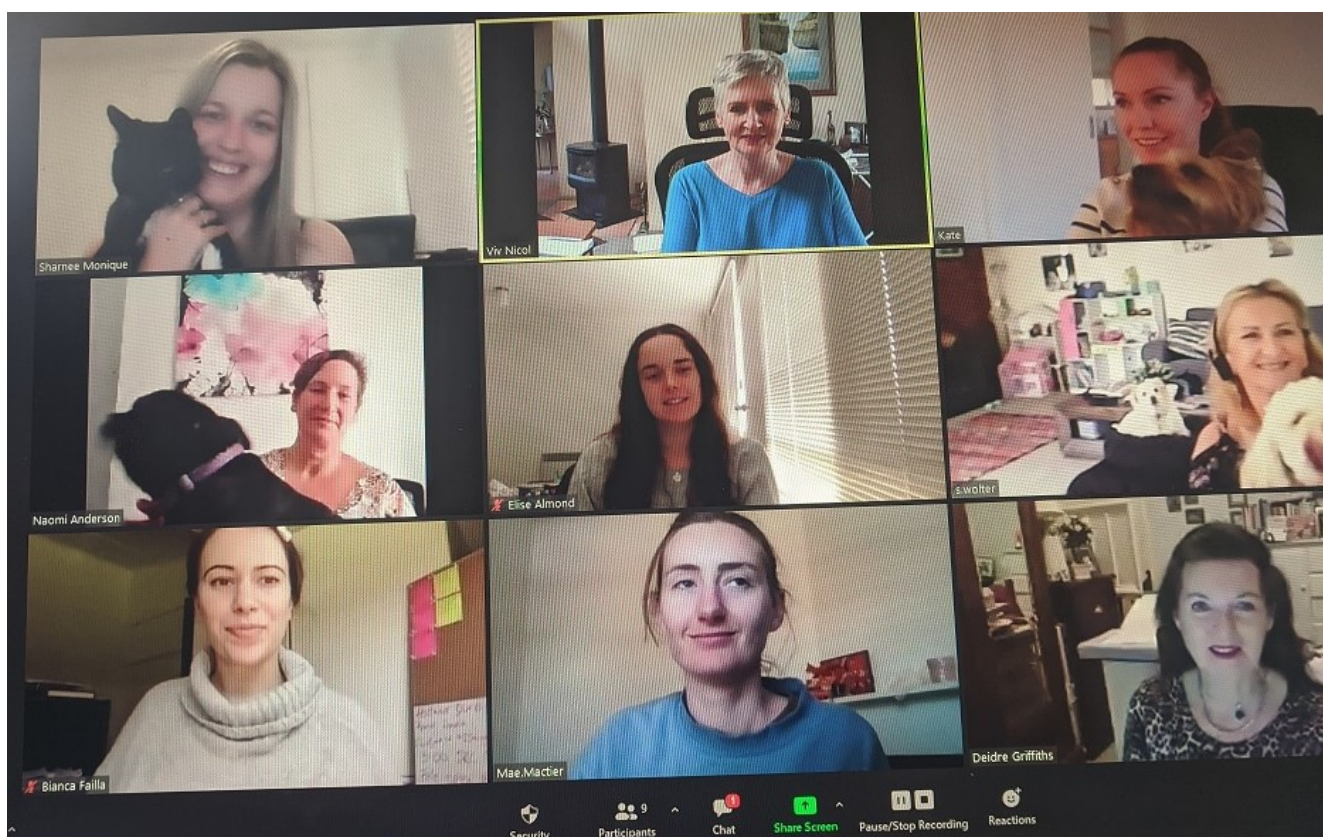
"You helped us navigate the AAT and get the outcome we wanted from the NDIS. Thank you"

Objectives of Villamanta's Programs



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

- To prevent abuse, discrimination or negligent treatment of people who have a disability
- To promote and enhance the rights of people who have a disability
- To encourage people who have a disability to make informed choices
- To increase economic and social participation for people who have a disability in the community
- To assist people who have disabilities to participate equitably in community life
- To increase the knowledge and understanding of people who have a disability, their families and carers about the rights of people who have a disability
- To recognise, value and include families and carers, wherever possible and appropriate, in the support system for people who have a disability
- To improve communication between people who have a disability and other members of the community



One of Villamanta's "Zoom" Staff Meetings

Policy & Law Reform Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**



Deidre Griffiths
Executive Officer &
Principal Solicitor

The aims of our Policy & Law Reform work:

Villamanta does Policy & Law Reform work to try to bring about good changes and improvements to laws and policies that affect people who have a disability.

Annual performance indicators

| | |
|--|---|
| Carry out Policy & Law Reform work on issues of serious concern to people who have a disability. | Situations to be monitored and reviewed and feedback obtained to measure changes. |
|--|---|



Naomi Anderson
Casework Lawyer

How we do our Policy & Law Reform work

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc. carries out Policy & Law Reform work through individual submissions to various government and other bodies that are conducting investigations and reviews of legislation or systems that affect people who have a disability. We also work collaboratively on systemic issues with various colleague organisations and networks, including: the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria), Community Legal Centres Australia (formerly known as the National Association of Community Legal Centres), the Disability Law Committee of the Law Institute of Victoria - and their working groups - Disability Advocacy Victoria Inc. (DAV Inc.), the peak body for independent disability advocacy in Victoria and its members, Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA), the National peak body for Disability Advocacy, VicDAN, the Victorian network of legal service providers and disability advocates which meets regularly in relation to the NDIS, and the Inclusive Education Alliance. Many of these groups work on the same systemic issues.



Mae Mactier
Casework Lawyer

This year's Policy & Law Reform issues

COVID response

With the lockdown in Melbourne and restrictions in regional Victoria we have seen an increase in callers who have had their movements restricted, or their access to services and visitors reduced. We have worked with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to raise these issues and ensure that providers were receiving appropriate advice about their obligations. This involved updating information available on the Department of Health and Human Services website. We are continuing to monitor this situation as issues arise, and have worked with media and advocates to ensure that the rights of our clients are acknowledged in the community.



Carolyn Stuart
Casework Lawyer

Policy & Law Reform Report



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

Villamanta spoke with the press about treatment of people with a disability during the pandemic - See link:

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/coronavirus/2020/05/18/coronavirus-care-home-rules-go-too-far/>

See also, Villamanta's media page on our website: <https://www.villamanta.org.au/about/media/>

During the reporting period most of Villamanta's Policy and Law Reform work related to the many problems associated with clients' and constituents' experiences of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). In particular, we monitored and responded to issues and problems around the interface between the Victorian disability services legislation and its systems and the NDIS legislation and systems, during the transition to the NDIS. During the year we had a successful appeal to the AAT which, importantly, indicated the AAT's views on assessments carried out on participants by assessors who only see them for a short time, as opposed to those who have worked with them over longer periods.

Submissions

During the year we made several submissions including:

- Response to VCAT Guardianship List new forms;
- Submission to NDIA re. assertive outreach (for NDIS access);
- Submission to VLA regarding accessibility of service for people with Intellectual Disability and;
- Submission to the Joint Steering Committee on NDIS planning

Most recently, we made submissions to the NDIA in relation to its planned introduction of Independent Assessors to the scheme and the associated problems that are expected to result from this.

We also contributed to systemic work aimed at overcoming the abuse and neglect of children with disabilities in the Victorian education system, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people living with disabilities, and the abuse and neglect of people with disabilities living in supported accommodation and elsewhere.

Human Rights Charter (Victoria)

Along with various colleagues, Villamanta continued to monitor the implementation and use of the Victorian *Human Rights Charter*. Villamanta's lawyers continue to use Charter arguments in their casework matters whenever possible.

A Bill of Rights for Australia, Human Rights Framework and National Disability Framework

Villamanta, in collaboration with many of its colleague organisations, continued to lobby for the introduction of a much needed national *Charter of Human Rights* for Australia and to monitor the current *Human Rights Framework* and *National Disability Framework* and associated state and federal disability plans.

Policy & Law Reform Report



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

Villamanta continued to observe and provide feedback on the work of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, an independent agency established with the intention of improving the quality and safety of NDIS supports and services, regulating NDIS providers, providing national consistency, promoting safety and quality services, resolving problems and identifying areas for improvement. We also supported constituents to learn about and use the complaints system.

The Office of Professional Practice

Villamanta continued to monitor and provide feedback on the work of the Victorian Office of Professional Practice (previously called the Office of the Senior Practitioner, set up under the *Disability Act 2006*). The Office, within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), brings together the former Offices of the Principal Practitioner (child protection and youth justice) and the Senior Practitioner (Disability).

The Senior Practitioner (Disability) has been generally responsible for ensuring that the rights of people who are subject to restrictive interventions and compulsory treatment are protected, that appropriate standards are complied with in relation to restrictive interventions and compulsory treatment, and best practice is followed by disability service providers.

Following the rollout of the NDIS, the Victorian government and the NDIS Commission now share responsibility for oversight of restrictive practices under the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework. Registered NDIS providers in Victoria are now required to comply with the *NDIS (Restrictive Practices and Behaviour Support) Rules 2018*. Behaviour support plans containing regulated restrictive practices for people in Victoria must be authorised in line with the *Disability Act 2006* as amended by the *Disability (National Disability Insurance Scheme Transition) Amendment Act 2019* and provided to the Victorian Senior Practitioner.

Forensic Leave Panel Review

We are actively involved in the reference group for the review of the Victorian Forensic Leave Panel system.

Disability Act (Vic.) 2006 Review

We are actively involved in the reference group for the review of the Victorian *Disability Act*.

The Office for Disability

Villamanta continues to have ongoing communication with the Victorian Office for Disability, located within the Department of Health and Human Services, and its work to bring about a “whole of government” approach to disability issues in Victoria.

Victorian Guardianship and Administration Legislation

Guardianship and Administration laws are very important to our constituents because they can be used to take away people’s rights to make their own decisions.

Policy & Law Reform Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

We continue to monitor the implementation and effect of the new legislation - the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2019* - which came into effect on 1st March, 2020.

The Impact of the NDIS on Disability Advocacy

During the year Villamanta was a member of RMIT University's Future Social Service Institute's Action Research Group, which, under the leadership of Dr Paul Ramcharan, has been researching the impact of the NDIS on Disability Advocacy.

The Royal Commission into Abuse of People with Disability

Most importantly, this year, Villamanta has been supporting people with disability to make their own submissions to the Australian *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability*, which was established on 4 April, 2019.

Villamanta will also make its own submissions to the Royal Commission.

Deidre Griffiths
Principal Solicitor

Naomi Anderson
Casework Lawyer

Mae Mactier
Casework Lawyer

Client feedback

"I can't adequately express my gratitude and appreciation for taking on my case, let alone for the successful outcome. I wish you all the very best. Kindest regards."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Villamanta thanks Phil Grace of Grace IT for his great assistance throughout the year.



Grace Information Technology

ABN: 32 151 591 102

Project Reports



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Guardianship List Duty Lawyer Service Project

In 2019 Villamanta was successful in obtaining funding from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services for a project to provide a duty lawyer service at VCAT for guardianship hearings.

We partnered with the Deakin Law Clinic to deliver the service in Melbourne and Villamanta lawyers provided the service in regional locations.

The project was cut short by urgent relocation of VCAT hearings due to flooding, and then COVID, but prior to this we:

- Represented 54 people in their hearings
- Deakin Law Clinic opened a client file for ongoing representation of 5 people
- Villamanta opened a client file for ongoing representation of 16 people

This project also led to the identification of a significant issue in relation to access to the NDIS. When meeting with people at VCAT we identified that there were individuals who were probably eligible to be a participant in the NDIS, but had no ability to apply for the scheme, nor anybody to assist them. These people were isolated to such an extent that they did not know what supports exist, and the only way we could come into contact with them was by physically attending VCAT.

We worked with State Trustees to establish a streamlined referral process for their clients who appeared likely to be eligible for the NDIS. In the 12 months since, we have received 62 referrals from them, which we are working through as capacity permits. These matters are also being supported by our partnership with University of Melbourne Law School.

Naomi Anderson
Casework Lawyer

Elise Almond
Casework Lawyer

Advocacy Project

In 2019 Villamanta was successful in obtaining funding from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services for a project to strengthen the links between specialist and generalist advocates in two regional areas, through increased contact, identification of issues, development of resources, and partnership on complex client matters.

We partnered with the Rights Information and Advocacy Centre (RIAC) in Shepparton and Gippsland Disability Advocacy Inc (GDAI) in Gippsland. Lawyers visited RIAC seven times and GDAI five times (cut short by COVID). We ran training sessions, attended client meetings, and discussed client issues with the advocates.

Feedback from advocates was very strongly supportive of the project and that we had met the objectives:

- A better understanding of the work each organisation does
- Improved confidence for advocates assisting clients with legal problems

Project Reports



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

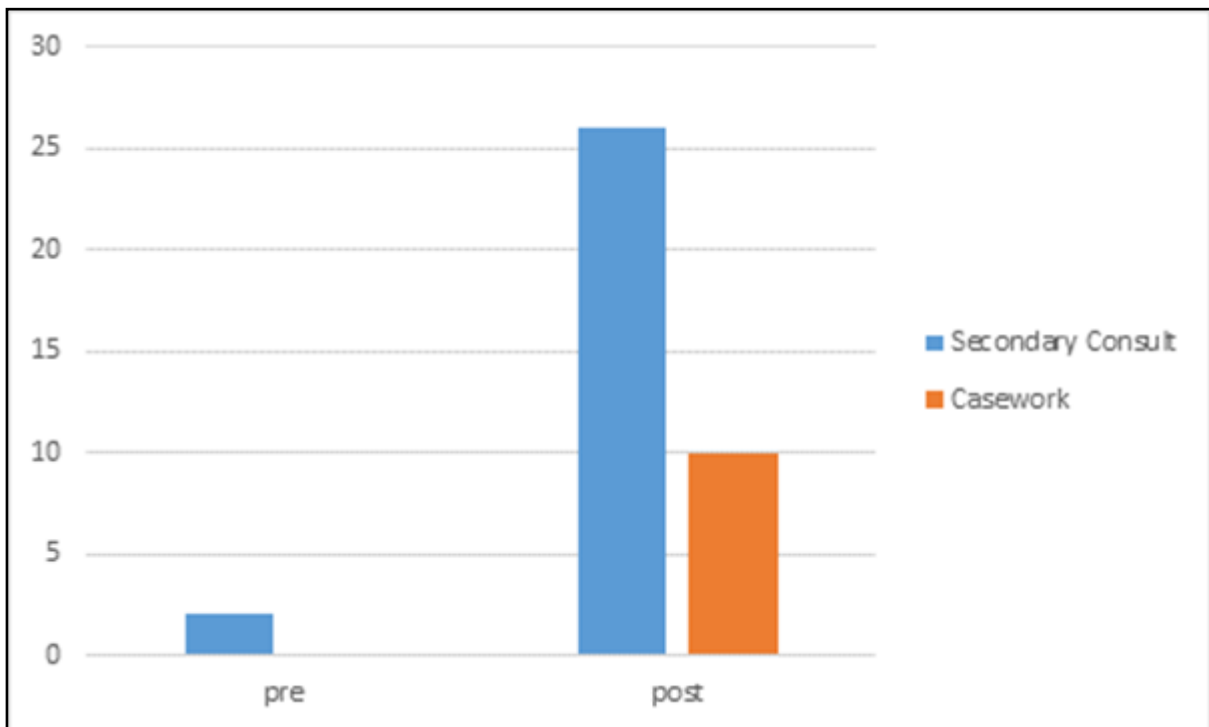
- Development of resources for advocates
- Better access for advocates to contact Villamanta for advice about a client issue

The feedback was very clear that the face to face meetings and working together on client issues was valuable to advocates, and we have seen changes in the way we work together and provide assistance to people in regional areas.

Mae Mactier
Casework Lawyer

Elise Almond
Casework Lawyer

Number of clients assisted in Gippsland, pre and post project



Client feedback

If you have any comments please write them here?

*I can not thank you enough for your service.
My quality of life is now so much better*

Project Reports



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Community Legal Centre Project

In 2019 Villamanta was successful in obtaining funding from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services for a project that involved running training sessions for Generalist Community Legal Centres, with emphasis on those in rural and regional areas, on working with people with a cognitive impairment.

We partnered with VALID and a self-advocate to develop and deliver this training. The training was delivered to Hume Riverina Community Legal Service in Wodonga, Northern Community Legal Service in Broadmeadows, Ballarat and Grampians Community Legal Service in Ballarat. We were unfortunately unable to deliver our fourth training session due to Covid-19 but are currently conducting a survey of people with a disability to draw on their experiences to provide feedback to the Federation of CLCs, instead of this session.

The training we delivered covered the work of each organisation, the disability advocacy sector more broadly and working with people with a cognitive impairment from both a legal perspective and that of a non-legal advocate and how lawyers and non-legal advocates can collaborate.

Through this training we found that the experience of the Generalist CLCs in working with people with a cognitive impairment varied and there were open discussions with the Centres around the adjustments that both VALID and Villamanta make to ensure that their service is accessible. As a result of the training project, Villamanta has strengthened its networking with rural and regional CLCs and has registered increased contact from the Generalist CLCs involved, through both secondary consultations and referrals.

Mae Mactier
Casework Lawyer

Elise Almond
Casework Lawyer

Website and Social Media

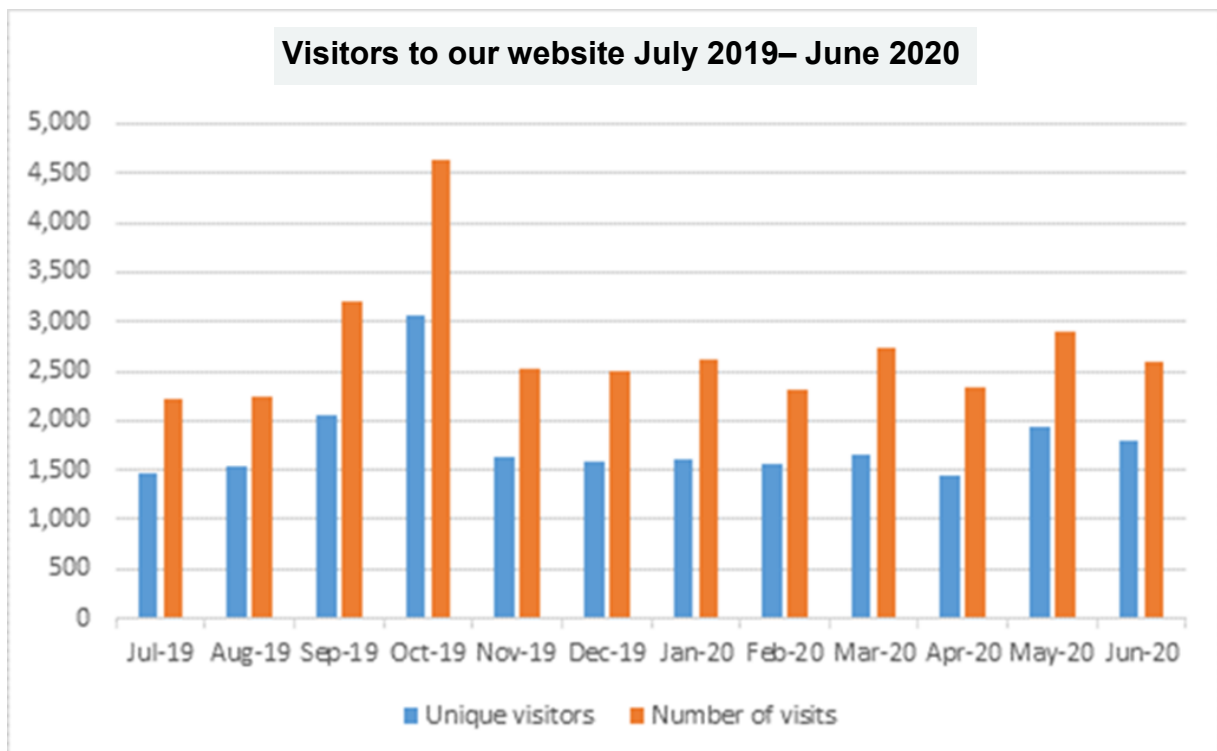
Villamanta regularly shares news articles and updates relevant to the disability community on our Facebook page. Our page “likes” have increased by 100% over the last 12 months and we continue to see our audience steadily grow. However this growth has been irregular. It peaks when we share a story about a client’s win – as is the case in the second graph, (opposite page) of an AAT decision regarding NDIS – and drops off in other months.

This year we have invested in improving the information we provide online, and the ways members of the community can seek assistance or ask questions. We have added a contact form to our website, allowing people to send in their query at any time of day or night. We receive roughly 50 enquiries per month, each of which reduces the demand on our phone lines, especially while working remotely. We are continuously improving our website, which has seen a 68% increase in average monthly visits compared to the previous year.

Website and Social Media



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**



Elise Almond & Naomi Anderson

Disability Royal Commission Legal Representation



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Naomi Anderson, Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service lawyer, provided a written statement to the Disability Royal Commission and gave oral evidence on 5 December 2019 with a panel of advocates.

Ms Anderson gave evidence about how, in a practical sense, the rights of people with disability are not realised. She gave the example of a woman in a group home who, after she was sexually assaulted by another resident, her family 'did all of the right things', including reporting the matter to the police and the Disability Services Commissioner. Even though 'all of the complaints mechanisms were brought into play, promises were made, agreements were brokered, the two people still live in the same house 18 months on.' Ms Anderson said that, for people with disability to be free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, 'they need to know that the community has their back' and that they will be protected when people do things that are illegal. Ms Anderson also gave evidence about the importance of residents in group homes being connected to the community and having access to independent advocacy and support. She said 'When all of the people that you see work for one service provider...that means your support workers, the managers, your support coordinator, your psychologist, your therapists, everybody works for one provider, you are not going to have choice and control and you are not going to be connected to your community because you don't know who the community is.'

Public hearing 3

The experience of living
in a group home for
people with disability



Royal Commission
into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation
of People with Disability



Disability Royal Commission Advocacy



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

We have been working on a number of DRC submissions with a number of these being submitted already, some are awaiting on feedback from the clients after taking their submissions, some are waiting on getting legal advice from Your Story Disability Legal Support, the free legal advice service for Disability Royal Commission - related questions.

It takes a considerable amount of time from the beginning to the submitting of a submission. With support now from Bianca Failla and Baxter Lyons we are attending to the many requests for assistance.

There are several ways people can share their experiences with the Disability Royal Commission. People can write, telephone, film or record their submission. They can attend a Private session (due to COVID these sessions can only be done by way of a Private Telephone Session with one of the Commissioners. Many clients seem to be opting to have Private Sessions. On talking with a member of the Private Sessions team he informed me that they currently have a 650 clients waiting to be interviewed by a Commissioner and this is taking the interviews well into next year. Private sessions are protected by law, the information remains confidential, even after the Royal Commission has ended. It can not be subpoenaed or disclosed under FOI legislation. Information can not be used in evidence against the person in civil or criminal proceedings.

Many clients are being referred to Your Story Disability Support to receive legal advice before submitting or talking with the Commission and we have recently been getting referrals from Your Story for people wanting assistance in preparing their submissions.

There are quite a few services that can be utilised for people when making a submission:

- Your Story Disability Legal Support (part of Legal Aid)
- Blue Knot Foundation offer counselling support
- Various Advocacy services
- Relationships Australia (Victoria)
- Drummond Street Services

It is interesting to note some of the issues being submitted include:

- Abuse in care settings
- Negligence within the health care system
- Abuse within the education system
- Sexual abuse and exploitation
- Inadequately trained support staff
- Discrimination, abuse, neglect within care settings
- Abuse within criminal justice settings
- Complaints re. police and Government Departments
- Insufficient accommodation

There have been many reports which show a pattern of situations where service providers have neglected clients. Parents have made complaints directly to service providers over a series of months/years regarding these incidents, however service providers failed to provide parents details of where they could complain if they wanted to take the matter further.

Disability Royal Commission Advocacy



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Allegations of neglect were not addressed by service providers and would worsen over time, causing clients to sustain serious harm.

There have also been reports of untrained service providers trying to override medical advice from client's doctors and attempts made to provide clients with incorrect medication. Many parents have asked for service providers to be advised that they are not permitted to override medical advice and that medical training should be provided to all services supporting disabled people.

Baxter Lyons has also been working on contacting media outlets, politicians and other organisations. We have so far heard back and been in further contact with the following:

- The ABC
- The Federation of CLCs
- The City of Greater Geelong Council
Christine Couzens' Office

We are hoping we will hear from more outlets in time.

We currently have our media release on our website. Other media contacts include radio stations, newspapers, political contacts, Geelong Chamber of Commerce and Geelong Regional Library.

At the end of this financial year we were providing advocacy for a total of 17 Disability Royal Commission submissions.



Sue Wolter



Bianca Failla



Baxter Lyons

Villamanta's Disability Royal Commission Advocates

Client feedback

"My Villamanta lawyer was absolutely fantastic in helping me to achieve my goal of getting NDIS. She worked very fast and efficiently. She was very friendly and helpful. Getting NDIS really will change my life and I couldn't have done it without her help. Thank you"

University of Melbourne Law School students and staff



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.



University of Melbourne Law School NDIS Clinic students and staff

Villamanta partnered with the University of Melbourne Law School in an NDIS Clinic to train law students about the NDIS, and facilitate their practical experience supporting clients to seek access to the NDIS. This reduced our waitlist of State Trustees-referred clients by 25%.

Client feedback

If you have any comments please write them here?

We are parents/guardians of a severely disabled man. We had been stretched to our emotional limits & getting nowhere, until the intervention of our amazing lady from Villamanta. Then, and only then, did the NDIA start behaving morally. We don't know where we could have ended up without the support from this lady.

Casework Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Annual Performance targets for casework

| | |
|---|--|
| 1. Undertake casework about disability related legal issues | Minimum of 80 active files per year |
| 2. Resource telephone advice in relation to queries about the law | Review of legal resources manual. Available to the advice service staff as needed. Regular meetings with advice service staff for provision of ongoing training. |
| 3. Supervise the telephone advice provided | Review of contact records. |

1. Undertake casework about disability related legal issues – a minimum of 80 active files per year.

During the period 1/7/19 to 30/6/20, 255 new casework files were opened and 185 files were closed.

A total of 130 files remained open at the end of the period.

A breakdown of issues covered in the files still open at 1st July, 2020 is as follows:

Note - Issue type may exceed number of files as some clients have more than one issue.

Priority area: Advancing the rights of people who have their finances managed by administrators, including State Trustees Ltd.

16 files relates to this area.

Priority area: Advancing the rights of people for whom applications are made to restrict those rights through the appointment of guardians.

7 files relate to this area.

Priority area: Advancing the rights of people to have accommodation / service/ access to services/quality of service that meet their needs and conform with the principles of the Disability Act 2006

10 files relate to this area.

Priority area: NDIS-related matters

55 files relate to this area.

Casework Report



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

Other matters still being dealt with at 1st July, 2020 relate to:

Citizenship (1), Civil Law (2), Criminal (1), Financial Abuse (8), Power of Attorney (2), Social Security (4), Statutory Obligation (5) Victim of Sexual assault (1) and Wills (1)

Of the 185 casework files closed in the period, outcomes were as follows:

Note - Issue type may exceed number of files as some clients have more than one issue.

Priority area: *Advancing the rights of people who have their finances managed by administrators, including State Trustees Ltd.*

Matters of administration are extremely important to many of our clients as Administration Orders, which are made by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal's Guardianship List, can severely restrict a person's freedom to make their own choices and decisions about their finances, property and in some cases, their legal affairs. Sometimes there is a less restrictive way of dealing with the issues affecting our clients. Because of this it is important that the person has access to legal advice and representation when administration orders are being considered. In some instances, the orders can be of benefit as they can provide authority that helps family members, or other support people, to get things done for our clients. Sometimes clients need help to communicate with their administrator and get their views and wishes heard.

32 matters related to this area.

In these cases we investigated, advised, liaised and negotiated on behalf of clients in relation to whom application for appointment of an administrator had been made to the Guardianship List of the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). Where necessary, we represented clients at VCAT hearings ensuring that their views and wishes were clearly communicated to the Tribunal and that, if orders were made, they were the least restrictive possible under the circumstances and were fully understood by our clients.

Outcomes: in most of these cases orders were made in line with our clients' wishes and administrators were removed or replaced with ones who were more acceptable to our client. In various cases we negotiated with administrators to achieve satisfactory outcomes. In several cases administrators were changed to one of our client's choice. In some cases, we assisted our client to recover funds from a previous administrator. In some matters the application was withdrawn, dismissed or revoked so that our client regained control of their finances. Some clients were provided with information and advice that empowered them to resolve their issue themselves.

Client feedback

"Just a personal & heartfelt 'THANK YOU' for your time & support with James (& us) while dealing with the NDIA. Take care. Kind regards"

Casework Report



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

Priority area: Advancing the rights of people for whom applications are made to restrict those rights through the appointment of guardians

Matters of guardianship are extremely important to many of our clients as Guardianship Orders, which are made by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal's Guardianship List, can severely restrict a person's freedom to make their own choices and decisions about many aspects of their daily life.

Sometimes there is a less restrictive way of dealing with the issues affecting our clients. Because of this it is important that the person has access to legal advice and representation when guardianship orders are being considered. In some instances guardianship orders can be of benefit as they can provide authority that helps family members, or other support people, to get things done for our clients. Sometimes clients need help to communicate with their guardian and to get their views and wishes heard.

26 files related to this area.

In these matters we investigated, advised, liaised and negotiated on behalf of clients for whom applications had been made to the Guardianship List of the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for the appointment of a guardian. We represented our clients at Tribunal hearings, ensuring that their views and wishes were clearly communicated and were fully understood by our clients, and negotiated with relevant parties.

Outcomes: most of these cases resulted in appointments of guardians acceptable to our clients; in some cases, orders were revoked. Some applications were dismissed or withdrawn.

Priority area: Advancing the rights of people to have accommodation/services/access to services/quality of service that meet their needs and conform with the principles of the Disability Act 2006 (Vic.) or the Disability Services Act 1986 (C'th.) and relevant consumer legislation

Issues of accommodation and services are extremely important to our clients. They affect many of our clients and often relate to the most basic issues of their day-to-day lives, including where they live, how they are treated there, what services they access outside of their accommodation, including day placement, health and other services. If things go wrong in any of these areas of our clients' life, their life can be an ongoing misery for them until something is done to fix the problem(s).

Issues encountered include negligence/breach of their duty of care by service providers, injury to our clients, exposure to physical and/or psychological abuse, lack of services, insufficient, inadequate or inappropriate services – sometimes no services at all.

24 files related to this area.

In many of these cases we investigated, advised, liaised and negotiated with relevant parties in relation to service plans and accommodation and services issues where service providers were failing to provide appropriate accommodation and/or services.

Casework Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Where required, we represented clients at meetings, conciliations, mediations or hearings.

In some cases, we advised and assisted clients to access the conciliation process of the Disability Services Commissioner, under the *Disability Act 2006 (Vic.)* and from July 2019, the National **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission**. Some satisfactory outcomes resulted from these conciliation processes. In some cases, we supported clients to access complaints processes in relation to NDIS-funded service providers. In other cases, around NDIS refusal to include clients as NDIS participants, or provision of inadequate levels of NDIS-funded support in service plans. Some of these matters were addressed initially as internal complaints to the NDIA and resolved through that process, others required elevation to the external complaints process of the Federal Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) for resolution.

Issues included: problems around access to appropriate disability support services, access to accommodation services, issues with a not-for-profit service providers overcharging, failure to provide appropriate accommodation, need for support services, unjustifiable increase in accommodation charges, forced relocation from supported accommodation, notices of temporary relocation, notices to vacate, issues with landlord failing to comply with legal requirements, advocacy around care planning with service provider, debt issue with service provider, unacceptable conditions in community residential units/group homes, threatened evictions of clients from disability accommodation, discrimination in accommodation, and abuse and/or neglect of residents in disability accommodation.

Outcomes included: Access gained to appropriate support services, access achieved to accommodation services, issues resolved with not-for-profit service provider regarding over charging of fees, issues of relocation from supported accommodation resolved, care planning completed with service provider, unacceptable conditions in community residential units rectified, eviction of clients from disability accommodation addressed, issues of discrimination in accommodation addressed, notice to vacate withdrawn by residential service provider, appropriate accommodation offered to client, more “in home” supports made available, compensation paid to client for inappropriately charged fees, and abuse and/or neglect of clients prevented and negligence and/or crimes victims compensation actions pursued where appropriate. With regard to NDIS funding, some matters resolved with client being included as an NDIS participant while others resolved with client receiving NDIS funding for adequate services.

Priority area: NDIS-related matters

NDIS-related matters affect many of our clients. They range from problems accessing the NDIS, rejection by the NDIS, inadequate provision of funding by the NDIS for services, among other issues.

79 files related to this area.

In many of these cases we investigated, advised, liaised and negotiated with relevant parties in relation to access to the NDIS, inadequate provision of NDIS funding, content of NDIS service plans, supported clients to achieve internal reviews of plans, new plans or, where necessary, external reviews of plans by the AAT.

Casework Report



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

Outcomes included: inclusion as participants, increased funding, better understanding of how the NDIS system works, access gained to adequate and appropriate support services, relief/reduction of stress, distress and trauma experienced by NDIS clients and their family members going through the often extremely difficult process of trying to communicate with the NDIS.

Priority Area: *Disability Royal Commission*

1 file related to this area.

Other matters:

Fully or significantly satisfactory outcomes were also achieved in the following other matters: *27 files related to these areas.*

Bullying and Harassment - 2 files; Civil Law - 2 files; Confidentiality & Privacy - 1 file; Contract & consumer law - 2 files; Criminal Law – 1 file; Employment - 1 file; Financial Abuse – 3 files; Forensic Leave – 5 files; Health - 1 file; Intervention Orders – 2 files; Restrictive Interventions/Behaviour Support Plans/Supervised Treatment Orders – 6 files; Wills – 1 file.

2. Resource telephone advice in relation to queries about the law Compile and review a legal resources manual. Be available to the advice service staff as needed. Hold regular meetings with advice service staff for provision of ongoing training.

Villamanta's lawyers provided legal advice to staff members working on the free advice, information and referral service about legal matters, on an as needed basis.

Staff meetings and one-on-one meetings provided regular opportunities for staff to raise systemic issues in relation to the advice, information and referral service. Specific staff training needs are provided for on an ongoing basis. Lawyers undertake compulsory continuing professional development to increase their knowledge and comply with professional indemnity insurance and legal practice requirements.

3. Supervise the telephone advice & referrals. Regularly review IVO (client database) records where legal advice was provided and ensure the IVO database is operating effectively.

The supervision and review system is operating effectively.

Casework Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Casework Team



Deidre Griffiths
Executive Officer &
Principal Solicitor



Stephen Grainger
NDIS/Casework Lawyer



Sue Wolter
Para-legal Worker &
Royal Commission Advocate



Naomi Anderson
Casework Lawyer



Kate McGrath
Casework Lawyer



Mae Mactier
Casework Lawyer



Carol Stuart
Casework Lawyer



Elise Almond
Casework Lawyer



Sharnee Crain
Para-legal Worker

Community Legal Education



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

The aims of our Community Legal Education work :

- Help increase the access of people with disabilities to the community and participation in community life
- Increase people with disabilities' knowledge and understanding of their rights so that they can exercise their rights as citizens
- Encourage people with disabilities to make informed choices
- Improve communication between people with disabilities and other members of the community
- Promote the understanding of the rights of people with disabilities in the Australian Community

Annual Performance Indicators

| | |
|--|---|
| Present workshops/talks about rights of people who have a disability, using a community development model. | Workshops to be reviewed and evaluated. |
|--|---|

For the first half of the 2019-20 financial year Villamanta participated in Community Legal Education (CLE) activities in the usual way and also made plans for further CLE activities throughout the year. Our CLE sessions are usually held in both metropolitan, rural and regional centres throughout Victoria, including sessions for groups, presentations at conferences and distribution of materials. Most attendees are people who have a disability living in Victoria. A number of sessions are usually also held for people assisting people who have a disability and some for other members of the community, to extend the community's knowledge of disability rights and related issues, with the aim of advancing the full inclusion in the community of people who have a disability.

Those attending CLE sessions usually include advocates, lawyers, clients, field workers, police, allied health professionals, disability service providers, TAFE, university and high school students, special school students, employees of Australian Disability Enterprises, corrections and justice system workers, academics, researchers, community organisations (including their board members), disability support workers, carers, parents, staff of open employment services and other members of the community.

This year, in addition to its regular CLE work, Villamanta provided education sessions associated with its project work, funded by the Victorian government. These included training for rural/regional CLC lawyers and disability advocates to better equip them to work with people who have a disability and increase their knowledge about disability-related legal matters and systems.

A wide range of CLE topics is usually covered in various presentations, including disability rights, Your Rights Your Choices, Human Rights, wills, administration, powers of

Community Legal Education



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

attorney, guardianship, capacity and consent, “Thinking about the Future”, special disability trusts, Carers’ rights, care recipients’ rights in future planning, Duty of Care/ Dignity of Risk for direct care workers, Working with People who have an Intellectual Disability in the Criminal Justice System, People who have an Acquired Brain Injury and the justice system, Child Protection & Parents who have a Disability, clients’ rights in regard to Police interviews/fingerprinting, court processes, Independent Third Persons’ program, clients’ rights regarding interactions with Public Transport Authority authorised officers, communicating with people who have cognitive impairment, the NDIS and the work that Villamanta does.

Everything changed suddenly early in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began. From then on we had to quickly change our methods of delivering CLE and information about Villamanta and its work and our various CLE topics. We rapidly moved to more online methods of sharing this information, through our website and Facebook page and by presenting and participating in CLE sessions using “Zoom”. In some ways these changes have helped us to reach a broader and more widespread audience, making it easier for people, particularly in rural and regional areas, to participate without having to travel. Most of our participants have quickly learned how to take an active part in “Zoom” sessions, ask questions and have their say.

We continue to use a community development approach when providing Community Legal Education, delivering sessions in a way that ensures that people who have a disability can participate to identify and discuss issues of importance to them. This also provides Villamanta with valuable input about issues that are affecting people who have a disability, to inform our casework and policy and law reform work. The community development approach also empowers people to work for positive social change on both a personal and a community level. We often discuss a variety of topics during each session. Community Legal Education sessions, like all of Villamanta’s work, are underpinned by a strong Human Rights foundation. The training we provide looks at issues, such as Duty of Care/Dignity of Risk, from the perspective of people who have a disability.

We also provided CLE on issues relevant to our clients in the process of participating in regular phone or video-conferenced meetings of several important networks throughout the year. These included DAV Inc., VicDAN, the Tas/Vic Disability Royal Commission Advocates network, the NDIS Advocates network, DARU/VCOSS Disability Advocates network and meetings of the Victorian Federation of Community Legal Centres.

Before the pandemic set in, we had planned to distribute material to various community organisations and through a number of disability expos and conferences, informing them about Villamanta’s various services, including education and training, and that a number of Villamanta publications are available for purchase from Villamanta. More recently, we have been sharing this information online.

“Having A Say” Conference

Villamanta was represented by Villamanta’s Deputy President, Amanda Millear, at this year’s very successful annual “*Having a Say*” Conference, organised by VALID, which was held in Geelong in February, 2020. The 2021 Conference is being planned to be held in June and will be both online and in person, so that everybody can join in.

Telephone Advice Service Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Villamanta provides a statewide, free Telephone Advice, Information and Referral Service five days per week from 1.00 p.m. — 3.00 p.m.

The aims of our Telephone Advice, Information & Referral Service:

Villamanta provides a Telephone Advice Information & Referral Service to ensure that people who have a disability are able to know their rights and get access to the services they need.

Annual performance targets :

| | |
|---|---|
| Provide a toll free number. | Staffing of toll free number each work day from 1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. |
| Provide callers with information about disability related legal issues over the phone and in writing. | Provision of information designed to maximise choice and empowerment of people with disabilities, over the telephone &/or written (via mail, email, or referral to our website) |
| Provide callers with a referral service to generic services. | In order to provide efficient / effective referrals: maintain and continue to develop knowledge of specialist & generic services throughout Victoria |
| Provide advocacy to constituents. | Advocate/liase on behalf of constituents where appropriate: Referral to Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc. legal casework services or other advocacy services where necessary |
| Provide constituents with access to legal advice. | Referral to Villamanta casework lawyers or other specialist lawyers where appropriate |

This year Villamanta's Telephone Advice Information & Referral Service free-call advice line (1800 014 111) continued to be in great demand. The advice line is open each weekday from 1.00 – 3.00pm (10 hours per week).

The number of issues dealt with via our Telephone Advice Service in 2019-2020 was 1,181. The Telephone Advice Service responds to a wide range of enquiries and requests. People often call with complex issues which can require some untangling; callers can be very unhappy, stressed, distressed, or angry about something which has happened, or worn down from trying to battle difficult situations without assistance.

Villamanta staff and volunteers work with callers to clarify what the issues are, and what would resolve the situation for them, as this differs from one person to another. We aim to empower people with the information and confidence to advocate for themselves where that is possible; we also try to link people with appropriate advocacy or other supports.

Telephone Advice Service Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Often we are able to give people several options. We provide information around the law and practical advice on dealing with situations, including those where the law is not the best solution.

Of all callers' issues, only a small proportion require specifically legal advice; of these, some are taken on by Villamanta's lawyers as casework matters. Although in our legal casework we work only on disability-related legal issues, mainly for people who have an intellectual disability, people often call Villamanta's Advice Line about other issues. Sometimes this means that, although we can often offer some initial information or advice, giving the best possible service means providing tailored referrals to other organisations which have more specific expertise on the issue.

Villamanta often receives calls from people who think that because they have a disability, we will act for them. We then need to explain that our work is only on *disability-related* legal issues - we are not a segregated legal service! Many of these callers have been referred to us by other organisations; we then contact the organisation to clarify our role, in an attempt to reduce the frustration people experience when being sent from organisation to organisation to no avail.

Nearly all of Villamanta's staff members answer the advice line. We are constantly increasing our knowledge in all relevant areas, and participating in training and professional development, so that we can continue to provide the best service possible.

Our internal web-based Telephone Advice Service Manual provides a resource which enables us to advise and refer callers more effectively. Constantly updating, expanding and refining the manual is time consuming, and we are extremely grateful to our wonderful volunteers for assistance with this. Telephone Advice Service volunteers are also invaluable in assisting to document calls, and record statistics, in our tailored electronic database.

Villamanta staff and volunteers continue to strive to give our callers the best possible service, and are pleased to be able to make a positive difference to the lives of people with a disability and those around them.



Sharnee Crain
Para-legal Worker



Vivienne Nicol
Administration Worker



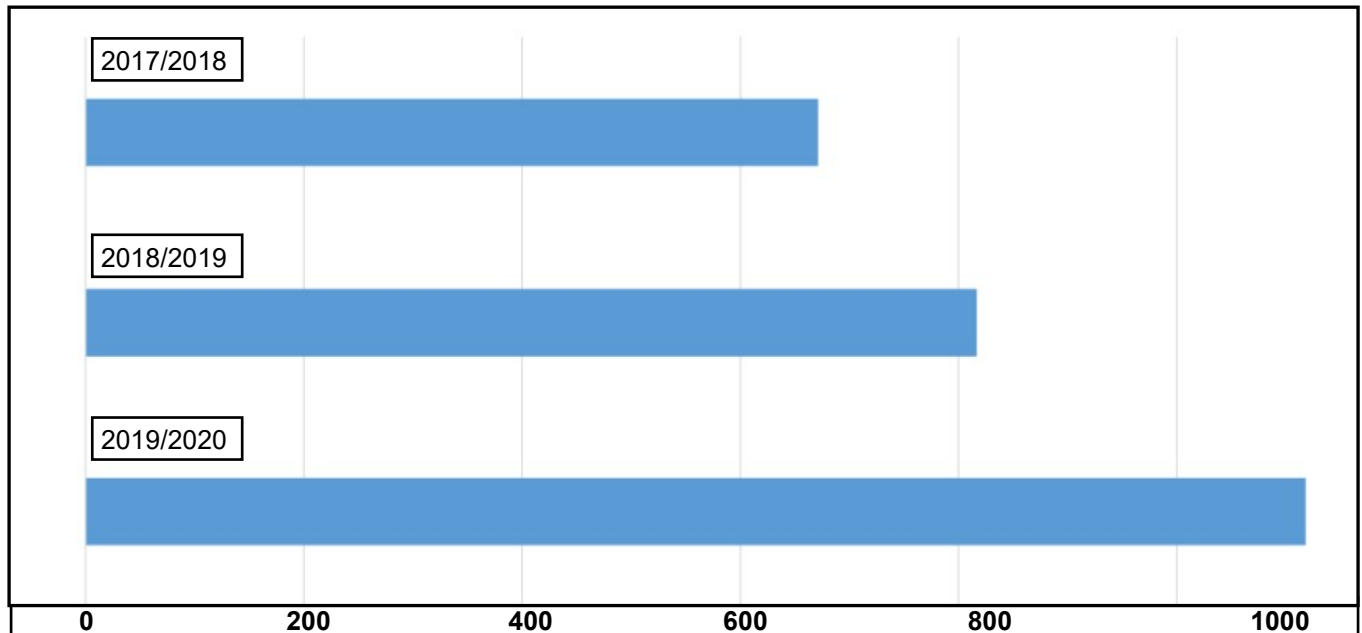
Elise Almond
Casework Lawyer

Telephone Advice Service Report

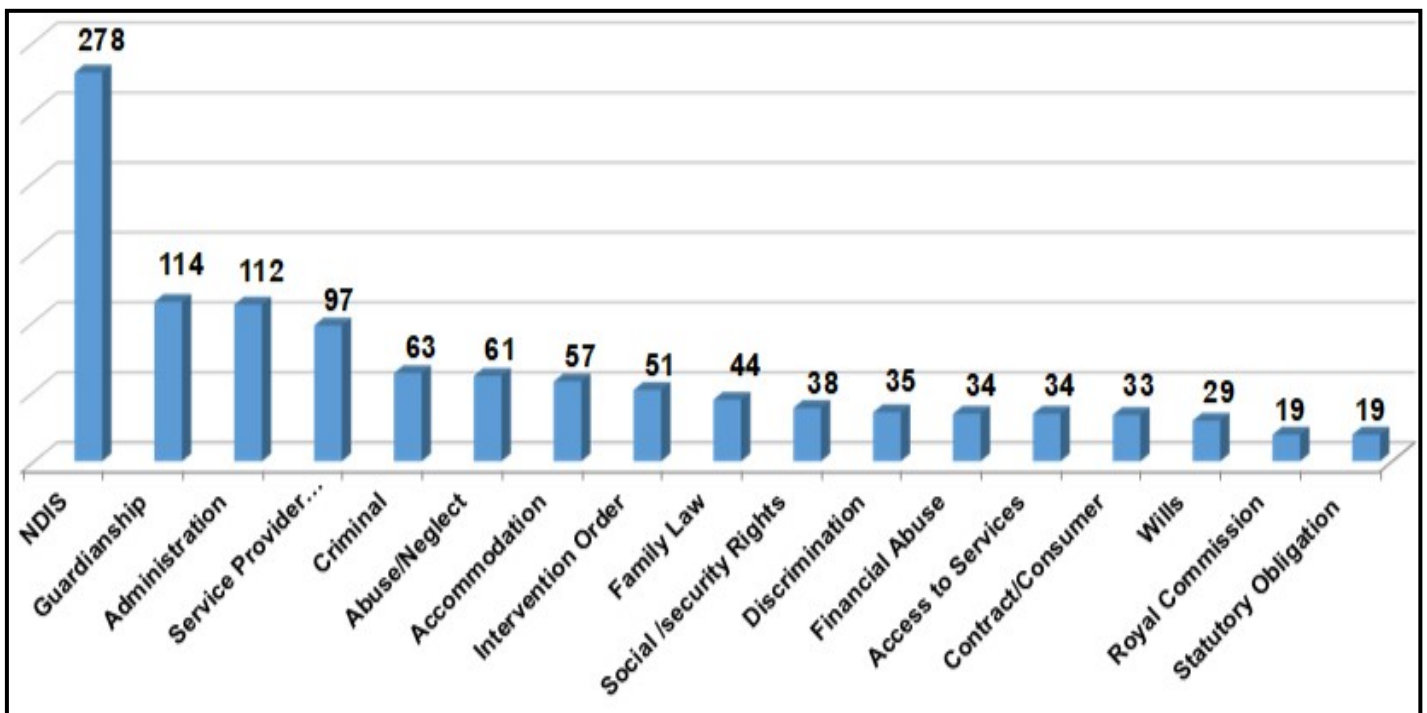


Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

Telephone Advice & Referral Service — Number of callers/activities



Types of issues people called us about in 2019/2020



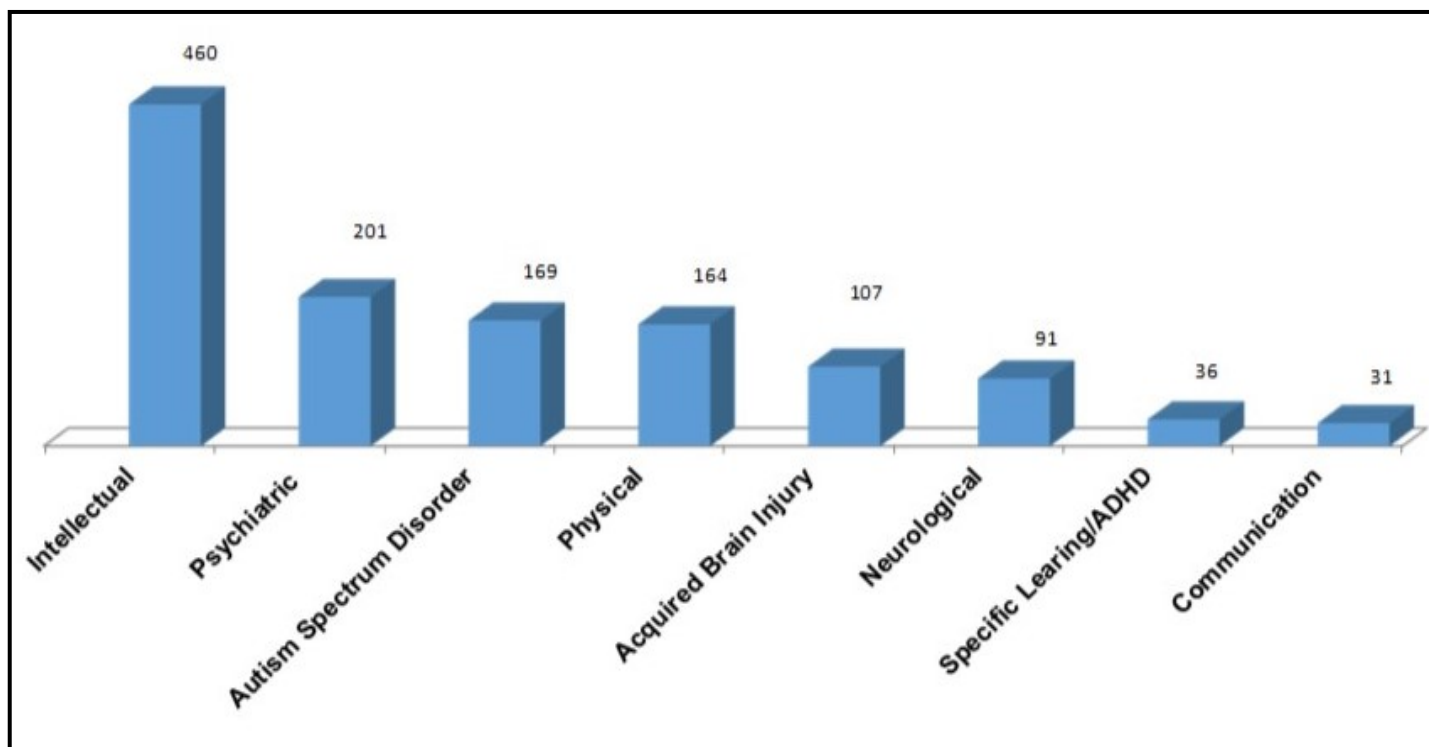
Other issues in 2019-2020 were as follow: Bullying/Harassment, Personal Injury/Duty of Care, Education, Victim of Crime, FOI, Recreation/Family, Health and Civil Law

Telephone Advice Service Report



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

Type of Disability



Client feedback

Thank you for doing what we thought was the impossible.

it's great to know that there are organizations such as villamanta in the community.

And these organizations could not function without the likes of you and Deidre. I know it sounds corny but you and I know it is true.

Right now we are starting to get a bank account together and we three are really enjoying our life together in our beautiful home.

Every day we are working hard to make our house better,

As before we were worried, and it was an endless packing up and cleaning up, and wondering what was going to happen to us when we lost our home.

I feel so humble in trying to find some way to say thank you.

You will never know just how much happiness you have given us.

So thank you Deidri and kate and villamanta for all you have done.

I remain yours truly

Financial Statements



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc

Income and Expenditure Statement For the year ended 30 June 2020

| | 2020 \$ | 2019 \$ |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Income | | |
| Grants - Recurring | 567,635 | 558,264 |
| NDIS Appeals | 192,402 | 184,000 |
| Disability Royal Commission | 95,088 | |
| DHHS | 137,785 | 85,402 |
| Other income | 11,467 | 6,103 |
| Interest received | 6,774 | 8,083 |
| ATO Cash Flow Boost | 50,000 | |
| Total income | <u>1,061,151</u> | <u>841,852</u> |
| Expenses | | |
| Administration | 7,707 | 7,931 |
| Consultancy | 10,337 | 11,312 |
| Depreciation | 5,085 | 5,547 |
| Employment expenses | 907,763 | 754,195 |
| Library | 408 | 435 |
| Memberships | 5,645 | 6,071 |
| Motor vehicle & travel costs | 14,966 | 11,608 |
| Office expenses | 22,046 | 18,435 |
| Occupancy | 16,564 | 15,142 |
| Staff training & development | 656 | 2,538 |
| Telephone | 2,125 | 5,873 |
| Total expenses | <u>993,303</u> | <u>839,087</u> |
| Surplus from ordinary activities before income tax | <u>67,849</u> | <u>2,765</u> |
| Income tax revenue relating to ordinary activities | | |
| Net surplus attributable to the association | <u>67,849</u> | <u>2,765</u> |
| Total changes in equity of the association | <u>67,849</u> | <u>2,765</u> |
| | | |
| Opening retained earnings | 243,242 | 240,477 |
| Net surplus attributable to the association | <u>67,849</u> | <u>2,765</u> |
| Closing retained earnings | <u>311,091</u> | <u>243,242</u> |

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Financial Statements



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2020

| | Note | 2020 \$ | 2019 \$ |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Assets | | | |
| Current Assets | | | |
| Cash assets | 2 | 548,886 | 403,877 |
| Receivables | 3 | 133,650 | |
| Other | 4 | 3,386 | 2,060 |
| Total Current Assets | | 685,922 | 405,937 |
| Non-Current Assets | | | |
| Property, plant and equipment | 5 | | 5,085 |
| Total Non-Current Assets | | | 5,085 |
| Total Assets | | 685,922 | 411,022 |
| Liabilities | | | |
| Current Liabilities | | | |
| Payables | 6 | 31,929 | 32,791 |
| Current tax liabilities | 7 | 7,451 | 5,993 |
| Provisions | 8 | 104,188 | 78,627 |
| Other | 9 | 200,273 | 31,592 |
| Total Current Liabilities | | 343,842 | 149,004 |
| Non-Current Liabilities | | | |
| Provisions | 8 | 30,989 | 18,776 |
| Total Non-Current Liabilities | | 30,989 | 18,776 |
| Total Liabilities | | 374,831 | 167,780 |
| Net Assets | | 311,091 | 243,242 |
| Members' Funds | | | |
| Retained earnings | | 311,091 | 243,242 |
| Total Members' Funds | | 311,091 | 243,242 |

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Auditor's Report



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

ASSUR
Audit & Assurance

Chartered Accountants
Registered Company Auditors

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Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members

Director:
A.R. Ager CA, BEc
Registered Company Auditor

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Authorised Audit Company
No. 453122

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc (the association), which comprises the Statement by Members of the Committee, the Income and Expenditure Statement, Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2020, a summary of significant accounting policies and the certification by members of the committee on the annual statements giving a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the association.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the association as at 30 June 2020 and [of] its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements and the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the association in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist the association to meet the requirements of Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of the Committee for the Financial Report

The committee is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and for such internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the committee is responsible for assessing the association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the committee either intends to liquidate the association or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Report



Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.

ASSUR
Audit & Assurance

Chartered Accountants
Registered Company Auditors

Director:
A.R. Ager CA, BEc
Registered Company Auditor

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Authorised Audit Company
No. 453122

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Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the association's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the committee.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the committee regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

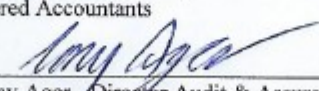
Signed on: 12TH NOVEMBER 2020

ASSUR PTY LTD

ASSUR PTY LTD

Authorised Audit Company Number: 453122

Chartered Accountants


Anthony Ager - Director Audit & Assurance
Chartered Accountant

Client feedback



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

- ◆ *Thank you so much for the help. I couldn't have coped without your service."*
- ◆ *"Thank you so much for what you did to help Peter. I feel more confident his rights will be protected now. You made a real difference"*
- ◆ *"You helped my daughter greatly. My daughter, her parents and siblings are very grateful to Villamanta"*
- ◆ *"You helped our family in ways you cannot know. Warm regards"*
- ◆ *"Big thank you our lawyer for her excellent assistance, advice and support. Her legal knowledge and tenacity were gratefully received during a time of great stress to myself and my family."*
- ◆ *"Today I am happy to let you know that James was relocated yesterday. I would like to thank you very much for your help all that time. Your contribution in the case played a vital role and without it I am not sure if today the result would be the same."*
- ◆ *"I still think of you often and how much you helped and supported us, and our lives now are quite different, I feel, because of you and your hard work to get us to a good place. There are no words that I can say, except thank you and how appreciative we are."*
- ◆ *"I feel the service provided by Villamanta was invaluable to Robert and his guardian. Robert felt he was listened to and the lawyer was able to provide a strong voice when voicing Robert's wishes to the VCAT Member. Robert was extremely nervous attending VCAT but he was excited at the meeting, feeling confident and reassured about the process."*
- ◆ *"This is such a great outcome. Thank you. I have let Lydia's case manager know (from the aged care team) and she is over the moon and very grateful. Thanks for all your hard work on this one."*
- ◆ *"Just a personal & heartfelt 'THANK YOU' for your time & support with James (& us) while dealing with the NDIA. Take care. Kind regards"*