



# Centre for Innovative Justice



**2020 Annual Review**

RMIT University's Centre for Innovative Justice (CIJ) is a research, education and advocacy organisation which promotes innovative and therapeutic initiatives to help make the justice system a positive intervention in people's lives. Established in 2013 by former Attorney-General Rob Hulls, the CIJ has produced ground-breaking work in the areas of family violence, systemic reform and restorative justice.

Shaping the world

Life-changing experiences

Passion with purpose



We respectfully acknowledge the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations on whose unceded lands we conduct business on-behalf of the University. We acknowledge Ancestors and Elders, past and present. We also acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia which we conduct our work and life upon.

## A note from the director



### Rob Hulls

Director  
Centre for Innovative Justice



For most of us, 2020 was a year full of mixed emotions. Fear, uncertainty, isolation, loneliness, hope and even a little joy. It was a tough year for many – particularly those who came into contact with the justice system. Despite the difficulties, the justice system needs to adapt and adjust to ensure it can be a positive influence in the lives of its users.

The CIJ takes the view that out of adversity comes opportunity and we were full steam ahead in 2020, embarking upon work that had real impact in changing the justice system for the better. Whether it be our on-going projects in the family violence area, where the Victorian State Minister Gabby Williams launched and endorsed our report on Adolescent Violence in the Home, or our ground-breaking project on Strengthening Victoria's Victims Support System, launched by Victorian State Minister Natalie Hutchins, or our award winning work in the disability justice field, or our Criminal Records Discrimination Project that lead to life-changing legislation in the State Parliament, we made a positive impact in 2020.

I'm also pleased that our restorative justice work is being embraced throughout many parts of the justice system and by private enterprise. This aspect of the CIJ's work will expand in 2021.

Despite COVID-19, we were still able to offer students some extraordinary experiences and continued work on our Secondary Schools Outreach Program, advocating the case for innovative justice and promoting the law offerings at RMIT.

Working with key stakeholders and having a real impact on our ever evolving justice environment with a view to improving the experience of those who use the system will continue to be our motivation and goal.





# 2020 Snapshot

## Shaping the World | Research with Impact

### Systemic Reform ■■■

#### Strengthening Victoria's Victim Support - Victim Services Review

Launched our final report concerning the review and proposed redesign of Victoria's victim support system.

#### Child Witness Service Review

Completed our review of the Child Witness Service which made recommendations for how the service can be further strengthened and expanded.

#### Children's Court of Victoria Service Delivery Reform Project

Continued to support the RMIT Graduate School of Business and Law and Huddle Design Consulting on the Service Delivery Reform Project for the Children's Court of Victoria to guide.

#### Unstacking the Odds: Towards positive interventions at the intersection of gambling and crime

Delivered an Issues paper with the Victorian Responsible Gambling Authority which highlights the impact of COVID-19 and its potential for gambling harm to be experienced by an even greater number of Victorians.

### Criminal Record Discrimination ■■■

#### Criminal Record Discrimination Project

The CIJ's previous work with Woor-Dungin on this project contributed to legislative change with the introduction of the *Spent Convictions Act 2021* (Vic).

#### Rethinking Criminal Record Checks

New project commenced in partnership with, Woor-Dungin, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (VACCHO) and Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation and funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board.

### Family Violence ■■■

#### The PIPA Project

Launched full report in March at Capitol Theatre in Melbourne. Followed by webinar launches for Tasmania and Western Australia.

#### COVID-19 impact on AVITH

The CIJ partnered with the Centre for Family Research & Evaluation at drummond street services to release an Issues Paper examining the issue of AVITH during COVID-19 lockdowns.

#### Pre-court support for AVITH pilot

Continued work supporting the design and evaluation of a program providing Pre-Court Support to Adolescents using family violence. This project is being delivered by Youthlaw as the lead agency.

#### Improved accountability: The role of perpetrator intervention systems

The ANROWS funded, *Improved Accountability: the role of perpetrator intervention systems* was released featuring a range of case studies, including one from the CIJ.

#### Perpetrator identification and comprehensive assessment tools

Developed two evidence-based perpetrator identification and comprehensive assessment tools led by Family Safety Victoria and Curtin University.

#### Knowledge Transfer Framework for Respect Victoria

Contributed towards the KPMG led project developing a Knowledge Transfer Framework for Respect Victoria.

#### Risks and Needs Assessment Framework

Developed a resource for the Magistrates' Court of Victoria which explored ways in which the court can work with perpetrators of family violence who have co-occurring complex needs.

#### Legal Practice and Resourcing and Allocations Model

Appointed to evaluate a new model for those with lived experience of the family violence court system.

### Women's Decarceration ■■■

#### Women Transforming Justice

Released our evaluation of the Women Transforming Justice project which showed the value of gender-specific approaches to addressing rises in women's incarceration rates in Victoria.

#### Feasibility Study – Residential Program for Aboriginal Women

New collaboration with Djirra and Price Waterhouse Cooper's Indigenous Consulting to develop a model and plan for implementation of a residential program for Aboriginal women in Victoria.

#### Financial Counselling Practice Guide

Completed our Financial Counselling pilot – in which a financial counsellor was seconded to deliver services to women in prison through the Mental Health Legal Centre.

### Disability Justice ■■■

#### Supporting Justice

Launched the Supporting Justice website which is a resource for legal professionals, support workers and those with a disability to navigate the criminal justice system.

#### Voices for Justice

Supported the Self-Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) to develop the Voices for Justice training project.

#### Voices for Change

Supported self-advocates to form this group which developed from the Voices for Justice training and facilitated a podcast series in which they shared their stories.

## Open Circle | Restorative Practice Service

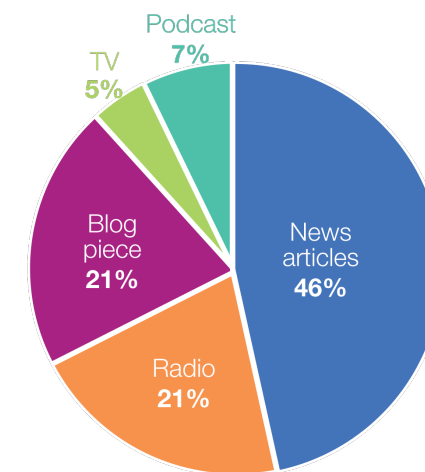
The CIJ restorative justice service rounded out its first year of operation, consulting to a range of organisations to develop restorative approaches and programs specific to their needs.

## Life Changing Experiences | Students

CIJ continued to offer RMIT Juris Doctor and Master of Social Work students opportunities and placements via an online delivery model.

## Passion with Purpose | Advocacy & Engagement

### In the media ■■■



### Social media ■■■

- Open Circle joined Twitter
- CIJ joined LinkedIn

**twitter**  
2144  
followers  
12% increase  
from 2019

**facebook**  
524  
followers  
48% increase  
from 2019

**LinkedIn**  
134  
followers  
since joining  
mid 2020

15 CIJ webinars

09 student webinars

18 speaking events

26 CIJ blogs

05 written submissions

05 CIJ bi-monthly newsletters

07 fortnightly CIJ 'Innovation in Isolation' newsletters during Melbourne lockdown

15 student newsletter for Juris Doctor and Master of Social Work students

# Shaping the world

## Research with Impact

- Systemic Reform
- Family Violence
- Women's Decarceration
- Disability Justice
- Criminal Record Discrimination

## Systemic Reform

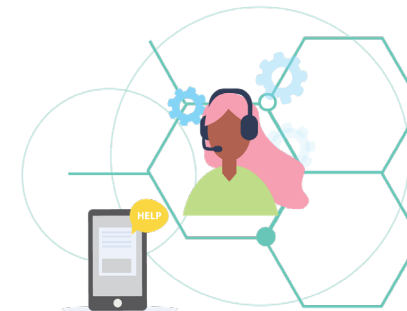
### Victim Services Review



[Click here to read the Final Report](#)



[Click here to read the Key Practice Insights](#)



### Strengthening Victoria's Victim Support System

The CIJ was delighted to be invited by the Minister for Victim Support, Natalie Hutchins, to launch our report concerning a review and proposed redesign of Victoria's victim support system. This work, conducted throughout 2019, involved an extensive review of the existing victim-focused services; consultations and workshops with a wide range of practitioners and stakeholders; as well as, most importantly, interviews with 37 victims of crime around the state.

These interviews informed recommendations for a proposed redesign of the service model – with a centralised, specialist phone-based service delivered by a proposed Victim Support Centre which could provide initial risk and needs assessment and ongoing check-ins for people with less extensive needs; and a community-based Victim Support and Recovery Program at which intensive service provision and lighter caseloads could address longer term and multiple needs, including across whole families.

Overall, the review demonstrated an opportunity to acknowledge the 'Victim Support System' as a highly specialised area in need of a specialised response. Initial steps in terms of workforce capability and development are the foundation of this and the CIJ was delighted to hear the Minister for Victim Support similarly recognise the value of this early focus. The CIJ's proposal for a redesign of the system can be found in the review's Final Report; the themes from our interviews with victims of crime in this Practice Insights resource and a summary of our findings in Part One of a two part blog piece by Riley Ellard which you can read [here](#).

### Child Witness Service

The CIJ also completed its review of the Child Witness Service, finding it to be a strong and valuable service supporting some of the most vulnerable witnesses in the community. The CIJ has made recommendations to the Department of Justice and Regulation for ways in which this service can be further strengthened and expanded into the future and presented these recommendations to a high level Advisory Group.

### Measuring crime harm – the development of a Crime Harm Index for Victoria

In addition, the CIJ drew on its work with victims of crime in a submission to the Crime Statistics Agency in relation to their proposal to develop a Crime Harm Index, being a way of measuring the impact of different kinds of crime across the community.

### Children's Court



### Children's Court Service Delivery Reform Project

Throughout 2020, the CIJ continued its support of the Graduate School of Business and Law at RMIT and Huddle Design Consulting, who were engaged by the Children's Court of Victoria to guide its Service Delivery Reform Project. The outcomes from the project served as a crucial foundation for the Court's rapid and successful adaptation to service delivery in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CIJ also oversaw the development of a resource focusing on Specialist Children's Court approaches across Australia and in comparable jurisdictions.



# Family violence

## Adolescent violence in the home (AVITH) – 2020 a year of vital discussions



CIJ's Associate Director, Elena Campbell, Minister Gabrielle Williams and CIJ Director, Rob Hulls at the PIPA project report launch in March.

[Click here to read the full PIPA Project report](#)



[Click here to read the PIPA Project 'Key findings and future directions'](#)



[Click here to read the 'Behind Closed Doors' paper](#)

### The PIPA Project: Positive Interventions for Perpetrators of Adolescent violence in the home

In March, the CIJ was delighted to launch the final report of the PIPA project. An audience of 200 was joined by the Hon. Gabrielle Williams, Minister for Women, Youth Affairs and the Prevention of Family Violence, CIJ Associate Director and PIPA project lead author, Elena Campbell and an expert panel involving Judge Amanda Chambers, President of the Children's Court of Victoria; Dr Heather Nancarrow, CEO of ANROWS; and Jo Howard, leading consultant in the area of adolescent family violence.

The event explored some of the systemic and pragmatic changes that could improve the legal and service system's response to AVITH, including legislative and wider reform. This included grappling with the nuance and flexibility required in such a complex area of policy. Responding to the research findings, Minister Williams reflected on the opportunities for ensuring that Victoria's interconnected systems function as a more positive intervention for families and adolescents and committed to considering PIPA's recommendations in detail.

Over the ensuing six months, Elena continued to conduct online workshops with a range of Victorian and interstate service providers who were eager to hear how they could respond with greater nuance to the complex issue of AVITH, or how this issue was connected with their areas of work.

Unfortunately, due to Victoria's second lockdown, Elena was unable to travel to Tasmania and Western Australia to promote the findings and support our interstate project partners. These partners instead joined her in online webinars – exploring the project's findings as they related to the Tasmanian and Western Australian experience. These webinars received fantastic support from ANROWS and were attended by audiences from around Australia.

### The effect of COVID-19

During this time, Elena also sought to raise awareness of the different ways in which COVID-19 lockdowns were impacting children and young people identified as using family violence.

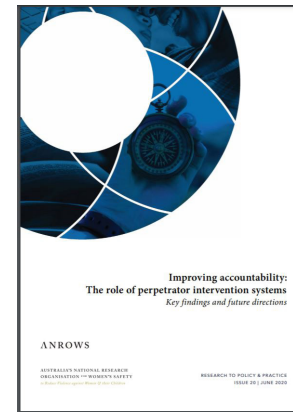
CIJ partnered with the Centre for Family Research & Evaluation at Drummond Street Services to release an Issues Paper examining the issue of AVITH during COVID-19 lockdowns – *Behind Closed Doors: Adolescent Violence in the Home (AVITH) during COVID & challenges to come*.

### Pre-Court Support to Adolescents Using Family Violence

Meanwhile, the CIJ continued work supporting the design and evaluation of a program providing Pre-Court Support to Adolescents Using Family Violence. This project is being delivered by Youthlaw as the lead agency. The CIJ has designed a Program Logic, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and is working with local service providers to ensure that the voices of young people are safely and ethically featured in the evaluation.

Shaping the world | Research with Impact

## Adult perpetrated family violence – additional complexities



[Click here to read 'Improved Accountability: the role of perpetrator intervention systems' including Chapter Four authored by Elena Campbell and Tallace Bissett](#)

### Improved Accountability: the role of perpetrator intervention systems

The CIJ was thrilled to see the release of ANROWS funded research into Improved Accountability: the role of perpetrator intervention systems. This major edited collection – led by Professor Donna Chung from Curtin University – was a collaboration between researchers from multiple universities around Australia. This collection will serve as a substantial contribution to the growing evidence base concerning perpetrator interventions and features a range of case studies, including one led by Elena Campbell and CIJ Senior Adviser Tallace Bissett examining the various innovations and challenges inherent in the development of perpetrator intervention responses. Elena also participated in an ANROWS hosted webinar to discuss the findings from the research.

### Perpetrator identification and comprehensive assessment tools

In other work related to adult perpetrated family violence, Family Safety Victoria engaged a team led by Curtin University and involving Elena Campbell and Consultant Rodney Vlasis to develop two evidence-based perpetrator identification and comprehensive assessment tools through a multi-tier process.

### Knowledge Transfer Framework for Respect Victoria

The CIJ was also pleased to work alongside the team at KPMG again – this time contributing towards a Knowledge Transfer Framework for Respect Victoria, the statutory authority established in response to Recommendation 188 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. This project, led by KPMG and supported by Elena Campbell, developed a framework to provide an even stronger foundation for Respect Victoria's mission.

### Risks and Needs Assessment

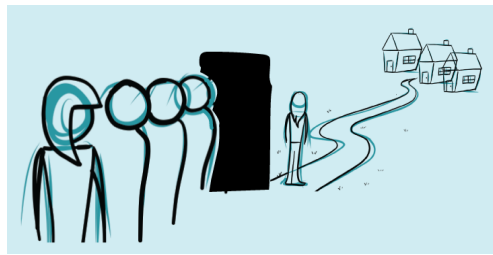
Building on the CIJ's past work with the Magistrates' Court of Victoria the CIJ also developed a Risk and Needs Assessment Framework – exploring ways in which the court can work with perpetrators of family violence who have co-occurring complex needs. In addition, the CIJ worked with the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Family Safety Victoria, No to Violence and other relevant organisations to develop an adapted response for men participating in Men's Behaviour Change Programs while these programs could not operate in the usual face to face group environment. The swift response of courts and other agencies highlighted how crucial a truly co-ordinated community response and evidence base are to achieving 'perpetrator accountability'.

### Legal Practice and Resourcing and Allocations Model

More broadly, the CIJ was delighted to be appointed to evaluate the exciting new Legal Practice and Resourcing and Allocations Model developed by Victoria Legal Aid in conjunction with the Federation of Community Legal Centres. With work commencing in November 2020, the evaluation will span a number of years, during which time the CIJ – supported by evaluation expert, Lucy Macmillan – will measure the effectiveness of the model and the outcomes it produces for people with lived experience of the family violence court system.

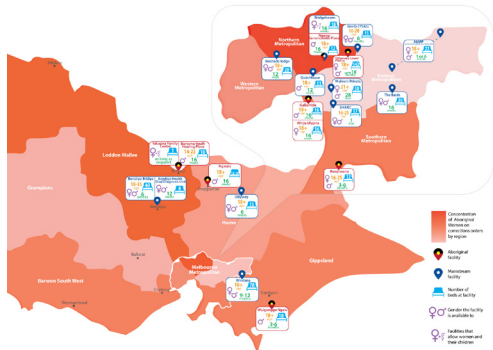
# Family violence

# Women's Decarceration



December 2020 marked 10 years since the UN adopted the Bangkok Rules – recognition that women in contact with the criminal justice system require gender-specific, non-custodial responses.

As part of the CIJ's Women's Decarceration agenda, the CIJ released two blogs on the experiences of women in Dame Phyllis Frost Centre during COVID-19 related lockdowns, as well as a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness, highlighting the particular and compounding challenges for criminalised women in terms of securing safe and stable accommodation. The CIJ was also excited to secure ethics approval for a project we will conduct in 2021 exploring changes in women's access to bail.



## Feasibility Study for a Residential Program for Aboriginal Women

CIJ continued to work with Djirra and Pricewaterhouse Coopers Indigenous Consulting on a Feasibility Study for a Residential Program for Aboriginal Women who come into contact with the criminal justice system. Having conducted a literature review, surveys and site visits to relevant services right around Victoria, the work was 'paused' during the remainder of 2020. In 2021, work will resume to consult with community and with women with lived experience on options for the development of a best practice model. We know that women with lived experience of the criminal justice system are the experts in what is needed, so their voices need to be front and centre in the service's ultimate design.

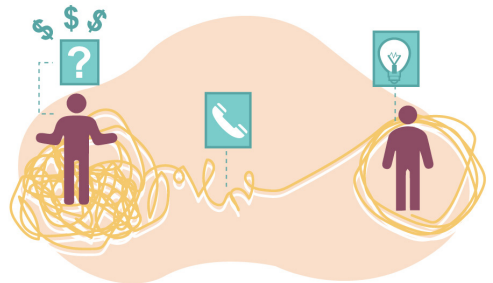
## Women Transforming Justice project

The CIJ released the final evaluation of the Women Transforming Justice project. The project provides gender-informed legal assistance specifically to women seeking bail, combined with follow up case management and other support to women either while they are in custody or in the community. The project is a collaboration between the Fitzroy Legal Service (incorporating Darebin Community Legal Centre), the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women (LACW) and Flat Out.

The evaluation found that the design of the program was meeting women's immediate legal and social support needs, while operating within the confines of a largely inadequate service system, showing the value of gender-specific approaches to addressing unacceptable rises in women's incarceration rates in Victoria.

## Financial Counselling Practice Guidance: Integrating financial counselling in a legal setting for effective collaborative practice

At a service delivery level, the CIJ completed its Financial Counselling pilot – in which a financial counsellor was seconded to deliver services to women in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre through the Mental Health Legal Centre (MHLC). The CIJ was delighted that the MHLC subsequently engaged its own financial counsellor as part of its core staff. To support the further integration of financial counsellors in other community legal settings, the CIJ released a Practice Guidance, developed with the support of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, which funded the original Financial Counselling pilot, and with the advice of Financial Counselling Victoria.



# Disability Justice

## Supporting Justice

The CIJ worked with design firm Paper Giant to develop SupportingJustice.net. The project adopted systems thinking and human-centred design principles to develop the online resource. The project team drew in a broad cross-section of court and legal professionals, as well as court support and disability justice workers, to inform every stage of the website's design and development. Critically, the lived experience of people with disability was embedded in the project, ensuring that the resource responds to the needs of the people it is designed to support. For many participants with lived experience, it was the first time they had been approached as subject matter experts based on their own experience. Participating in the design, creation and testing of the resource was an empowering experience for participants with lived experience and proved invaluable for the integrity and practicality it has provided to SupportingJustice.net.



## Website launch

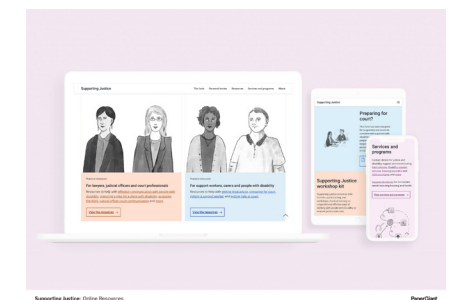
To formally launch the SupportingJustice.net website, the CIJ was joined by Minister for Disability, the Honourable Luke Donnellan and an expert panel discussion facilitated by CIJ Associate Director Stan Winford. The Panel included Magistrate Pauline Spencer, Advocacy Coordinator at Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID), Emily Piggott and Self-Advocate Dorothy Armstrong and explored the issues facing people with disability in the criminal justice system.

## Voices for Justice

CIJ supported the Self-Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) at Melbourne's Ross House to develop and deliver the Voices for Justice training project to people with an acquired brain injury who have had contact with the justice system to assist them develop confidence and skills to become self-advocates. In 2020, it was featured across ABC News, AM radio and ABC News Online. Dorothy Armstrong, Adviser and Peer Support Worker, was interviewed on ABC's Morning Breakfast radio where she highlighted the overrepresentation of people with disability in the criminal justice system and the importance of engaging lived-experience in finding policy solutions.

## Voices for Change self-advocacy group

The Voices for Change self-advocacy group resulted from the Voices for Justice graduates. All members of the group want to see and contribute to changing the system to make it better. The members of Voices for Change completed the Voices for Justice training in 2019 to develop skills and build confidence to become self-advocates.



## SupportingJustice.net Good Design Award

The Good Design Awards is one of the world's oldest and most prestigious design award programs. It showcases superior examples of good design to a national and international audience. The award for SupportingJustice.net acknowledges the innovative design process that went into creating the online resource.



[Click to watch webinar](#)



[Click to listen](#)

## Our Voices Podcast

There are six foundation members of Voices for Change, five of the members participated in the Our Voices podcast series. The podcast series was produced with CIJ as a way of communicating the group's message for change to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.



# Criminal Record Discrimination



The Woort Dungen team (L-R) Naomi Murphy, Georgina Heydon, Bronwyn Naylor (RMIT), Christa Momot, Michael Bell, Stan Winford (CIJ) and Sue-Anne Hunter.

## Criminal Record Discrimination Project

The CIJ's previous work with Woort-Dungen on the Criminal Record Discrimination project which commenced in 2017, contributed to legislative change for those with historic criminal records in Victoria. In October, the then Victorian Attorney-General Jill Hennessey introduced the *Spent Convictions Bill 2020* into Victorian Parliament and on 30 March 2021, the *Spent Convictions Act 2021* (Vic) came into effect. The Act brings Victoria in line with other Australian states and territories by introducing a scheme for certain criminal offences to be removed from an individual's criminal record.

## Rethinking Criminal Record Checks

In 2020, the Rethinking Criminal Record Checks (RCRC) project commenced in a partnership between the Centre for Innovative Justice, Woort-Dungen, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (VACCHO) and Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation and funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board. The RCRC project was established to continue the work initiated in our Criminal Record Discrimination Project which called for a legislated spent convictions scheme in Victoria and was recognised for its effective advocacy by winning the National Indigenous Philanthropy Award from Philanthropy Australia.

Criminal records can be barriers to employment, as well as social and economic exclusion and create poor justice and health outcomes. This disproportionately affects Aboriginal Victorians, who are over-represented in the criminal justice system and under-represented in the state's work force.

The RCRC project will explore ways to improve employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, and to support employers in recruitment of Aboriginal people.

The aims of the project are to identify existing good practice amongst employers, and to communicate these practices to jobseekers and employers in ways that can be readily understood and adopted. The project will also engage employers and employees in an ongoing program to enhance Aboriginal employment, in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal communities.



Background art: 'Ulupna Wanala (Home in Spring)' by Renee Gray

# Open Circle

**The beginning of 2020 was an exciting time for the Open Circle team. The restorative justice service had just been launched and Anna Howard (Manager) and Asia Swida (Convener), had joined the team. Open Circle were excited by the possibilities for restorative justice (RJ) and by the interest others were showing in RJ and the service.**

2020 was a year of establishing the service, refining practice, building relationships and providing information to the community about how restorative processes can be used to respond to and prevent harm and conflict and to strengthen communities.

Through the necessity of having to deliver RJ processes online, the team learned that while not ideal in a practice sense, it can overcome some access barriers and will have an ongoing impact on the way Open Circle delivers services into the future and how they can connect with the wider RJ community. Asia Swida wrote about adapting RJ to the online environment in this blog piece. The team met with the Restorative Justice Council in the UK, attended online conferences, met with the Diana Unwin Chair of Restorative Justice in Wellington, connected with Churchill Fellow Michael Power around RJ in forensic mental health settings and with Dr Jane Bolitho and Thea Deakin Greenwood from Transforming Justice Australia around restorative responses to sexual harm.

Open Circle also focused on developing relationships with stakeholders such as the Office of Public Prosecutions, victims support services, sexual assault services, Victoria Police, Courts (including the Coroners Court, Magistrates Court and County Court) and lawyers.

Open Circle received referrals from a wide range of sources involving a broad range of harms. The referrals received tended to involve serious harms committed by adults, including harms caused by road collisions, sexual violence, assault and homicide.

Open Circle also continued to explore how and where restorative processes might offer benefits, including:

- in residential group home settings: Open Circle was engaged by Yooralla to develop a series of training sessions on the application of restorative practices in their group homes as a way to build the capacity of staff and residents to respond to conflict that arises.
- the Coroners Court in relation to a number of projects that involved offering restorative processes to families involved in the Coronial process, in response to the CIJ's submission to the Coronial Council Appeals Review in 2017. The CIJ's submission invited the Coronial Council to consider its inquiry within a broader framework and noted that restorative justice processes may provide families and non-family members with the opportunity to have their needs met in ways that traditional justice processes, including appeals and reviews, cannot.

In 2021, Open Circle will benefit from the groundwork done this year and the team are stealing themselves for a busy 12 months ahead.



# Passion with Purpose

## Advocacy & Engagement

- Events
- Advocacy & Engagement
- Submissions

### Events

#### PIPA Project report Melbourne launch

An audience of 200 was joined by Gabrielle Williams, Minister for Women, Youth Affairs and the Prevention of Family Violence, PIPA project lead author Elena Campbell and an expert panel involving Judge Amanda Chambers, President of the Children's Court of Victoria; Dr Heather Nancarrow, CEO of ANROWS; and Jo Howard, leading consultant in the area of adolescent family violence to launch the report.



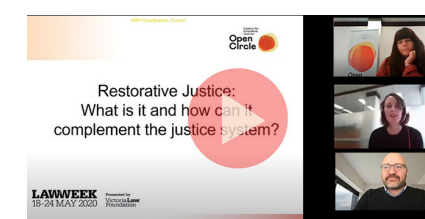
Pictured (L-R): Elena Campbell, Jo Howard, Family Violence consultant, Judge Amanda Chambers and Heather Nancarrow, ANROWS CEO at the Melbourne PIPA Report launch

#### Law Week 2020

The CIJ held two webinars during the Victorian Law Foundation's Law Week – 'Acquired brain injuries and the criminal justice system' and 'Restorative justice – what is it & how can it improve the justice system'. These events were the first webinars that CIJ ran and it was exciting to see how the online environment enabled us to reach a much larger audience from across Australia and even the world.



Click to watch 'Acquired brain injuries and the criminal justice system'



Click to watch 'Restorative justice – what is it & how can it improve the justice system'

#### PIPA Project report launch Webinars for Tasmania and WA

While Elena had also been looking forward to travelling back to Tasmania and Western Australia to promote the findings and support our interstate project partners, these partners instead joined her in online webinars – exploring the project's findings as they related to the Tasmanian and Western Australian experience. They were facilitated by ANROWS CEO, Heather Nancarrow.



Click to watch the Tasmanian PIPA webinar



Click to watch the WA PIPA webinar

#### Raising the age

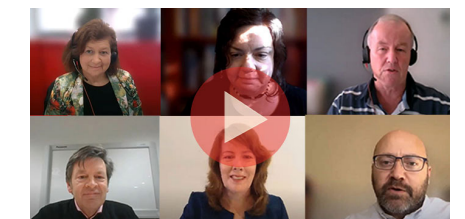
The CIJ hosted a panel discussion featuring the Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, Liana Buchanan, Youth Director at West Justice, Anoushka Jeronimus and CEO of the Victoria Aboriginal Legal Service, Nerita Waight to highlight the appalling realities of the current age of criminal responsibility, as well as to discuss constructive alternatives.



Click to watch webinar

#### SupportingJustice.net Launch

Minister for Disability, Luke Donnellan joined CIJ Director Rob Hulls to launch the Supporting Justice website - an important new resource. The panel featured Magistrate Pauline Spencer, Coordinating Magistrate Court Support Service, Dorothy Armstrong, Self-Advocate and Victorian Disability Award winner, Stan Winford, Associate Director of the CU and Emily Piggott, Advocacy Coordinator at VALID discussing the current issues for people with disability in the criminal justice system.



Click to watch webinar

#### Intersections of gambling and offending

This webinar looked at the benefits learnt from our Financial Counselling pilot, run in collaboration with the MHLC's Inside Access program. The webinar was facilitated by Elena Campbell and featured Sarah Davidson, Financial Counsellor, CIJ, Ann Jorgensen, Principal Solicitor, Mental Health Legal Centre, Kristina Bucak, Solicitor, MHLC's Inside Access and Amanda Carter, Managing Lawyer, Therapeutic Courts, Victoria Legal Aid.



Click to watch webinar



# Engagement



Stan Winford speaking at the United Nations Development Programme

## CIJ Speaking engagements

18 Speaking engagements including the United Nations Development Program, Malaysia, on access to justice, VLA Criminal Law Connections Conference, Reintegration Puzzle Conference, Reframing Adolescent Violence Symposium, Raise the Age webinar, International Conference of Legal Regulators.

## A global spotlight on Access to Justice

Before COVID-19 restrictions were introduced in Australia, in January CIJ Associate Director, Stan Winford travelled to Malaysia. He was invited by the United Nations Development Programme and the Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak Tan Sri Datuk Sri Panglima David Wong to speak at National Colloquium on Access to Justice 2020 in Malaysia. The Colloquium was attended by most of the Malaysian judiciary.

Stan spoke about improving access to justice through technology and how this is being implemented in Australia. His presentation included the factors driving change, and Australian examples of some of the ways in which technology has been used to improve access to justice. In his talk, Stan also addressed the opportunities, limitations and barriers associated with the use of technology and some of the lessons learned in Australia, as well as suggestions for Malaysia. He also addressed the importance of using human centred approaches to developing technology, drawing on some of the work of the CIJ and PaperGiant to develop SupportingJustice.net.

## Decriminalising public drunkenness

CIJ contributed to the Expert Reference Group to inform the Victorian Government's commitment to decriminalising public drunkenness. The Reference Group was appointed to provide advice on replacing Victoria's public drunkenness offences with a health-based response. The commitment to decriminalise public drunkenness followed the coronial inquest into the tragic death of Yorta Yorta woman Tanya Day and is consistent with the recommendations of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. This led to the Victoria's upper house passing the Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Bill at the start of 2021.

## Developing the new Youth Justice Act 2021 with the Aboriginal Justice Caucus

During 2020 the CIJ worked with the Aboriginal Justice Caucus and its co-chair, Aunty Marion Hansen, to articulate a clear vision for the Victorian youth justice system. Facilitating several workshops with the Department of Justice and the Caucus, CIJ Associate Director Stan Winford led a CIJ team that developed 128 recommendations for reform based on the input of the Caucus.

A thorough submission was also developed which

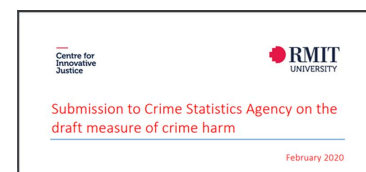
- promoted Aboriginal Justice Caucus' vision for the progressive transfer of resources, authority and responsibilities from government to the Aboriginal community over time
- a vision for justice responses that promote cultural healing and social and emotional wellbeing and turn Aboriginal children away from offending and towards a stronger role in their culture and community.

# Advocacy

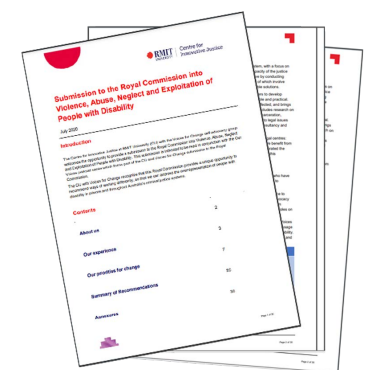
## Submissions



[Click here to read](#)



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## Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

The CIJ made a joint submission with the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women to the Victorian Parliament Legal and Social Issues Committee's Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria. It contained very important information and advocacy regarding criminalised women and homelessness, including case studies, as well as a section on how COVID-19 is impacting dramatically on LACW's clients.

## Crime Harm Index submission

The CIJ contributed a submission to the Crime Statistics Agency in relation to their proposal to develop a Crime Harm Index, being a way of measuring the impact of different kinds of crime across the community. The CIJ drew on its work with victims of crime to call for a nuanced and complex set of measurements.

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

In line with our commitment to disability justice, the CIJ made a joint submission with the Voices for Change self-advocacy group to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. It included 36 recommendations for those with a disability in the justice system. The recommendations included providing extra supports, such as increased opportunities for self-advocates to contribute to system change, housing supports and availability, disability and trauma awareness for those working in the justice system, police, courts and prison, independent third person scheme and early intervention support for young people.

## Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility

We also made a submission to the Council of Attorneys-General as part of their review of the age of criminal responsibility in Australia. A crucial standalone issue which the CIJ sought to highlight during 2020 was the urgent imperative to raise the age of criminal responsibility. Currently the age of criminal responsibility in most Australian jurisdictions sits at age 10, four years under internationally recognised human rights standards and scientific evidence on child and adolescent brain development.

The criminalisation of children disproportionately impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and those who have experienced abuse and neglect. There is also ample evidence to indicate that incarcerating children does not work and in fact the younger a child is at their first sentence, the more likely they are to reoffend, to reoffend violently, and to continue offending into the adult jurisdiction.

# Life Changing Experiences

## Students

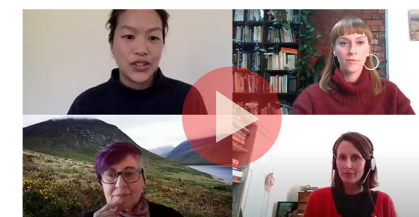
- Engagement during COVID-19
- Placements and internships
- Virtual high school outreach program

## Students

### 9 student webinars



Click to watch Neighbourhood Justice Centre student webinar



Click to watch Restorative Justice student webinar

**15** Student newsletters sent out to Juris Doctor and Master of Social Work students



**Virtual School Outreach Program:** Remote learning offered an opportunity to engage

Throughout 2020, CIJ adapted its student program to continue engagement with RMIT Juris Doctor and Master of Social Work students while they studied remotely. Through a regular newsletter, students were given an overview of justice and social issues arising from the coronavirus pandemic. The newsletter covered issues such as police powers, homelessness, prisons, an explanation of the bail laws in Victoria and the issue of deaths in custody.

In addition to this, the CIJ ran a weekly webinar series 'How did you get here?' where we interviewed a variety of legal professionals who shared their career journey. The series invited students to participate in an interactive session and offered a perspective on the breadth of career pathways a law degree can offer.

Our partners MHLC, LACW, Young Workers Centre and Youthlaw continued to offer placement opportunities through an offsite delivery model, to engage Juris Doctor and Master of Social Work students in project-based research tasks and development of community legal education resources.

Finally, as most of us would be aware, the adjustment to working from home highlighted the need for self-care. Irene Dao, Master of Social Work student commented on this issue:

**Working from home has placed such an emphasis on the importance of self-care. It was important that I established effective self-care strategies in order to prevent burnout and recognize my own triggers. I was fortunate to have supports put in place for me to debrief about the challenges I was facing, as well as my personal feelings and thoughts, such as peer support supervision.**

- Irene Dao, Master of Social Work student

With secondary school students undertaking online classes due to the coronavirus restrictions, the CIJ took the opportunity to engage over 20 secondary schools across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, including schools in Horsham, Mildura, Bairnsdale and Wodonga, presenting to over 300 legal and political studies students. This program offered students a break from their usual class with an online presentation from CIJ Director Rob Hulls discussing the work of CIJ, the systemic issues experienced by those who come into contact with justice system, the importance of law reform as well as inspiring students to think critically about traditional law and order policies. This program is continuing in 2021.



## Student placement during COVID-19

Placement with our co-located partners, LACW, Youthlaw and MHLC

Online law and social work internships were project based and were co-designed with our partners to include research into the effects on legal service responses as a result of COVID-19 as well as designing and developing community legal education resources.

**As part of my Clinical Legal Education I was tasked with creating a resource for the Young Workers Centre which would support their work in educating young people about their workplace rights and entitlements and help the Centre in expanding their online platform and outreach program. For my resource I created a pdf guide for apprentices which provided information about common workplace issues, places that apprentices could find support as well as step-by-step instructions on navigating the relevant legal avenues for apprentices interested in self-representing whilst taking action against their employers**

— Katrina Harte, RMIT Juris Doctor student

Master of Social Work students, Anushia Andrews and Lauren Tarver, completed a project-based placement at LACW, researching integrated practice, with a particular focus on social work support in community legal settings. It involved a literature review, identifying best practice principles from the existing literature and the strong integrated practice networks in Victoria. You can view this on the CIJ website [here](#).

MHLC also hosted two Field Education 2 final year Master of Social Work students, Madeleine Grigg and Irene Dao.

**I was able to do client work over the phone, and build relationships with staff members, even though we have never met in person...my placement partner and I were able to support each other, which is crucial at a time like this. Group supervision was invaluable and provided us with a space to critically reflect on our practice.**

— Madeleine Grigg, Master of Social Work student



### Centre for Innovative Justice

The CIJ was pleased to welcome on board three Juris Doctor students undertaking research field placements. Siobhan Dodd, Cassandra Martin and Rachael Humphris are working across two research projects that will help progress the CIJ's advocacy work in 2021. Guided in the work by Student Program Manager, Mi-Lin Chen Yi Mei, and Senior Advisers Riley Ellard and Catherine Caruana, the students will have the opportunity to do a deep dive into two pressing social justice issues.

### Open Circle

Open Circle also engaged a student intern, double degree Master of Social Work and Juris Doctor student, Eliza Hew, who assisted with research into best practice in restorative justice conferencing while also receiving the opportunity to gain exposure to restorative justice principles. Eliza also produced a fantastic report on the application of restorative processes in forensic mental health settings.

The report can be read [here](#).

**Following discussions between Open Circle and Forensicare...I have been researching to create a grounding piece of work on this topic. In addition to this project work, I have been (virtually) attending Open Circle's weekly team meetings, which has facilitated exposure to the day-to-day occurrences at Open Circle, including conference referrals, program work and practice conversations. The internship has facilitated my knowledge in areas of law, social work and has given me a taste of what it's like to be a part of a restorative justice service.**

— Eliza Hew, Master of Social Work and Juris Doctor student



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