

Centre for Innovative Justice

2021 Annual Review

Shaping the world

Passion with purpose

Life-changing experiences

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.

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.

Rob Hulls

Director
Centre for Innovative Justice



A properly functioning justice system should protect people's rights and in doing so, keep people safe and provide a fair, impartial and understandable process. The system needs to be continually analysed and questioned about whether it meets these objectives and reformed to ensure that it does.

The CIJ sees itself as an analyser, researcher, questioner, and an advocate for change when, as is often the case, the justice system fails to meet its stated aims.

From our ground-breaking work addressing adolescent violence occurring in homes around the country; helping to co-design an Aboriginal women's residential facility; or attempting to reduce the growing number of women and Indigenous Australians in prisons – the majority of whom have been victims themselves, this is crucial work. So is recommending better ways for the system to meet the needs of people with disabilities and advocating for restorative justice to be embedded in our system. All in all, 2021 has been another busy year for the CIJ as we tried to push the justice system to do better.

We know, however, that this task is ongoing – that innovative reform must be a persistent ambition if our justice system is truly to deliver justice for all.

Tom Bentley

Executive Director
Policy, Strategy & Impact



The Centre for Innovative Justice (CIJ) shares RMIT's vision to be a global university of technology, design and enterprise creating solutions that benefit people and communities.

In 2021, despite the ongoing COVID disruptions to work and life, the Centre continued its work, producing rigorous research focussing on the complex challenges facing the justice system and its users and building potential solutions. The work of CIJ continues to have real impact in developing the evidence-base for reform, connecting experts and users, and developing blueprints for how it can be achieved. This practical, solutions-based focus is at the heart of CIJ's approach.

Working with an extensive network of partners, the CIJ has achieved crucial policy influence and impact in such areas as family violence, including AVITH (Adolescent Violence in the Home), and the impacts of COVID on family violence, women's decarceration, indigenous, youth and disability justice and victims of crime. The passing of the Spent Convictions Act 2021 was a particular highlight following a campaign lead by the CIJ & Aboriginal led organisation Woor-Dungin, calling for a legislated scheme to be introduced in Victoria.

CIJ's Open Circle service, offers a much-needed Restorative Justice (RJ) option for victims, has seen demand grow hugely as organisations across our society look for more people-centred and less adversarial ways to address harms and justice needs.

These approaches can be far more effective in helping to heal the harm caused by trauma. The Victorian Law Reform Commission, in its report 'Improving the Justice System Response to Sexual Offences', recognised Open Circle and recommended the wider adoption of restorative justice to improve the choices for victims and survivors of sexual violence.

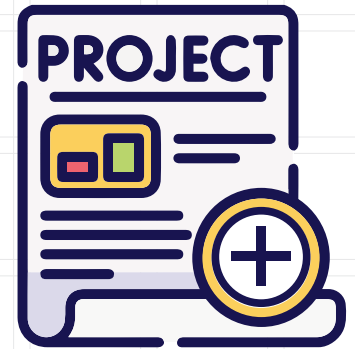
CIJ also provides RMIT students with career-defining placement & internship opportunities, working with partners like Youthlaw and the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women, to help tackle challenges in the systems that deliver justice, health and social services.

During a tough and challenging time, the CIJ has continued in building applied innovations that extend RMIT's positive impact in our community, and use education and research to create new workforce opportunities and new justice system solutions. They play vital and dynamic part in RMIT's life and in advancing justice more widely.

Snapshot 2021

New projects

- WRAP around families experiencing adolescent violence in the home (AVITH): Towards a collaborative service response
- Future-proofing Safety: COVID-19 and family violence
- Lessons from COVID-19: The use of remand, bail and sentencing for women
- Community SupPORT Pathways for Women
- Just Voices Project: Building mainstream justice workforce capability around the NDIS through lived experience
- Ensuring that Aboriginal perspectives inform responses to Aboriginal victims of crime



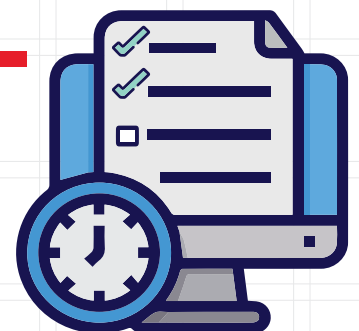
Ongoing projects

- Pre-court support for Adolescent violence in the home (AVITH) Pilot
- Evaluation of the Specialist Legal Practice Model
- Evaluation of the State-wide Rollout of the Family Violence Intervention Order Online Form
- Co-designing an Aboriginal women's residential facility
- Rethinking Criminal Records Checks work
- Opportunities for restorative responses to sexual harassment and sexual assault at BHP



Completed projects

- More than just a piece of paper: Getting protection orders made in a safe and supported way: Responding to Recommendation 77 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence
- Leaving custody behind: Foundations for safer communities and gender-informed criminal justice systems
- Supporting the Aboriginal Justice Caucus consultation and submissions on the Youth Justice Bill
- Coronial Council working together to improve the experience of bereaved families in Victoria
- Support for families during the St Basil's inquest: Open Circle's engagement by the Coroners Court of Victoria



Snapshot 2021

Advocacy

- AVITH Collaborative Network
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Program Logic development and workshop
- Strengthening a State-wide Children's Court Response
- Open Circle Restorative Justice Service
- Raising the Age campaign
- Six written submissions to Royal Commissions, reviews and inquiries

Engagement



15

CIJ blog pieces



5

newsletters



4

CIJ events



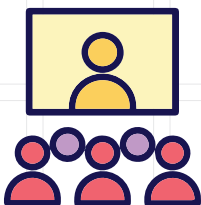
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News articles



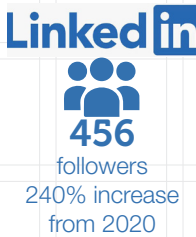
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radio/podcast
appearances



13

speaking events



Students

youthlaw



L | A | C | W
LAW & ADVOCACY
CENTRE FOR WOMEN

Social Work and Juris Doctor
student placement opportunities
within CIJ, LACW and Youthlaw



Virtual High School
Outreach Program

Shaping the world Research with Impact

Family Violence

Adolescent violence in the home (AVITH)



WRAP around families experiencing adolescent violence in the home (AVITH): Towards a collaborative service response

In 2021 the CIJ built directly on its crucial work in the PIPA project through the 'Whole-of-family Responses to AVITH Programs (WRAP) around families experiencing AVITH' (the WRAP Around project). Funded by ANROWS, the WRAP Around project aims to develop a Collaborative Practice Framework for service providers keen to respond to the complex issue of adolescents using violence in the home. In partnership with the Centre for Family Research & Evaluation at Drummond Street Services and Associate Professor Silke Meyer from Griffith University, the WRAP Around project is seeking to research, identify and track support needs from marginalised populations who may be experiencing AVITH amid a range of co-occurring issues. This project will fill a gap in evidence and future practice, supporting the development of a whole-of-family, collaborative practice framework which services across Australia can employ. The final report will be published in the second half of 2022.



Pre-court support for Adolescent violence in the home (AVITH) Pilot

The CIJ continued work supporting the design and ongoing evaluation of a program providing Pre-Court Support to young people who are respondents on Family Violence Intervention Orders (FVIOs). This project is being delivered by Youthlaw and is aiming to facilitate referrals to legal and casework support for young people who are respondents on FVIOs for their use of violence at home. Wider evidence and the CIJ's own research shows that the majority of young people who use harm in their relationships have experienced violence themselves, or have a disability or developmental delay of some kind. While the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and associated lockdowns throughout 2020 and 2021 have provided challenges for the program, the CIJ's evaluation hopes to identify ways in which to strengthen early intervention pathways that could potentially be taken to scale across Victoria.



AVITH Collaborative Network

Throughout 2021, the CIJ's Elena Campbell had the privilege of chairing a multidisciplinary network of practitioners working to respond to the priority issue of AVITH. From small beginnings with its partners Youthlaw, Victoria Police and the Royal Children's Hospital the network expanded to over 100 members during 2021 and included practitioners from mental health, drug and alcohol outreach, the Children's Court, family services, the Orange Door and programs specifically funded to respond to AVITH. Meeting monthly, the network shares systemic updates as well as discussing case studies to facilitate greater connections and practice improvements. Elena and her team look forward to this fantastic network continuing into 2022 and beyond.

Family Violence

Adult perpetrated family violence

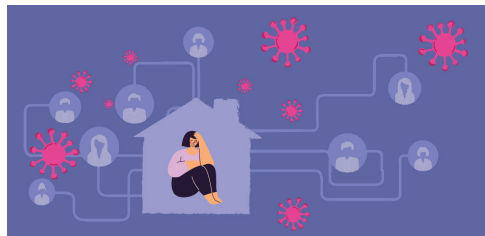


[Click here to read the Research Report](#)

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

More than just a piece of paper: Getting protection orders made in a safe and supported way: Responding to Recommendation 77 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence

The process of reaching orders 'by consent' was identified by the Royal Commission into Family Violence as an area of concern as it is not always conducted in a way which keeps victim-survivors safe. The CIJ released research it conducted to support implementation of Recommendation 77 of the Royal Commission. Delivered to government in July 2019, the findings and recommendations in this report were still being considered at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when courts and legal services were suddenly required to shift to conducting urgent matters online. Although this meant that the findings and recommendations in the CIJ's report were developed in the 'pre-COVID' environment, several key features functioned as the foundation for crucial adaptations in the context of the pandemic, including the provision of pre-court support and legal advice, the benefits of which seem likely to be retained for many years to come.



Future-proofing Safety: COVID-19 and family violence

CIJ have partnered with drummond street's Centre for Family Research and Evaluation (CFRE) and the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) to explore how family violence in Victoria has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic began. This project is exploring how services adapted, what gaps and weaknesses surfaced, and how services responded to the crisis. It is also taking a future focus by providing tangible recommendations on how we can future-proof Victoria's responses to family violence post-COVID. Commissioned by Family Safety Victoria, this ambitious mixed-methods project will span the breadth of Victoria's community services system to understand how services have responded to family violence during COVID-19, recognising that people who experienced or used family violence during this period may have accessed the service system in a range of ways other than through specialist family violence services.



Evaluation of the Specialist Legal Practice Model

Throughout 2021 the CIJ continued its support for the 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 is spanning 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. To account for the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, throughout 2021 CIJ adopted a developmental evaluation approach, identifying the most useful measures for the program's evolving implementation. The CIJ's first interim report will be delivered in 2022, before moving into action research with program clients to inform the evaluation's final report in 2023.



Evaluation of the State-wide Rollout of the Family Violence Intervention Order Online Form

The CIJ was pleased to continue its support for the Magistrates' Court of Victoria (MCV), this time through an evaluation of the MCV's online Family Violence Intervention Order (FVIO) application forms. Working with our colleagues at Clear Horizon, the evaluation examined the extent to which these forms were being accessed by victim survivors of family violence across different regions of Victoria and across different cohorts in the community; the extent to which they have enabled more effective identification and triaging of risk; and the extent to which they have helped the court respond more swiftly and appropriately to Victorians' experiences of family violence. The evaluation's findings were received very positively by the MCV, informing amongst other things, the MCV's keen interest in continuous improvement and in making other court forms more widely accessible to the community through online formats.

Women's decarceration

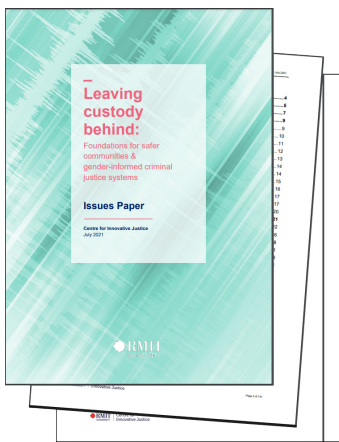


Lessons from COVID-19: The use of remand, bail and sentencing for women

In 2021 the CIJ started work on a two year project, developed in partnership with the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women (LACW), Fitzroy Legal Service and WEstJustice, which is investigating women's experiences of criminal justice contact and legal outcomes since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

'Lessons from COVID' is exploring changes in trends in the use of remand, bail and non-custodial orders during the pandemic. This will include the reasons behind a temporary reduction in the number of women entering Victorian prisons in the initial months following the declaration of a state of emergency in Victoria in 2020, as well as the longer term impacts of a lack of service provision and support in the community which has meant that this reduction was not sustained.

Findings from the project will contribute to our understanding of the gendered impact of changes occurring in the criminal justice system, and considerations specific to women's experiences.



[Click here to read the Issues Paper](#)

Leaving custody behind: Foundations for safer communities and gender-informed criminal justice systems

This Issues paper is a substantial piece of work on one of the CIJ's research priorities – the need for better responses to women in contact with the criminal justice system. '*Leaving custody behind*' explores the factors behind escalating female imprisonment rates in Victoria and, in particular, of Aboriginal women; women's experience of the justice system; and the disproportionate harm caused when the system incarcerates women. The paper also provides a roadmap for cross-government reform via a Women's Justice Reinvestment Strategy. Launched by the Honourable Natalie Hutchins, Victoria's Minister for Corrections, Crime Prevention, Youth Justice, and Victim Support, an online event also included a discussion by an expert panel which consisted of:

- Antoinette Braybrook, co-chair of Change the Record and CEO of Djirra, Victoria's Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria;
- Dorothy Armstrong, Peer Support Worker & Lived Experience Adviser at the CIJ;
- Elena Pappas, CEO of the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women;
- Elisa Buggy, Executive Officer at Flat Out Inc.; and
- Mindy Sotiri, Executive Director at the Justice Reform Initiative



Co-designing an Aboriginal women's residential facility

CIJ continued to work with Djirra 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 in late 2019 and early 2020, the work was 'paused' at the onset of the pandemic. In 2021, work resumed to consult with community and through yarns with women in custody at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre on options for the development of a best practice model. Given that women with lived experience of the criminal justice system are the experts in what is needed, their voices need to be front and centre in the service's ultimate design. The model and associated final report will be finalised in the first half of 2022.

Community SupPORT Pathways for Women

The CIJ is supporting an exciting pilot program led by our co-located partner, LACW. Collaborating with a number of organisational members of the Victorian Amateur Football Association, Community SupPORT Pathways for Women is linking criminalised women with local community football clubs. In doing so, the program will provide opportunities for employment, volunteering, recreation – and, most importantly, belonging - in a supported and trauma-informed environment, facilitated by training provided to participating clubs by LACW. The CIJ will conduct an embedded, participatory evaluation over the program's two year duration, with the program seeking to expand after the first year of operation, informed by interim evaluation findings.



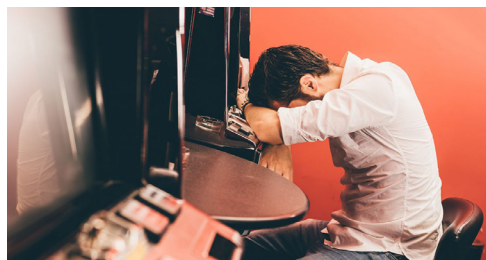
Systemic reform



Ensuring that Aboriginal perspectives inform responses to Aboriginal victims of crime

The CIJ embarked on an exciting new project, jointly commissioned by the Koori Justice Unit (KJU) and Victim Services, Support and Reform (VSSR) at the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Building on a key finding of our earlier Victim Services Review – which highlighted that Aboriginal people are over-represented as victims of crime but under-represented as clients of specialist victim services – the research will engage with Aboriginal people who have experienced crime victimisation to explore their experiences interacting with the justice system and wider service system.

The work will be led by a Project Steering Committee comprising Djirra, Dardi Munwurro and Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Service (EMHAWs), as well as a senior representative from the Koori Engagement Worker network. Following establishment of culturally-appropriate and supported recruitment pathways, the second stage of the work will include a community consultation phase, engaging with the nine Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs), as well as a wide range of practitioners working with Aboriginal clients in and around the justice and broader service system. The third phase of the project will include yarns with Aboriginal people who have experienced crime before reporting to Government in the second half of 2022.



Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Program Logic development and workshop

The CIJ continued our work with the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation to highlight and explore the link between gambling harm and contact with the criminal justice system. Drawing on its [2017 research](#) and [2020 Issues Paper](#), the CIJ facilitated a theory of change and design process for the Foundation, Gambler's Help providers and Victoria Legal Aid as they seek to establish a program in an area of Melbourne particularly impacted by gambling harm to enable gambling harm to be identified at an earlier point and for people in contact with the criminal justice system.



Strengthening a State-wide Children's Court Response

In the context of a larger project led by Deloitte, the CIJ conducted an extensive consultation process with stakeholders from across the justice system to identify and interrogate the elements which contribute to a more effective Children's Court response. The project had fantastic buy-in and engagement from practitioners and professionals working across the Children's Court's Family Division and Criminal Division, including judicial officers and court staff; legal practitioners from across a range of contexts, such as Victoria Legal Aid, Community Legal Centres, Victoria Police and the Child Protection Litigation Office; support services working within the Children's Court environment; and senior representatives from Youth Justice, Child Protection and the Commission for Children and Young People. These critical insights will inform future planning and support greater consistency in the approach to dealing with Children's Court matters across the state.



CIJ and the Coronial Council working together to improve the experience of bereaved families in Victoria

The Victorian Attorney-General issued a reference to the Coronial Council (Council) seeking advice on whether the current processes of the Coroners Court operate in a way that is responsive and sensitive to a range of bereaved family needs, and what changes should be made to improve the experiences of all Victorian families who engage with the coronial process.

The CIJ was commissioned to help the Council respond to this reference, undertaking several research and policy development projects. The CIJ interviewed 37 family members who had recently experienced the coronial process and stakeholders who work within, or alongside the Coroner's Court.

The second project involves the CIJ identifying best practice restorative justice models tailored to the context of the Coroners Court. The CIJ's reports were provided to the Council in October 2021 and January 2022. The CIJ was privileged to listen to the experience of family members as they recounted their experiences of the coronial system. We hope the report's recommendations will ultimately lead to improvements for other families who may be required to make the same journey in the future.

Disability Justice



Just Voices

Building on the Supporting Justice project, the Department of Justice and Community Safety commissioned CIJ to deliver the 'Just Voices Project: Building mainstream justice workforce capability around the NDIS through lived experience'. This project will work with people with disability and lived experience of the justice system to design and develop workforce initiatives for the mainstream justice workforce. The CIJ have partnered with KPMG to bring together our expertise in disability justice, working with people with lived experience, co-design, and workforce capability development.

Just Voices aims to build the capability of the justice workforce to:

- understand the lived experience of people with disability;
- be aware of disability and able to identify associated behaviours;
- communicate and interact effectively with people with disability
- better understand and engage with the NDIS

The CIJ will work with our partners in disability advocacy and self-advocacy networks to draw lived experience and disability expertise into the project, as members of the Project Advisory Committee and participants in co-design activities. This project will draw from our recent experience and learnings from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, working with disability self-advocates and developing innovative approaches to embedding lived experience in service design. the criminal justice system to improve outcomes for people with disability in the justice system.

Rethinking Criminal Record Checks



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

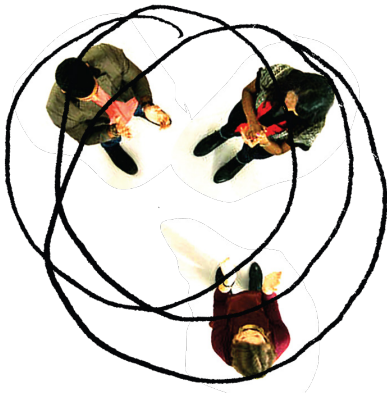
This project was funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board for three years and is being undertaken in partnership with VACCHO, Winda-Mara and Woor-Dungin. The aim of the project is to explore ways to improve employment opportunities for Aboriginal people with a criminal history, and to support employers in recruitment of Aboriginal people and in the employment of people with a criminal record. The project began with the establishment of the Aboriginal-led Reference Committee to review and guide the project, and the Management Team comprising the University researchers, a Stakeholder Engagement Team, and the partner agencies. The first research component of the project involved interviewing employers (public and private) and job service providers and support agencies about their practice and experience in recruiting Aboriginal people and managing criminal record checking processes.

Twenty-four interviews have been completed with interviewees Aboriginal employers, employers with an interest in Aboriginal employment, welfare agencies, employment agencies, and – to date – one interviewee with a role in government employment. The interviews have provided many examples of constructive practices, and also some hurdles, which will be helpful for the overall aims of the project.

The aim will be to prepare materials and templates to assist Aboriginal job-seekers to explain their criminal history and address recognised risk issues, and to demonstrate their employability relevant to their own circumstances. It will also be to provide employers with information and guidance based on the learnings from the research interviews.

Open Circle

Restorative Justice Service



Open Circle continued to undertake its restorative justice practice work, supported by organisations that provide a referral pathway for its clients. Referrals to Open Circle have encompassed a range of different harms and causes, including harms caused by dangerous and culpable driving, sexual violence, assault and from deaths in medical settings.

Restorative practice

Open Circle offers restorative processes that are focused on meeting the needs of the person harmed and grounded in trauma-informed principles, narrative therapy, and human rights. This year, we received referrals in relation to a wide range of harms or offences. In particular, victim/survivors of sexual violence and those directly supporting them contacted Open Circle, seeking a restorative avenue. In recognition of this demand, a key focus of Open Circle's work this year has been to carefully develop a specialist restorative practice model for sexual violence, in which the experience of the victim/survivor is centred.

Program design work

Open Circle's expertise has been in high demand from external organisations seeking our guidance in establishing restorative programs suitable for their own specific contexts. This year we have been working with BHP to assist them to create a restorative engagement program that responds to workplace sexual assault and sexual harassment by providing an avenue for people who have experienced these harms to be heard and to contribute to organisational change. We also worked with the Coronial Council on several projects drawing on restorative principles to make recommendations for improving the experience of bereaved family members, and the opportunity to offer a restorative process alongside the coronial process. Another interesting piece of work involved the families who were participating in the St Basil's inquest who we supported to develop coronial impact statements.

Partnerships

Open Circle is proud to have entered into a memorandum of understanding with Te Ngāpara Centre, a restorative practice centre at the Victoria University of Wellington, Te Herenga Waka, New Zealand, led by renowned restorative justice expert Dr Jane Bolitho. The partnership will connect researchers and practitioners in restorative justice across the trans-Tasman region and will be the catalyst for some exciting opportunities to collaborate and promote smarter ways of delivering real and lasting justice outcomes.

We are also excited to have formed a partnership with sexual violence prevention specialists the Centre Against Sexual Assault, Central Victoria (CASA CV). The partnership will create a supported referral pathway between the services for victim/survivors of sexual violence who wish to explore a restorative response to sexual violence.

Engagement

A key aim for Open Circle is to expand the visibility of and access to restorative justice in response to sexual violence, so that all victim/survivors are aware that this is an option open to them, whether or not they choose to engage in it. In service of this aim, Open Circle has established a working group of key justice system and social service system stakeholders in order to raise awareness of our restorative responses to sexual violence we offer, and to find solutions to any points of tension between the restorative justice responses to sexual violence offered by Open Circle and legal system processes.

Open Circle made a submission to the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC)'s inquiry 'Improving the Justice System Response to Sexual Offences,' recommending that restorative processes be made available to victim/survivors, whether or not they choose to make a report to police, and available at multiple points during a criminal prosecution. The VLRC's final report endorsed the use of restorative justice in response to sexual violence, and recommended an approach that was consistent with that outlined in Open Circle's submission. Open Circle's restorative justice work in the area of sexual violence was expressly recognised by the VLRC, who commented that this work should be encouraged to continue and develop.



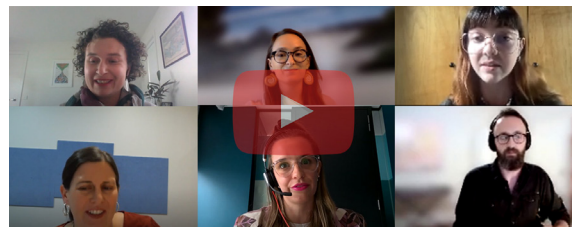
Passion with Purpose

Advocacy & Engagement

Events

Legal advice as a human right: Can early access to legal assistance make a difference to safety in Family Violence Intervention Order matters?

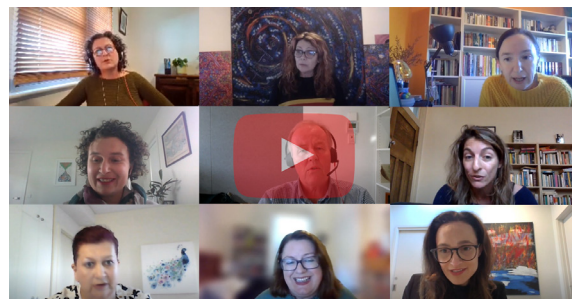
Drawing on the CIJ's research to support implementation of Recommendation 77 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, this webinar explored the benefits of early legal advice and assistance from different perspectives. CIJ's Elena Campbell was joined by panellists: Kate Clohesy, ARC Justice; John van Kooy, ARC Justice; Eva Lazzaro, ARC Justice; Hannah Fearnside, Victoria Legal Aid; and Carmel Lohan, Youthlaw.



Click here to watch the 'Legal advice as a human right: Can early access to legal assistance make a difference to safety in Family Violence Intervention Order matters?' webinar

Launch of the CIJ's 'Leaving custody behind' Issues Paper

The Hon Natalie Hutchins, Victoria's Minister for Corrections, joined the CIJ's Rob Hulls, Elena Campbell and Catherine Caruana for the launch of our Issues Paper 'Leaving custody behind'. The expert panel featured front line agencies and prison reform advocates: Mindy Sotiri, the Justice Reform Initiative; Dorothy Armstrong, CIJ Adviser and Peer Support Worker; Antoinette Braybrook, CEO, Djirra; Elena Pappas, CEO, the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women; and Elisa Buggy, Executive Officer at Flat Out Inc.



Click here to watch Launch of the CIJ's 'Leaving custody behind' Issues Paper webinar

The CIJ held two webinars during the Victorian Law Foundation's 2021 Law Week – 'Restorative justice responses to sexual harm' and 'Finding a job with a criminal record | What new spent conviction laws mean'.

Restorative justice responses to sexual harm

The Restorative justice responses to sexual harm panel discussion featured RJ practitioners and experts exploring how RJ responds to the needs of people impacted by sexual harm. Facilitated by CIJ's Anna Howard, panellists included: Dr Jane Bolitho, Associate Professor Diana Unwin Chair in Restorative Justice, Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington NZ; Thea Deakin-Greenwood, Founder, Transforming Justice Australia; Ada Conroy, Accountability and Family Violence Specialist; Stan Winford, Associate Director, CIJ; Renee Handsaker, Principal Convener, Open Circle; and Nareeda Lewers, Co-Manager and Convener, Open Circle.



Click here to watch the 'Restorative justice responses to sexual harm' webinar

Finding a job with a criminal record: What new spent conviction laws mean

A discussion aimed at jobseekers, including Aboriginal people who have a criminal record, which provided information and guidance on how to present their strongest case for employment to an employer. Facilitated by CIJ's Stan Winford, panellists included: Naomi Murphy a Wakka Wakka woman, a Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation Aboriginal Community Engagement Worker and former Woor-Dungin Aboriginal Ex-Offender Employment Project Worker; Christa Momot, Rethinking Criminal Record Checks Project Stakeholder Engagement Co-ordinator; Stan Winford, CIJ Associate Director; Bronwyn Naylor, RMIT Professor; and Georgina Heydon, RMIT Associate Professor.

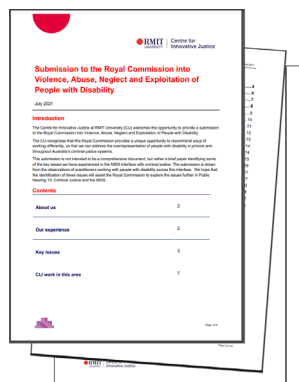


Click here to watch the 'Finding a job with a criminal record: What new spent conviction laws mean' webinar

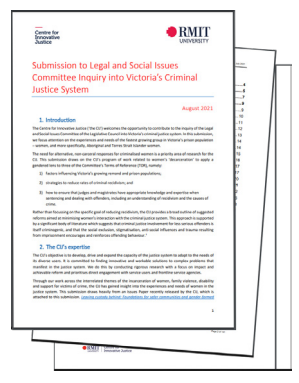
Submissions



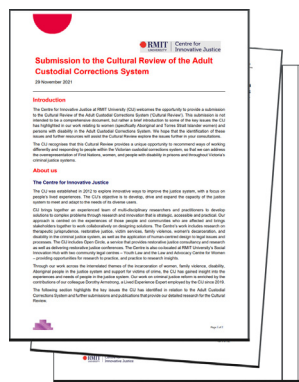
[Click here to read submission](#)



[Click here to read submission](#)



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Review of the Victorian Disability Act 2006 (Vic)

The CIJ made a submission to the Review of the Victorian Disability Act 2006 (the Act). The second stage of the Review is aimed at tackling inequality and promoting inclusion, following the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). In our submission we called on the Victorian Government to take a lead in promoting and protecting the rights, dignity and needs of people with disability, including those who have been involved in the justice system. It stated that if the Act is to meaningfully promote equality for people with disability, it must work to reduce justice involvement, and promote equality for all people with disability, including those who have contact with the justice system.

'Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability' – NDIS interface with criminal justice

The CIJ made a further submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability for consideration at Public Hearing 15: People with cognitive disability and the criminal justice system: NDIS interface. This submission outlined key issues in relation to the NDIS and the criminal justice system for consideration by the Royal Commission: workforce capability and information silos; eligibility, assessment and inadequate packages; communication and information sharing with the NDIA; market failure and lack of services in custody; youth justice. These issues were identified by the CIJ from the direct experience of the CIJ social worker providing NDIS support at Ravenhall prison, as well as activities undertaken during our Supporting Justice project.

Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into Victoria's Criminal Justice System

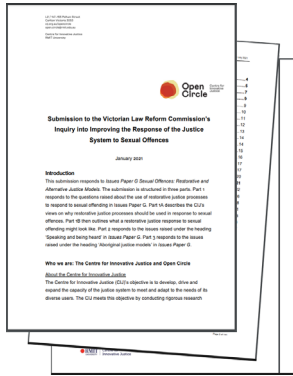
The CIJ's Associate Directors, Elena Campbell and Stan Winford, appeared before the Victorian Parliament Legal and Social Issues Committee's Inquiry into the criminal justice system. Stan and Elena focused on two major areas of the CIJ's work. Elena spoke about the CIJ's research and advocacy around better criminal justice responses for women, while Stan spoke about the many ways in which the justice system fails to meet the needs of people with a disability.



Cultural Review of the Adult Custodial Corrections System

The Cultural Review of the Adult Custodial Corrections System was an independent review of the culture within adult prisons and correctional centres in Victoria. Drawing on the CIJ's extensive work across the justice system, our submission offered insights into the experiences and needs of people in custodial corrections, in particular people with disability and women in prisons. Our submission spoke to the conditions of people in prison in relation to getting support, health and medical treatment, lack of access to housing, trauma and mental health and the lack of supports available in custody for people with disability and women.

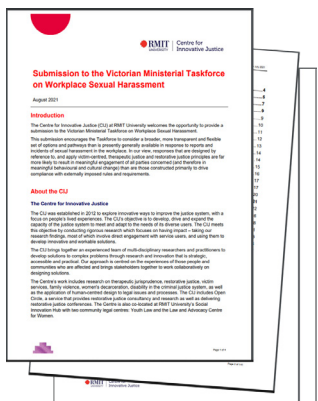
Submissions



[Click here to read submission](#)

Victorian Law Reform Commission's Inquiry into Improving the Response of the Justice System to Sexual Offences

In this submission, the CIJ advocated for restorative justice processes that respond to sexual harm that are focused on the needs of victim/survivors. Victim/survivors seek a response to the harm that allows them to feel that justice has been done. Some have a strong need to tell their story, in a forum where they are believed and supported. Some want to engage directly with the person responsible for the harm, to express how they have been affected, and see the person responsible acknowledge the wrongfulness of their actions. Others want the opportunity to meet with members of their own family, in cases where they were not believed or supported when they disclosed the harm to family members. These processes must be ones in which victim/survivors can exercise agency, and which are responsive to them as individual people. The processes must be delivered in ways that recognise the power dynamics inherent in sexual offences, and that avoid replicating harmful myths and misconceptions about sexual violence.



[Click here to read submission](#)

Victorian Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment

In March 2021, the Victorian Government announced the establishment of a Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment to develop reforms that will prevent and better respond to sexual harassment in workplaces. The prevalence of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces is increasing. In the 2012 Australian Human Rights Commission national survey, it was found that 21 per cent of respondents experienced workplace sexual harassment. In its 2018 survey, this had increased to 33 per cent.

Our submission encourages the Taskforce to consider a broader, more transparent and flexible set of options and pathways than is presently generally available in response to reports and incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace. In our view, responses that are designed by reference to, and apply victim-centred, therapeutic justice and restorative justice principles are far more likely to result in meaningful engagement of all parties concerned (and therefore in meaningful behavioural and cultural change) than are those constructed primarily to drive compliance with externally imposed rules and requirements. Our submission to this review highlighted opportunities to improve prevention and survivor-focussed responses to workplace sexual harassment by providing restorative options.



[Click here to read the first submission](#)

Review to Improve Victim's Experiences of Summary Criminal Proceedings

The CIJ contributed two submissions to a review by the Department of Justice and Community Safety into the experiences of victims of crime involved in proceedings in the summary criminal jurisdiction – a review required under the Victims' Charter Act 2006 (Victims' Charter). In the first, our Open Circle team discussed the potential for restorative justice processes to provide victims of crime, and those responsible for the harm they have experienced, to achieve a different kind of justice outcome. The second submission drew on the CIJ's findings from a system-wide review of Victoria's victim support services, to explore better ways to meet the needs of the many victims of summary crime.

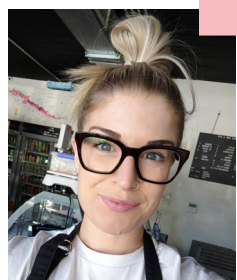
[Click here to read the second submission](#)



Life Changing Experiences Students

Student placements

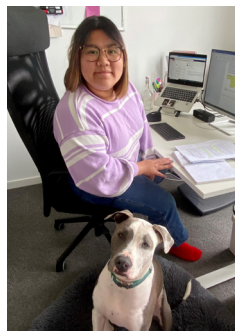
In a case of 2020 déjà vu, RMIT social work, youth work and law students once again found themselves completing remote placements during Victoria's COVID restrictions. Our partners Youthlaw and LACW continued to provide career defining opportunities for these students despite the challenging circumstances. Students at LACW assisted the case management team in their work supporting criminalised women with client-related follow up and file reviews to collect critical data. This groundwork experience provided insights into the program and gave the students a chance to engage in direct practice during their placement. Students at Youthlaw worked on research projects related to integrated family violence programs. They had the opportunity to develop practical skills and knowledge in the justice system, community legal service sector and a stronger understanding of the integrated way Youthlaw works with frontline youth services. Within CIJ, students worked on research projects including the development of a practice guide for integrative practices, particularly for practitioners in Community Legal Centres (CLCs) and the Just Voices project, conducting co-design workshops for people with a disability and lived experience of the justice system.



Georgie Adeney
Bachelor of Social Work

I have learnt so much about the intersection of social work and the law... I have been able to build connections with many clients and help them to take steps towards their goals...to successfully build on my values and show my commitment to ethical social work practice. I have developed my skills base especially in problem solving, client assessment and referral and research.

I feel really proud of all that I have achieved while I have been on placement and am proud to have been a part of such a passionate, driven, hardworking and empathetic team of people at LACW.



Ly-Ann de Jesus
Master of Social Work

Having the opportunity to undertake placement with the CIJ has really helped me expand my knowledge and experience of Victoria's justice system...I was supported by a great group of student peers and team members within the CIJ and gained so much confidence through this experience. Even though I had little experience in research, I developed this through guidance from my supervisor and the encouraged autonomy to coordinate the project that suited my learning needs...I was surprised and proud of how well I managed the research project.



Brittney Hogan
Master of Social Work/
Juris Doctor

I first heard about the CIJ during an Intro to Law class where the Director Rob Hulls was a guest speaker. I remember feeling relieved when I heard about the kind of work that the lawyers and social workers at the CIJ do to improve our justice system.

When it came time for my first placement, I was overjoyed to have been matched with the CIJ. It was the perfect placement for me as someone who has an interest in both social work and law. I was assigned to the 'Just Voices' project. This project highlighted for me the importance of listening to those who have a lived experience of the justice system when trying to make improvements or changes to it.

This placement was the best professional experience of my life! I walk away from it inspired and ready to take on the final year of my Master of Social Work.



Noemi Garcia
Master of Social Work

Even though placement has been entirely remote, the team have embraced me virtually sharing their knowledge and experience in a very welcoming way. I have really sunk my teeth into learning about integrated practice, the benefits, and challenges in this socio-legal space.

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

Despite the ongoing challenges of dealing with COVID impacts, our Director, Rob Hulls, continued to speak to Victorian high schools as part of the Virtual School Outreach Program, a partnership between the CIJ and the Victorian Law Foundation. The program is aimed at Year 10, 11 and 12 Legal Studies students from schools far and wide, including in regional areas such as Nhill & Bairnsdale who don't often have the opportunity to hear from guest speakers. Rob spoke of the work of the CIJ and the systemic issues facing those who come into contact with the justice system and the importance of law reform to ensure any contact with the justice system becomes a positive intervention in the lives of its users. With Rob's engaging and straight talking oratory style, including numerous anecdotes illustrating the problems and potential solutions to the issues with the justice system, the students were highly engaged and motivated by these talks. The Program continues in 2022.

Centre staff

Rob Hulls

Director

Stan Winford

Associate Director

Elena Campbell

Associate Director

Dorothy Armstrong

Adviser & Peer Support
Worker

Bernice Beaucaine

Social Worker

Tallace Bissett

Senior Adviser, Research &
Advocacy

Catherine Caruana

Senior Adviser, Research &
Advocacy

Riley Ellard

Manager, Service Design,
Evaluation & System Reform

Renee Handsaker

Open Circle Principle
Restorative Justice Convener

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