



'Tis the season (for AGMs)

As the festive chaos approaches, it pays to take a moment, slow down, and reflect on the year that was.

What did we achieve? How well did we live up to our values? What did we learn that can help us grow and improve in 2026?

We asked (and answered) these questions and more at our AGM held in November, the perfect opportunity for both celebration and consideration.

But we're not *only* looking backwards today. In this edition, we also have some big news about two exciting flagship projects that are likely to define our impact in 2026. More on that below.

Also in this edition, we recap our contributions to 16 Days of Activism, and two good news stories coming out of our advocacy work.

Plus, our Broadmeadows office is back in business now that office refurbishments have been completed!

However, our office will be **closed from Thursday December 25** and will **reopen on Monday January 5**.

We wish everyone in the North-West a safe and happy holiday season.



Upholding justice in uncertain times: the story of our past year

We were honoured to have Justice Rita Incerti, then-Mayor Helen Davidson from Merri-bek City Council and Natalie Naidu (advisor to Kathleen Matthews-Ward MP) speak at our AGM in November.



Our theme this year was 'Upholding Justice in Uncertain Times', in recognition of the importance of individual rights for communities impacted by overseas wars and racial tensions. This theme resonated in the presentations of all our speakers as they highlighted:

- [The Financial Divide Project](#), which helped victims-survivors of family violence access shared property pools after separation.
- [The launch of our Wallan office](#), which greatly improved access to our services for Mitchell Shire residents.
- [The Working Women's Centre](#), which helps women and non-binary people facing problems at work.
- [The Take the Next Step Project](#), which educates diverse young women living in Merri-bek to make informed choices regarding their economic security, bodies, and relationships.

You can read about these projects and more [in our annual report](#).



[Read our annual report](#)

NCLC wins the 2025 Tim McCoy Memorial Award

We were honoured to win this year's Tim McCoy Memorial Award, which honours the legacy of a passionate community lawyer and activist, and celebrates impactful grassroots work in the community legal sector.



We won the award for our family violence peer education initiatives: Take the First Step, Take the Next Step, and Take the Lead. These programs empower culturally diverse women to become leaders and educators in their communities, providing culturally relevant, accessible and effective support to others.

This program began as a small pilot project in partnership with Dallas Neighbourhood House, bringing together migrant and refugee women to learn about family violence and co-design a community education video.

Over time, it has grown and evolved, recognising the invaluable role that local women play as trusted voices and peer educators in their communities. The current iteration, Take the Lead, is funded by Merri-bek City Council. With peer educators, we co-design activities to deliver in high schools that promote healthy relationships, prevent experiences of financial and sexual abuse, and ensure that young women experience economic security and stability into the future.



Citizenship unlocked: VLF funds new project to assist young migrants

We're delighted to announce that our 'Citizenship Key Project' has been funded thanks to two welcome grants from the Victoria Law Foundation.

This project will provide specialist migration legal assistance to young people to help them obtain citizenship and overcome barriers to education that contribute to disengagement and social inequity.

Currently, only Australian citizens and holders of permanent protection or humanitarian visas are eligible for HECS-HELP to cover tertiary education fees. Additionally, most permanent residents must observe a four-year waiting period, from the time they arrive in Australia, before they can access Centrelink entitlements like youth allowance and job seeker. This waiting period is waived as soon as they become a citizen.

Furthermore, we have found that:

- There is limited awareness in newly arrived communities about the importance of applying for citizenship before young people turn 18,
- Young people are unaware that they can make their own applications over the age of 15,
- The process is quicker and cheaper under the age of 18, and
- Young people and their families don't know how to navigate the application process.

This program, combining education and legal assistance, aims to ensure that all eligible young people can equally access the education opportunities and supports to which they are entitled, ensuring future wellbeing and participation in economic life.

For more information, email us today: admin@northernclc.org.au.

We're sending our lawyers back to school

We kicked off December with the official start of our School Lawyer Project.

This project not only provides individual legal assistance to student needing help but also delivers community legal education embedded into the school curriculum. The education program aims to ensure that young people can stay safe online, in school, and in the community, and avoid legal pitfalls as they transition into the adult world of money, contracts, employment, renting and driving.

The two schools we will be collaborating with for the first stage of the project are Mt Ridley and Roxburgh Colleges, both located in Melbourne's North-West.

Across our catchment, we know young people and their families are facing additional challenges as a result of increased cost-of-living pressures, insufficient social supports and changes in

legislation that will directly affect them. This program ensures that we can reach young people easily to provide tailored and specialist support that addresses legal problems early before they escalate into bigger life problems.

A law reform win that will keep families safe

Northern CLC is proud to see our recent law reform submission influencing change. We highlighted how the family violence intervention order (FVIO) system fails to protect young people and made six recommendations based on research, program evaluations, and our work with victim-survivors.

Our key recommendation was simple but critical: FVIOs that include a protected person under 18 should continue to safeguard them even after they turn 18. Currently, courts apply this inconsistently, leaving young people vulnerable.

In November, Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny announced a new bill addressing this issue. Under the proposed law, young people listed on a parent's FVIO will remain protected when they turn 18—ending the “aging out” of vital protections.

“Nobody deserves to feel unsafe at the hands of a family member or loved one. These reforms will ensure perpetrators of gender-based violence are held to account.”

– Victorian Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny

Landmark Reform on NDAs in Sexual Harassment Cases

In late 2025, Victoria became the first state in Australia to pass legislation limiting the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in workplace sexual harassment cases.

Previously, NDAs were often used to silence victim-survivors and protect employers, reinforcing a culture of secrecy. The new laws aim to end this misuse while still allowing NDAs to protect victim-survivors' privacy when requested.

As a consortium member of The Working Women's Centre (WWC) Victoria, Northern CLC strongly supports this reform. We were pleased to see Georgie Purcell MP successfully move an amendment based on a WWC recommendation.

Northern CLC CEO Jenni Smith said:

"This new legislation restores dignity, promotes transparency, and affirms that secrecy must never come at the expense of safety or justice. It limits the use of NDAs to protect perpetrators, ensuring victim-survivors can access justice and helping prevent future misconduct."

While this is a significant step forward, more work is needed. We advocate for increased funding for community legal centres to respond to workplace sexual harassment, mandatory data reporting, public evaluation, and independent oversight to ensure transparency and accountability.

Nevertheless, this was much-needed law reform, achieved off the back of a review process that was finalised in September. The WWC provided one of the 81 submissions to this review, arguing:

"This reform will transform NDAs from a bargaining tool that contributes to the current culture of secrecy, cover-ups and silencing of victim-survivors into a clause that only victim-survivors can introduce to protect their privacy after

experiencing sexual harassment in their workplace. Any new legislation must ensure that the wishes of the victim-survivor are the paramount focus."

[Read the full submission](#)

How we spent our 16 Days of Activism

As you might expect, 16 Days of Activism is one of the busiest periods on our calendar. We attended, supported, hosted and co-hosted multiple events this year: from panel discussions to T-shirt painting workshops to networking groups.

We kicked things off in November with an event for women and girls from the Zenobia Association who have recently arrived from Syria. They painted T-shirts with messages of empowerment and gender equality.

We were also pleased to be invited to the City of Greater Bendigo's 16 Days of Activism launch. Our managing employment lawyer Eliza was there and had a great chat to Councillors Abhishek Awasthi and Damien Hurrell while running an info booth about the Working Women's Centre, which supports women and non-binary people facing legal problems at work.

In December, our senior project lawyer, Celeste, spoke on the panel for our event, co-hosted with Hume City Council, called "Engaging Men and Boys in Preventing Gender-Based Violence". The panel shared practical strategies and insights from practitioners working in school and community settings. Celeste also spoke about our brand-new School Lawyer Project, which was launched that same day.





We also worked with year 9 students from Pascoe Vale Girls College and Coburg High School as part of our Take the Lead Project to create collages of hundreds of messages calling for an end to gendered violence.

Lastly, our senior lawyer in Wallan, Emma, attended both a 'Steps Toward Change Walk' and spoke at a family violence services networking event in Seymour.

Our Broadmeadows office has reopened!

The lift repairs in our building have finished. So, our Broadmeadows office is back to business as usual — prior to our Christmas shutdown period.

Come see us at

**Level 3, Building 2,
1100 Pascoe Vale Road, Broadmeadows**

However our office will be closed for the holiday period

from Thursday December 25 and will reopen on

Monday January 5.

Northern Community Legal Centre acknowledges and respects the traditional custodians whose lands we are fortunate to live and work on. We pay our respects to all Elders past, present and future.

**Northern Community Legal
Centre**

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Level 3, Building 2, 1100 Pascoe Vale
Road, Broadmeadows AUSTRALIA

28/10/2025

