



The power of financial independence, plus a happy EOFY to those who celebrate

People don't typically think of EOFY as a joyous occasion. Crunching numbers, compiling figures, analysing data – these things don't sound terribly exciting. But the process has given us plenty of reason to celebrate at Northern CLC.

Yes, the numbers are in, and in the past financial year, we assisted – drumroll, please – 2,234 clients! This represents an 18% increase from the previous year. We're thrilled to have expanded our reach to even more people in Melbourne's north-west, and we're committed to continuing this trend into the new financial year.

One way we're hoping to continue helping even more people with unmet legal needs is by securing funding for our work providing wraparound legal support to women in crisis accommodation. More on that below.

Also in this edition, we look at the findings from a recent coronial investigation into a shocking case of systems abuse.

Plus, a sneak preview of a social media video about young women's safety in public and online spaces, produced in collaboration with some of our peer group educators. And we look back on two very successful community development events.



But first, a story of how we helped one woman secure financial independence and equality.

Parenting and property: a case study in achieving financial equality after separation

Jessica came to us facing significant financial stress.

Jessica and her husband, Martin, had been married for almost two decades but they separated at the beginning of 2020. They have three children together. The youngest lives with Jessica in a private rental and the two older children live with their father in the family home. Throughout their relationship, Martin worked full-time while Jessica was the primary carer. This arrangement meant Jessica left the relationship without any superannuation to her name.

On top of this, their youngest child has special needs and requires substantial support from Jessica. This compounds her own psychological disabilities. Jessica is on the NDIS and receives a CentreLink carer support payment. She cannot go back to work and is struggling to pay rent. Martin continues to work full-time. The

pair have shared assets, many of which have now been divided — except for the jointly owned family house. Jessica wants to sell the house and divide the sale. She is still on the title but no longer living there and does not have the means to pay the mortgage.

Jessica and Martin have previously attempted self-represented mediation to resolve issues around parenting and property. They had originally agreed the family home would be sold and divided, but Martin did not honour this agreement. This led to a protracted dispute.

When Jessica tried to talk to Martin about the property, he initiated FVIOs against her. The first was struck out. But the second was successful, and Jessica consented to a 12-month safe contact order. She says it was initiated because she swore at him in a text message.

With help from a Northern CLC lawyer, Jessica convinced Martin to attend a new round of mediation. There, Jessica made a proposal that was eventually agreed to by Martin. The family home would be valued and sold — the house would be on the market within 90 days of the agreement, and Jessica would retain 60% of the proceeds after the sale. The parties would pay 50/50 on sales fees and conveyancing.

Jessica's story is just one among many highlighting the power of legal assistance to help women build financial security and independence after separation.

Turning to philanthropy to help some of Victoria's most vulnerable women and children

Our Safe Steps to Legal Rights project is now live on the [Australians Investing in Women philanthropic platform](#). Securing this funding would allow us to expand a successful pilot project that provides

comprehensive legal assistance to women fleeing family violence at crisis accommodation services.

In 2024, with severely limited funding, we established a partnership with Safe Steps and the Salvation Army. But we urgently need further funding for frontline lawyers to continue this work, which significantly reduces the gendered impacts of family violence and prevents future experiences of homelessness.

Coroner calls for action on ‘systems abuse’

In June 2025, Victorian Coroner Ingrid Giles finalised her investigation into a shocking case of systems abuse perpetrated against a migrant woman who died by suicide in 2020.

Coroner Giles found, on the balance of probabilities, that the victim had been subjected to significant family violence for years, which, the Coroner says, “underpinned and propelled the decision she made to end her own life”.

Not only did the perpetrator subject the victim to a campaign of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, the Coroner also suggested he weaponised the legal system by making a police report against the victim to cast her as the perpetrator.

Tragically, this is not a unique strategy.

In her report, Coroner Giles noted this case underscores “the multiple and intersecting ways in which men can perpetrate family violence against women not only through direct physical, sexual and psychological assault on their victims, but also through the very systems that are designed and intended to keep those victims safe.”

In 2015, Broadmeadows Community Legal Centre (now Northern Community Legal Centre) made a submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence highlighting that courts should consider additional evidence, including risk assessments, when determining victim and perpetrator status, to reduce misidentification (and thus systems abuse) in courts.

While this submission was made many years ago, in her recent findings, the Coroner found that there is merit in our proposal and that it should be explored further by the Department of Justice and Community Services.

Though it is disappointing that the justice system still struggles with misidentification, we are heartened to see the coroner giving this important topic the attention that it deserves.



Back-to-back community workshops empower women and young people

May was a busy month for our community development team, which hosted two big educational workshops for both service providers and general community members.

The Economic Justice Forum: Women's Financial Independence & Equality featured speakers from organisations including The Orange Door, The SEED Project, Good Sheppard, and Nexus Primary Health, and was all about raising awareness of the resources available to women who are navigating the financial impacts of relationship breakdown and economic abuse.

We also went to Law Week to host a forum for youth educators to raise awareness of the importance of addressing young people's experience of common legal problems.

The forum was all about building the capacity of educators, community legal services, and community organisations, encouraging us all to work together to empower young people to act early on their rights, before legal issues escalate into bigger life problems.

What's coming up at NCLC?

Peer educators take to the small screen to discuss gendered violence



Our media team has been hard at work producing a short theatrical video in collaboration with our peer educators.

The Take the Next Step Project empowers a small group of diverse young women living in Merri-bek to make informed choices regarding their economic security, bodies, and relationships. So that they can, in turn, support, empower, educate and mentor other young women as they transition into adult relationships.

**POV you're a woman preparing to
make 101 personal safety decisions
throughout your day**



For the past couple of months, we've been working with the group to conceive a short video for social media. The point is to explore the issues discussed throughout the project's workshops, but to do so in a way that is entertaining, engaging and expressed in the language of the group's online peers.

The video is about women's safety in public and online spaces. The peer educators wanted to tell this story through a first-person perspective to generate empathy for the anxieties and difficult choices women face.

Choice #46



So, the video follows one young woman, seeing the world through her eyes, as she attempts to navigate various personal safety decisions throughout a single day.

The video will launch in August.

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.

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