



Annual Report
2018-19





The Victorian Council of Social Service is the peak body of Victoria's social and community sector.

We work towards a society free from poverty, where all people are supported to thrive.

Our members include charities, frontline service organisations and social advocacy bodies.

Our work includes policy development, advocacy and building the capabilities of the social services sector.

We also give people experiencing poverty a voice in policy formulation and public debates, fostering a greater understanding of the true causes and effects of disadvantage.

VCOSS acknowledges the traditional owners of country and pays our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. This report was produced on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

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This Annual Report has been designed using an original concept by Renée Arstall, Creative Director, ThinkLab Advertising.



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Chair's Report

The only constant is change. It might seem like a cliché, but it is a truth of our sector, particularly over the last year.

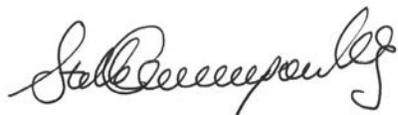
Amidst numerous commissions of inquiry—including the Victorian Royal Commission into the mental health system and Commonwealth Royal Commissions into aged care and disability—we have also steered through a state election campaign and state budget, all of which saw VCOSS playing a major role in terms of advocacy and influence.

The future direction of the organisation is being navigated through this period of intense activity and productivity. We have an ongoing commitment to evolving so that we can continue to best represent the needs of the sector and the communities we serve. As part of this commitment, VCOSS has since commenced governance reviews and preparation for developing a new strategic plan for 2019–22.

We are proud of the achievements of the last year—I am thinking here of the outstanding success of the VCOSS Budget Breakfast with Treasurer Tim Pallas, now an annual tradition and highlight of the calendar; of the Empowered Lives campaign, launched in September 2018, which has worked towards positive change for Victorians with disability, their advocates and carers; of the launch and initial implementation of the 10-Year Community Services Industry Plan, developed by VCOSS and the Victorian Government with the community sector.

Partnerships were key to all these achievements, and will continue to be the VCOSS *modus operandi*.

An evolving organisation in a changing sector, we nevertheless have a solid bedrock: in our collaborative ethos, in the commitment of the VCOSS staff led by our CEO Emma King, and in the amazing work of our member organisations. The board looks forward to working alongside these parties in the year ahead to help Victorians experiencing disadvantage live a better life.



Stella Avramopoulos
President



Stella Avramopoulos
VCOSS President

From the CEO



By any measure, 2018–19 was a big year.

It included a state election, a state budget and a federal election, as well as four Royal Commissions; three being conducted by the Commonwealth (Aged Care, Disability and Banking) and one by Victoria (Mental Health Services); as well as numerous other inquiries.

This full calendar of external events—in addition to VCOSS’ core business of original policy development, sector support and broad advocacy on issues relating to fairness, justice and equality—has made it a year of significant activity, output and achievement.

The lead-up to the Victorian election presented a strong opportunity for VCOSS to advance its policy agenda and shape the political discourse. VCOSS consulted extensively with our members and other stakeholders to develop the election platform around the theme of “Delivering a good life for every Victorian”.

In addition to a direct lobbying and media advocacy, we created and distributed a custom advent calendar—normally associated with the countdown to Christmas—as a key campaigning tool to generate buzz around our policy proposals as polling day approached.

Labor adopted many of the proposals championed by VCOSS and our members, including introducing a default energy offer, rolling out three-year-old kindergarten, providing more respite care for carers and delivering heavily subsidised public dental treatment for school-age children.

This set the tone for our follow-up policy manifesto, “Delivering Fairness”, which presented a roadmap for how the re-elected Andrews Government could deliver on its election promises and build a progressive and effective second term agenda.

Another significant milestone reached in 2018–19 was the development, launch and initial implementation of the 10-Year Community Services Industry Plan, developed by VCOSS and the Victorian Government in partnership with the community sector.

This is a comprehensive action plan to ensure our sector evolves and thrives in changing circumstances, and can continue performing its vital role long into the future.

I would like to thank all those who worked with and supported VCOSS over 2018–19, including our members, partners, funders and those people who trusted us to share their personal experiences of poverty and disadvantage in our advocacy.

Special thanks must also go to the VCOSS board, chaired by Stella Avramopoulos, for providing invaluable guidance and support to the governance and strategic direction of VCOSS.

Of course, VCOSS couldn’t achieve so much without our incredibly talented and hard-working staff. It’s a pleasure to work alongside them every day.

I thank you all, and look forward to the year ahead.



Emma King
Chief Executive Officer

Policy development

VCOSS continually consults with members and individuals on matters of importance.

Collected views are then used to help inform VCOSS policy positions, reports and submissions. These documents are crucial to our advocacy both within

formal policymaking frameworks (such as government inquiries and reviews of legislation) and as part of our contribution to broader public debates.

In 2018-19, VCOSS produced 35 public reports and submissions.

SUBMISSION	FLAGSHIP REPORT	OTHER
<i>Towards an inclusive DHHS</i> Feedback on the DHHS draft Disability Action Plan 2018-2020		July 2018
<i>Equitable and effective supported school transport</i> Submission to the Department of Social Services on supported school transport and the NDIS		July 2018
<i>Framing the big picture for Australians with disability</i> Submission to the National Disability Review		August 2018
<i>A strong future for adult learning</i> Submission to DET's Future Opportunities for Adult Learning discussion paper		August 2018
<i>10-Year Community Services Industry Plan</i> Produced in partnership with DHHS, through the Human Services and Health Partnership Implementation Committee (HSHPIC)		August 2018
<i>Victorian Disability Advocacy Futures Plan</i> Consultation report from the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit		September 2018
<i>Towards effective legal assistance</i> Submission to the review of the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services		September 2018
<i>Jobs of the Future</i> Flagship report into Victoria's vibrant community services industry		September 2018
<i>Legislating for gender equality</i> Submission to the Department of Health and Human Services Gender Equality Legislation consultation		October 2018
<i>Knowing the best energy offer</i> Submission to the Essential Services Commission Draft Decision on 'best offer' notifications		October 2018
<i>Better job pathways</i> Submission to the Commonwealth Inquiry into Job Active		October 2018
<i>Every Suburb, Every Town - Poverty in Victoria</i> Flagship report unpacking poverty data across Victoria		November 2018
<i>Gold standard accessible housing</i> Submission to the Australian Building Codes Board Accessible Housing options paper		November 2018
<i>Battling On: Persistent energy hardship</i> Flagship report from VCOSS on persistent energy hardship		November 2018
<i>Victorian Energy Upgrades</i> VCOSS response to Victoria's Regulatory Impact Statement		December 2018
<i>Supporting energy customers experiencing family violence</i> Submission to the Essential Services Commission draft principles and actions for family violence assistance		December 2018
<i>A fair, well-functioning electricity market</i> Submission to ACCC discussion paper on electricity supply monitoring		December 2018

A fair and just Victoria

SUBMISSION	FLAGSHIP REPORT	OTHER
<i>Getting solar tariffs right</i> Submission to the Essential Services Commission		January 2019
<i>Trimming the fat from electricity prices</i> Submission to the Essential Services Commission on the Victorian Default Offer methodology		January 2019
<i>Towards a successful Mental Health Royal Commission</i> Submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health terms of reference		January 2019
<i>Better energy deal information</i> Submission to the Essential Services Commission on a new energy fact sheet		February 2019
<i>A fair go in Victoria's on-demand economy</i> Submission to the Inquiry into the Victorian on-demand workforce		February 2019
<i>Supporting a child safe culture</i> Submission to the review of Victoria's Child Safe Standards		March 2019
<i>Australia needs strong community housing regulation</i> Submission to the Commonwealth-NSW review of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing		March 2019
<i>Energy retailer family violence support</i> Response to Essential Services Commission draft decision on Energy Retailer Code changes		April 2019
<i>Rethinking mental health</i> Submission to the Productivity Commission Issues Paper into the Social and Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health		April 2019
<i>10-year Community Services Industry Plan: Rolling Implementation Plan 2019-2020</i> Produced in partnership with DHHS, through HSHPIC		April 2019
<i>A simple, efficient and accessible energy deal</i> Response to draft Orders in Council on the Victorian Default Offer Joint submission by VCOSS, Consumer Action Law Centre, Financial and Consumer Rights Council, Council on the Ageing Victoria, and the Victorian Public Tenants Association		May 2019
<i>Rebuilding trust in the energy market</i> Submission to Essential Services Commission draft decision on Victorian Default Offer reforms		May 2019
<i>10 years reforming emergency management in Victoria</i> Consultation Paper		May 2019
<i>VCOSS Submission to Portable Long Service Scheme draft regulations</i> Submission on the draft Long Service Benefits Portability Regulations		May 2019
<i>Victorian Energy Upgrades</i> VCOSS response to Victoria's Regulatory Impact Statement		May 2019
<i>A Fairer Funding and Service Agreement</i> VCOSS report to the Service Agreement Working Group (SAWG) and HSHPIC		May 2019
<i>Active market stewardship for the NDIS</i> Submission to the NDIS Thin Markets project		June 2019
<i>Better data; stronger workforce</i> Comprehensive approach to community service workforce data collection		June 2019

Advocacy

Advocacy is central to VCOSS' mission to ensure every Victorian can lead a good life.

In 2018–19 VCOSS was involved with numerous committees, networks, campaigns and events.

Campaigns

VCOSS leads campaigns of broad significance to the social service sector or where a central coordinating role is needed. At other times, we support our members to lead campaigns for positive change. This dual track approach to campaigning is based on our strong belief that the sector is strongest when we work together collaboratively.

Empowered Lives

In September 2018, VCOSS formally launched Empowered Lives, a campaign to secure change for Victorians with disability. A key focus of this campaign was supporting advocates and systemic advocacy. In addition to media outreach, direct political engagement and a series of public facing events, the Empowered Lives campaign also ran three training workshops specifically for disability advocates (including self-advocates). These workshops were on:

- Engaging with MPs for policy outcomes with Ged Kearney MP
- Using the mainstream media to support advocacy with Jax Jacki Brown
- Social media for personal advocacy with Carly Findlay.

Stronger Schools

The Stronger Schools campaign made the case for broad and coordinated improvements across Victoria's education system. It stated that a school's 'strength' is measured by several different intersecting attributes. For example, a school is only truly 'strong' if it's also well-funded, affordable, accessible, diverse, welcoming and respectful of all students' views, experiences and needs. This campaign was supported by the Education Equity Coalition which VCOSS leads.

Community and public housing

As a member of the Victorian Housing Peaks Alliance, in October 2018 VCOSS helped draft and coordinate the launch of The Whittlesea Declaration; calling on the Victorian Government to build the equivalent of at least 'one new Whittlesea' of social housing each year, for at least 10 years, just to meet demand. This public positioning underpinned much of our direct advocacy on the issue of social housing up to and beyond the state election.

Worth a Second Chance

VCOSS supported the campaign to modernise Victoria's youth criminal justice system, led by Jesuit Social Services.

Raise the Age

VCOSS supported the campaign to lift the age of criminal responsibility, led by the Smart Justice For Young People Coalition, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and others.

Make Renting Fair

Make Renting Fair is a coalition of over 70 organisations and local councils, and thousands of individual supporters calling for better rights for over 1.5 million Victorians who rent their homes.

VCOSS supported the campaign, which highlighted the real issues affecting renters. Hard work paid off on 5 August 2018 when the Victorian Government announced its intention to introduce the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018 to the Lower House of Parliament that month. The Bill was 500 pages long and contained 388 clauses addressing all of Make Renting Fair's key policy asks. The Bill passed through the Lower House on 23 August and through the Upper House on 6 September.





Influence

Decisions are made by those 'in the room'.

VCOSS strives to be in that room so we can influence debates and decisions, and ensure that the views of the community sector and of Victorians experiencing poverty are clearly heard and acted upon.

Accordingly, we convene and participate in a large number of different advisory committees and stakeholder groups across a range of policy areas. These include but are not limited to:

Disability

- DET-NDIS Workforce Expert Advisory Group
- Victorian Government's NDIS Implementation Taskforce (and associated working groups)
- All Aboard Network, advocating for inclusive transport in Victoria
- Yarra Trams Accessibility Reference Group (participant)
- Councils of Social Service Lived Experience Advocacy Working Group (participant)
- Disability Act Review Advisory Group
- DHHS Psychosocial Reference Group

Families and children

- Roadmap To Reform Ministerial Advisory Group
- Youth Policy Advisory Group
- Inner Metro Youth And Community Partnership
- Family Violence Steering Committee
- Family Violence Industry Taskforce

Education

- Education Equity Coalition (convener)
- Department of Education Training – Community Service Organisation Governance Group (co-convener)
- Early childhood education reform stakeholder group (member)
- Education State Guiding Coalition (member)
- DET-CSO Governance Group

Justice

- Victorian Government's Crime Prevention Taskforce (member)
- Smart Justice for Young People (participant)

Health

- Victorian Mental Health Policy Network (member)
- Primary and Community Health Network (member)

Housing

- Public Housing Renewal Advisory Group (member)
- Joint Housing Peaks (member)

Energy

- Chaired Climate Change and Health Joint Roundtable with Sustainability Victoria
- Essential Services Commission Retail Market Review Stakeholder Reference Group (member)
- DHHS Utility Relief Grant Scheme Review Technical Advisory Group (member)
- Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria Community Consultation Group (member)
- VicUtilities network (member)
- One Million Homes Alliance (member)
- Community Coalition for Healthy, Affordable Homes (member)

Sector development

- Human Services and Health Partnership Implementation Committee (HSHPIC)
- Peaks and Statewide Networks Forum
- Community Services Industry Planning Working Group
- Service Agreement Working Group (SAWG)
- SAWG non-government members group
- Service Agreement consultations (February 2019)

Gender equity

- Equal workplaces advisory committee

Emergency management

- State Crisis and Resilience Council Relief and Recovery and Plenary Sub-Committees

Communications

Communicating VCOSS' key messages to our target audiences has never been more important. In an age of contracting newsrooms, fragmented media markets and social media 'echo chambers' it has also never been more challenging.

Our approach has been to continue being an available and authoritative voice on the issues that matter for traditional media platforms (like radio, newspapers and TV) while increasingly communicating through our own digital channels. In 2018-19 VCOSS:

- Produced 27 media releases (does not include direct pitching to journalists)
- Published 62 analysis and information articles (formerly 'blogs'), including more than 10 written by VCOSS member organisations
- Released two editions of *Insight: Victoria 2030* (focusing on long term policy reforms) and *Modern Government* (detailing ways politicians and policymakers can be more responsive and bridge the growing trust deficit)
- Shared 1,600 tweets (average 10 link clicks and 12 retweets per day) and grew our active Facebook audience by 15% (from 3,456 to 4,007)
- Hosted nine live videos on Facebook
- Achieved more than 1000 traditional media 'mentions', which incorporates being interviewed, directly quoted or referenced in some way. VCOSS was featured across a diverse range of media outlets, including newspapers, commercial TV, online and public broadcasters.



Advent calendar

In mid-2018, VCOSS was searching for a way to make its advocacy priorities break through all the white noise of the looming state election campaign. We needed something smart, different and attention grabbing.

We reasoned that advent calendars have been used for hundreds of years to generate buzz and count down the days until Christmas, so why not harness this tool for the election?

VCOSS produced a traditional advent calendar and posted it to politicians, political advisors, policymakers and journalists. Inside each 'door' was a chocolate treat and a key policy recommendation from our official State Election Platform 'Delivering a good life for every Victorian'.

The physical distribution of the calendar was supported by a playful digital campaign. For each of the 28 days of the calendar countdown—from November 1 to 30—we released a short online video revealing and explaining that day's policy ask. These videos starred relevant members and VCOSS staff.

We received overwhelmingly positive feedback and engagement from the advent calendar campaign. It represented a fresh way to communicate our policy platform and sparked numerous discussions with significant political players during the election campaign.



Jenny Mikakos, David Southwick and Samantha Ratnam received their Election Advent Calendars at the 2018 VCOSS Annual General Meeting

Jenny Mikakos MP
@JennyMikakos

Thanks @VCOSS for the 2018 Election Advent calendar - turns out Day 10 is my favourite #3yoKinder #springst



Monique Hore
@moniquehore

An election advent calendar!!! 🍫📅 #springst #vicvotes



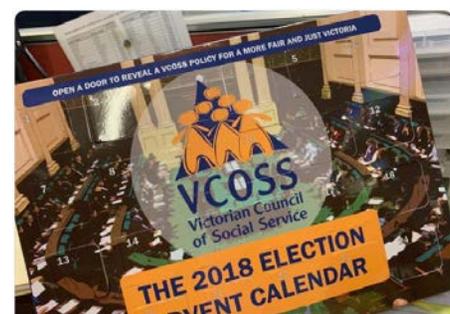
Fiona Patten MP
@FionaPattenMLC

Well done @VCOSS chocolate policy election advent calendar! Very persuasive #votereason #VicVotes2018



Dean Felton
@DeanFelton7

Clever DM piece from @VCOSS - the Vic Council of Social Service. The 2018 state election advent calendar, with a new social policy (and a chocolate) behind each door!





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Treasurer Tim Pallas MP in conversation with Walkley-winning journalist Rafael Epstein at the VCOSS Budget Breakfast on 29 May 2019

Welcome to the industry super fund dedicated to health, early childhood education and community services.

together

of Social Ser



Key events

Budget breakfast with Treasurer Tim Pallas

As is now a tradition in budget week, Treasurer Tim Pallas attended the VCOSS Treasurer's Breakfast on 29 May 2019 to speak expansively about the Government's social policy initiatives. In a session moderated by ABC Radio host Rafael Epstein, Treasurer Pallas took questions from VCOSS members on a range of policy fronts including homelessness, social housing, support for carers and justice.

A panel discussion featuring Per Capita Executive Director Emma Dawson, economist Professor David Hayward and VCOSS CEO Emma King followed.

Community Services Industry Symposium

On 4 April 2019, more than 200 industry leaders attended the Community Services Industry Symposium, hosted by the Human Services and Health Partnership Implementation Committee (HSHPIC) at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The symposium was the first step in implementing the 10-year *Community Services Industry Plan*. The *Community Service Industry Plan: Rolling Implementation Plan 2019-2020* was also launched at this event. For more information on this, see page five.

Delegates at the symposium were given the opportunity to be part of the first steps towards implementing action items in the following areas:

- Progressing Aboriginal self-determination
- Developing person-centred principles for the industry
- Marketing the value of the industry
- Developing a modern service agreement
- Progressing regional workforce development
- Understanding industry needs around IT and digital innovation.



Towards Resilience

Since 2014 the VCOSS-MAV Emergency Management Forums have engaged state and local governments, community service organisations, emergency service organisations and a range of other stakeholders to build resilience and help deliver enhanced emergency planning, response, relief and recovery. Through the sharing of information and experiences, as well as networking, the Forums have encouraged collaboration and cooperation across the community and emergency management sectors.

Almost 100 people attended the fifth annual VCOSS-MAV Emergency Management Forum in September 2018. Speakers included:

- Deaf Society NSW
- University of Sydney
- Wellington Shire Council
- Campaspe Shire Council
- Department of Health and Human Services
- The Inspector-General for Emergency Management.

A thriving sector

10-year Community Services Industry Plan

The Victorian community services industry is large and diverse and comprises many thousands of organisations across its varied programs. It is a proud industry and one that is facing unprecedented growth in both size and demand for services. Developed by the industry, for the industry, the Community Services Industry Plan seizes the opportunity provided by the rapid change and is built around four themes:

1. Making an impact in people's lives in the places they live and spend time
2. Strengthening the capacity of the community services industry
3. Effective community service system architecture
4. Fostering the potential of all communities.

The *Community Service Industry Plan: Rolling Implementation Plan 2019-2020* was launched in April 2019, taking the plan from vision to operation. The first two years of implementation is focused on practical and achievable actions that do not replicate existing efforts and work across government and the industry. The work done during these first two years will provide the foundations for the next wave of work in the industry plan.

Regional engagement

VCOSS has conducted a suite of important consultations across regional Victoria throughout the year. Following the success of the 10 regional consultations in 2018, the focus moved to advocating for region-specific priorities. Planning meetings in each region centred on identifying a common priority that VCOSS member organisations could collectively advocate for through the lens of their organisation.

We then moved on to organising regional media events prior to the state election, in conjunction with the leaders and communications experts from our regional member organisations. While media engagement varied from region to region, there were several notable successes that demonstrated that strategic, collective advocacy can be a powerful tool.

VCOSS has also contributed to a number of place-based initiative, including the Go Goldfields Collaborative Table in Maryborough, which is addressing complex social issues in the Central Goldfields Shire.

VCOSS has consulted regional communities around Funding and Service Agreement negotiations, a major review of the reform of Victoria's emergency management arrangements over the past 10 years, and most recently around the introduction of the MARAM (Multi Agency Risk Assessment & Management Framework) and Information Sharing Reforms (Children and Family Violence). The latter provided an opportunity to redesign our consultation model to ensure we spoke in depth to those working with these reforms. These learnings will shape how we consult in the future as we seek to continually improve our approach, method and effectiveness.

The coming year promises to be the most exciting yet, with a focus on advocacy and campaigns.

Service Agreement consultations

A service agreement is a contract between a community service organisation and the government department that funds their programs. It details the terms and conditions that both parties must follow.

VCOSS plays a critical role in negotiating the terms of the standard Funding and Service agreement (on which most service agreements are based) on behalf of the sector, in partnership with sector representatives.

In February 2019, VCOSS conducted consultations with community service organisations in Bendigo, Morwell and Shepparton to determine priority areas and inform negotiations.

VCOSS' subsequent negotiations with government departments sought to secure an agreement on behalf of the sector that is fair, is easy to understand, recognises that organisations are independent entities in their own right and reflects the spirit of partnership between government departments as funders and organisations who deliver services.



A thriving sector

Disability Advocacy Resource Unit

DARU has grown and expanded the scope of its work over the past 12 months, particularly in training and professional development. In 2018–19, DARU:

- Ran four professional training sessions for disability advocates on topics relating to activating the rights of people with disabilities
- Extended its online training library by building two more online training courses, and adding external courses for disability advocates to access
- Developed a number of new resources, including the highly successful ‘How to be Disability Inclusive’ guide and accompanying training for the mainstream community
- Hosted the Strengthening Disability Advocacy Conference.

VCOSS Community Communications Alliance

The VCOSS Comms Alliance exists to connect people working in communications, marketing or advocacy roles within VCOSS member organisations, and build capacity. Now in its third full year of operation, the Alliance has more than 130 active members.

In September, we convened one of our semi-regular ‘lunchtime workshop’ events. More than 20 people attended this free workshop on livestreaming through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

The beating heart of the Alliance remains an active closed Facebook page where people pose questions, offer advice and share resources.

COSS Network

VCOSS is a proud and active member of the national Councils of Social Service network.

Our combined national network has in excess of 4,000 organisational members and thousands more individual supporters.

The network makes a united case to end inequality and poverty and, acting together, champion the policies and approaches required to achieve this goal in every jurisdiction across Australia.

In 2018–19 the COSS network has been a key driver of the Raise The Rate campaign, seeking increases to the national support payments Newstart and Youth Allowance.

Ageing, Disability and Mental Health Collaborative Panel

Over the past five years, the Ageing, Disability and Mental Health Collaborative Panel—funded by the State Trustees Foundation Australia—has played a key role in supporting the ageing, disability and mental health sectors to:

- prepare for the transformational changes associated with government reforms, including the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the introduction of the Aged Care Gateway and related funding reforms
- develop good practice in relation to consumer-led service delivery.

The Panel comprises representatives from VCOSS and the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Australian Multicultural Community Services, Carers Australia Victoria, Council On The Ageing Victoria, Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria, Mental Health Victoria, National Disability Services, State Trustees Australia Foundation, and Victorian Aboriginal Controlled Health Organisation Inc.

During the year, the Panel delivered the following sector capacity building projects:

- Communities of Practice to Support Service System Development
- Good Practice Case Study and Sustainability Analysis
- HACC Consumer Perspectives Project
- Community Services Learning Hub Feasibility Study
- Promoting the Exercise of Consumer Choice and Control.

The Community Traineeships Pilot Program will support 200 young people to secure traineeships in community services organisations.



A thriving sector

Community Traineeships Pilot Program

Jobs Victoria has provided funding to VCOSS to deliver a Community Traineeships Pilot Program for young Victorian job seekers, to address youth unemployment and increased workforce demand in the community services industry. The Program was officially launched in June 2019 by Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade, Martin Pakula.

The pilot program will support 200 young people to secure traineeships in community services organisations, and will provide flexible, wraparound support to trainees to address barriers to participation and maximise their employment outcomes. The program will also build capacity within host organisations to supervise and support trainees throughout their traineeship.

The trial and evaluation of this best-practice model will assist community services to host traineeships in the future, and build a pipeline of new workers to support community sector workforce needs.

As part of the program, VCOSS has engaged three Local Partner Organisations:

- Access Australia Group – City of Greater Bendigo
- Taskforce Community Agency – City of Greater Dandenong
- Youth Projects – City of Hume.

These organisations are providing local project coordination, including trainee recruitment and support, and recruitment and support to 'Host Organisations' (employers) who take on a trainee.

VCOSS is also engaging with local TAFE and training providers, who are delivering high-quality, industry-relevant, accredited courses to trainees. Program participants will complete a nationally accredited community services qualification as part of their 12 months traineeship.

Enhanced Pathways to Family Violence Work Project

In December 2017 the Special Minister of State, the Hon. Gavin Jennings MLC, launched the Victorian Government's 10-year plan for Victoria's future family violence workforce.

The plan is helping to equip a range of workforces with the expertise and resources to deliver the services and support needed by Victorians impacted by family violence. It highlights the need to strengthen pathways for new workers into the specialist family violence and community services sector, and to build capabilities of students and graduates to be more 'work-ready'. Stage 1 of the Enhanced Pathways to Family Violence Work project commenced in April 2018 and concluded in April 2019, led by the Department of Health and Human Services on behalf of Family Safety Victoria, and in partnership with VCOSS, Domestic Violence Victoria, Domestic Violence Resource Centre and the Future Social Services Institute.

It aimed to support the development of the family violence and community services workforce through:

- student placements in community services sector organisations that provide specialist and/or non-specialist family violence services
- supervision training for experienced workers to enhance their competence and confidence (in working with students and practice entrants)
- developing and transitioning graduates and new workers to family violence roles.

VCOSS provided overall project management for the Project, with an independent evaluation by the Future Social Service Institute. Student placements established through Stage 1 of the Project continue to roll out throughout the 2019 academic year.

A thriving sector



**FUTURE
SOCIAL
SERVICE
INSTITUTE**

The past year has been a time of rapid growth and transformation for FSSI. David Hayward stepped down as the Director of the Institute at the end of 2018. Both VCOSS and RMIT acknowledge and thank David for his vision and leadership as the founding Director. David has made a significant contribution to VCOSS' work and mission across many years of engagement. In April 2019, FSSI welcomed its new Director, Micaela Cronin. Micaela brings to the role significant sector experience and knowledge, having worked across Australia and internationally.

Micaela is a past president of both VCOSS and ACOSS and has a strong track record as a collaborative leader.

In the past year FSSI has strived to deliver outstanding value to the sector:

- Transforming vocational educational curricula through a unique co-designed process which worked with Experts by Experience to develop a new suite of vocational education products that support students to work in the NDIS and aged care environment.
- With our partners, FSSI has widened the entry gate to the social service sector with a range of programs and initiatives to support under-represented and disadvantaged groups to join the workforce—including:
 - Providing wraparound support to 177 new entrants to the sector to undertake Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate IV students from organisations looking to upskill their staff
- Collaborating on the development and evaluation of a traineeships initiative, led by VCOSS, aimed at providing trainee and vocational education qualifications to 200 vulnerable job seekers to in the Dandenong, Hume and Bendigo regions; and
- Developing a place-based pilot project with Council of the Ageing (COTA) to support long-term unemployed aged 50 - 64 to re-skill and join the social service workforce.

FSSI has pioneered a responsive curriculum model to build leadership capability. FSSI has continued to play a key role in strengthening leadership capability in the family violence sector with almost 170 participants completing FSSI's Leadership Intensives sponsored by Family Safety Victoria.

Together, FSSI and VCOSS have helped to drive a significant shift in how the sector is viewed, moving the sector from a welfare paradigm to a paradigm focused on the social economy and jobs growth through knowledge reviews, position papers and submissions to parliamentary inquiries.

The social economy is undergoing rapid and systemic change—across levels of policy, funding, demography, markets and technology. This change creates widespread uncertainty as actors across the system struggle to make sense of and adapt to these tectonic shifts.

Five Royal Commissions in six years is emblematic of systemic failure, underscoring why we must build new capabilities, new approaches, new roles and new tools that can help the whole community and institutions across the social services ecosystem to adapt, respond and thrive in an unpredictable and complex environment.

The Future Social Services Institute—a trailblazing collaboration between RMIT University, VCOSS and the Victorian Government—exists to walk alongside the sector, to listen, learn, lead and make links across individual, institutional and system levels. It does this through a suite of activities developed and undertaken in partnership with the sector. These include innovative, inclusive education and training programs, engagement to build leadership capability, and high-quality research and evaluation, demonstrating the value and potential of new approaches to workforce growth and development.

Future Social Service Institute students on 26 September 2018, following the Victorian Government's announcement of a \$1 million injection to help Victorians looking to upskill or retrain to work in the fast-growing disability sector.



A healthy VCOSS

Reconciliation Action Plan

VCOSS is committed to an ongoing journey to respectfully partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to advocate for community-led solutions to achieve reconciliation, understanding and meaningful self-determination.

The key document governing this goal is the VCOSS Reconciliation Action Plan. Throughout 2018-19, VCOSS continued to deliver and build on its first Reconciliation Action Plan by:

- **ENHANCING** our existing relationships and building new relationships with a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations
- **RECOGNISING**, learning from, celebrating and helping promote the strength, diversity and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities, and
- **CREATING** opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

Highlights included the development of formal and informal relationships with DJIRRA, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, the Treaty Commission, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association, The Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and the Victorian Government's Aboriginal Workforce Working Group.

In 2019-20, VCOSS plans to develop and begin the delivery of its second Reconciliation Action Plan. This Plan will focus on continuing to develop and strengthen relationships, engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and developing and piloting innovative strategies to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Compact

VCOSS has begun work with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector and the community services industry to develop a Compact, articulating a shared vision for Aboriginal self-determination, and the responsibility of mainstream community service organisations in progressing self-determination. The Compact is a priority action in the *10-year Community Services Industry Plan Rolling Implementation Plan 2019-20*. Part of the Compact will be committing to and planning for the transition of services for Aboriginal people, families and communities to Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs). In 2018-19 VCOSS partnered with ACCOs and facilitated discussions with community sector organisations to determine the potential scope of the Compact, and to build broad engagement with the process.

Occupational health and safety

VCOSS' Occupational Health and Safety Committee meets regularly and is engaged in the ongoing review of OH&S policies according to best practice.

After a long period of consultation with stakeholders and emergency services, the Committee has finalised an evacuation plan for VCOSS premises that accounts for all staff and visitors, including those with disability.

Finance and risk

The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee ('FARC') has continued to meet regularly, with the aim of promoting an appropriate risk and compliance culture across VCOSS. The Committee provides oversight and safeguards for the integrity of the organisation's financial reporting and risk management.

The Treasurer's Report includes details about the organisation's investment strategy, which the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee is actively considering.



Top row, L to R: Bridget Tehan, Emily Barter, Melissa Hale, Deb Fewster, Callen Parsons, Ryan Sheales
Middle row, L to R: Maeve Kennedy, Charlotte Newbold, Emma King, Miriam Sved
Bottom row, L to R: Laura Mondon, Veronica Perera, Bianca Davey, Cathy Corbo
Not all VCOSS staff are pictured

The VCOSS Board

President

Stella Avramopoulos

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
Elected 2011

Deputy President

Kim Sykes

Bendigo Community Health Service
Elected 2012

Treasurer

Simon Trivett

Grant Thornton Australia
Co-opted 2013

Damian Ferrie

Star Health
Elected 2018

David Brant

Disability and community advocate
Elected 2006

Paul Linossier

Uniting Vic.Tas
Elected 2018

Sue Woodward

Justice Connect
Elected 2018

Vicki Sutton

Melbourne City Mission
Elected 2017

Dr Jason Davies-Kildea

The Salvation Army (Victoria)
(departed August 2019)

Departing members

Tony Keenan

Launch Housing (departed May 2018)
Independent member

Prof. David Hayward

RMIT University (departed June 2018)

Caroline Mulcahy

Independent member
(departed September 2019)

Lyn Morgain

cohealth (departed November 2018)

Tony Lang

Barrister (departed November 2018)



Top row, L to R: David Brant, Simon Trivett, Paul Linossier
Middle row, L to R: Vicki Sutton, Emma King (CEO), Stella Avramopoulos, Sue Woodward
Bottom row, L to R: Dr Jason Davies-Kildea, Kim Sykes, Damian Ferrie

Partners

VCOSS acknowledges the organisations who share our vision for a better Victoria, and work with us to achieve this goal. This includes our funders, partners and institutional supports. Thank you for your support in 2018-19.



Treasurer's Report

For the year ended 30 June 2019, VCOSS has reported a surplus of \$241,072 (2018: \$3,511,093). This is a return to a more 'normal' operating state after the gain on the sale of the Wellington Street property recognised in 2018. During the 2019 year, the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee finalised an Investment Strategy and Policy and it was approved by the Board. This Investment Strategy and Policy aims to ensure prudent management of the sale proceeds and enable VCOSS to meet its objectives in years to come. A critical part of the investment approach was to ensure VCOSS only invests in companies that are good corporate citizens, holding values similar to our own. The Committee ran a tender process to appoint an external investment manager to help execute the Investment Strategy and Policy.

VCOSS has now achieved operating surpluses for seven consecutive years. The net asset position has increased to \$4,719,352 (2018: \$4,478,280). I'm pleased to say that this tight financial management has meant the VCOSS Board is able to hold each membership category subscription fee at the same level as 2018.

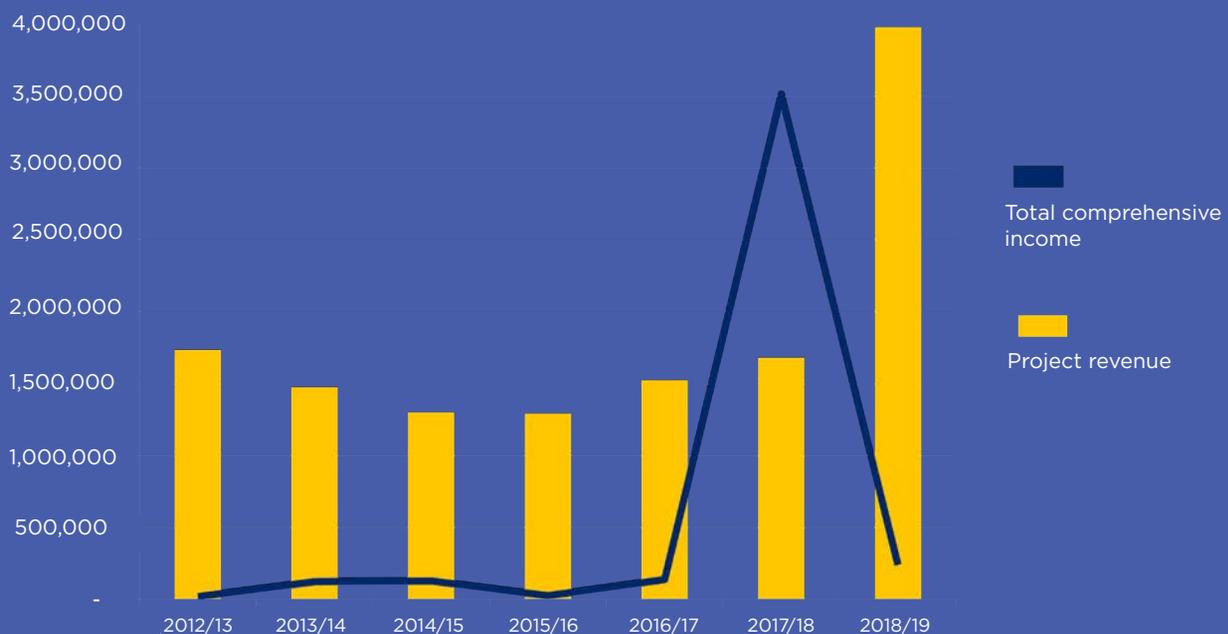
As I've noted in previous years and many will be familiar with in their own organisations, the sustainability of VCOSS continues to depend on diversified and recurring

revenue sources, and prudent expense management. Simply, VCOSS needs to be financially healthy in order to deliver quality member services and advocate on issues that matter. Over the 2019 year, there has been a focus on member engagement and support, and communications. VCOSS' financial position enables us to provide research and advocacy in areas needed by those experiencing disadvantage in Victoria. Oftentimes these areas don't attract funding.

Throughout the year, the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, established by the VCOSS Board, ensured the integrity of the organisation's financial reporting and internal controls. In the prior year we outsourced our accounting function to an external provider and this has worked very well. The VCOSS Risk Framework has continued to be embedded in the culture of the organisation and reviewed by the Committee.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, and the VCOSS Board, for working together to achieve another positive financial result for the year ending 30 June 2019, enabling a financially stable organisation. VCOSS management has worked hard on achieving sustainable revenues and this facilitates the necessary resources to operate as the peak body of the social and community sector in Victoria, now and into the future.

The table below shows the trend of project income and the financial sustainability of the organisation through continued surpluses.



Financial Report

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income For the Year Ended 30 June 2019

	Note	2019 \$	2018 \$
Revenue - operating activities	2	5,682,632	4,049,482
Employee benefits expense		(1,501,750)	(1,433,044)
Occupancy expenses		(243,225)	(233,626)
Publication expenses		(14,387)	(61,154)
Investment expenses		(2,774)	(2,092)
Other operating and administration expenses		(473,489)	(489,753)
Project expenses		(3,214,918)	(1,243,192)
Surplus from operating activities		232,089	586,621
Interest income - bequest	2	8,983	8,961
Other income	2	-	2,915,511
Surplus for the year		241,072	3,511,093
Other comprehensive income for the year		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		241,072	3,511,093

Statement of Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position For the Year Ended 30 June 2019

	Note	2019 \$	2018 \$
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	9,432,856	7,601,923
Trade and other receivables	5	48,064	294,350
Total current assets		9,480,920	7,896,273
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	6	39,265	32,721
Total non-current assets		39,265	37,721
Total assets		9,520,185	7,928,994
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	8	1,138,881	442,818
Employee benefits	11	207,905	223,838
Other liabilities	10	3,336,464	2,642,192
Total current liabilities		4,683,250	3,308,848
Non-current liabilities			
Employee benefits	11	36,192	61,520
Long-term provisions	9	81,391	80,346
Total non-current liabilities		117,583	141,866
Total liabilities		4,800,833	3,450,714
Net assets		4,719,352	4,478,280
Equity			
Reserves	12	364,792	355,809
Retained earnings		4,354,560	4,122,471
Total equity		4,719,352	4,478,280

A healthy VCOSS

Our 2018-19 members

Action for More Independence and Dignity in Accommodation | Amaze | Anchor Inc | Anglicare Victoria | ARC Justice | Ardoch | Association for Children with a Disability | Australian Association of Social Workers | Australian Red Cross | Autism Family Support Association | Ballarat & Grampians Community Legal Service Inc. | Ballarat Foundation United Way Inc. | Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council | Banksia Gardens Community Services | Bapcare | Barwon Adolescent Task Force Inc. | Barwon Community Legal Service | Barwon Network of Neighbourhood Centres | Belgrave South Community House | Bendigo Community Health Services | Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre | Berry Street | Beyond Housing | Borderlands Co-operative | BrainLink Services Limited | Braybrook Maidstone Neighbourhood House | breakthru People Solutions | Brimbank City Council - Community Planning Unit | Broadmeadows Progress Association | Brotherhood of St Laurence | Capital City Local Learning & Employment Network | Carers Victoria | CASA Forum | Casey North CISS | Catholic Social Services Victoria | CatholicCare Victoria Tasmania | Central Goldfields Shire Council | Central Highlands Community House Network | Central Ranges LLEN | Centre Against Violence Inc. | Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare | Cerebral Palsy Support Network Inc. | Child and Family Services Inc | Chronic Illness Alliance | Cobaw Community Health Service | Cohealth | Communication Rights Australia | Community Child Care Association Inc. | Community Houses Association of the Outer Eastern Suburbs | Community Housing Industry Association Victoria | Community Hub Inc. | Community Information and Support Victoria Inc | Community Southwest Incorporated | Community Support Frankston | Concern Australia Welfare Inc. | Consumer Action Law Centre | Consumer Policy Research Centre | Council of Single Mothers and their Children Inc. | Council On The Ageing (VIC) Inc. | Council to Homeless Persons | Craig Family Centre Inc. | Cranbourne Information and Support Service Inc. | Cystic Fibrosis Community Care | Deaf Victoria | DES Action Australia | Disability Advocacy Victoria Inc. | Disability Discrimination Legal Service | DJIRRA | Domestic Violence Resource Centre | Domestic Violence Victoria | Doncare Community Services | Drummond Street Services Inc | Early Childhood Australia (Victoria) | Early Childhood Intervention Australia | Early Learning Association Australia | Eastern Community Legal Centre | Eastern Domestic Violence Service | Eastern Metropolitan Region Regional Family Violence Partnership | Eastern Suburbs Rental Housing Co-operative | Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria | Emerge Women and Children's Support Network | Emma House Domestic Violence Services Inc. | Family Access Network Inc. | Family Life Limited | FamilyCare | Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre | Federation of Community Legal Centres Vic | Financial and Consumer Rights Council | Fitzroy Legal Service | Flat Out Inc. | Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre | Foster Care Association of Victoria | Frankston Mornington Peninsula Primary Care Partnership | Friends for Good Inc | Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC) | Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault | Gippsland Disability Advocacy | Gippsland Women's Health Inc. | Give Where You Live Foundation | Good Shepherd Australia & New Zealand & Good Shepherd Microfinance | Grampians Disability Advocacy Association | Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnership | Hamilton Community House | Healesville Interchurch Community Care Inc. | Highlands Local Learning & Employment Network | Holden Street Neighbourhood House | Hope Street Youth and Family Services | Humanist Society of Victoria | Hume City Council - City Communications | Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network | Inclusion Melbourne | Inner East Primary Care Partnership, | Inner Eastern Local Learning & Employment Network | Inner Melbourne Community Legal | Inspired Carers Inc. | IPAA Victoria | Ithaca CERC | Jesuit Social Services | Justice Connect | Kevin Heinze Garden Centre | Kids First | Kids Under Cover | Kidsafe Victoria | Knox Infolink | Launch Housing | Leadership Plus | Leadership Victoria | Leongatha Community House Inc | Lifestyle in Supported Accommodation Inc. | Link Community Transport Inc. | Lively | Living Positive Victoria | Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault | Loddon Mallee Homelessness Network | MacKillop Family Services | Make a Difference Dingley Village Inc | Mallee Accommodation and Support Program | Mallee Family Care | McAuley Community Services for Women | Melbourne City Mission | Mental Health Victoria Ltd | Mentone Community Assistance and Information Bureau Inc | Merri Community Health Services | Mission Australia | Morwell Neighbourhood House & Learning Centre | Navigating Outcomes Pty Ltd | Neighbourhood Houses Victoria | Network of Inner Eastern Community Houses | No To Violence incorporating the Men's Referral Service | Non Profit Training | North East Local Learning & Employment Network | North East Neighbourhood House Network | North Western Melbourne PHN | Northern Community Legal Centre | Office of the Public Advocate | Opening the Doors Foundation | Playgroup Victoria | Port Phillip Community Group | Prahran Malvern Community Housing | Primary Care Connect | Quantum Support Services Inc. | Queen Elizabeth Centre | Reconciliation Victoria | Reinforce | Relationships Australia Victoria | Ross House Association Inc. | Sacred Heart Mission | Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre | Samarinda Ashburton Aged Services | Slavery Links Australia Inc. | Social Change Projects | Social Traders Ltd | Social Ventures Australia | South Coast Primary Care Partnership | South East Community Links | South East Volunteers | South Port Day Links | Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership | Southern Peninsula Community Support & Information Centre | Spina Bifida Foundation of Victoria | Sports Central | Springvale Monash Legal Service Inc. | St Kilda Community Housing Ltd | Star Health | Syndromes Without A Name Australia | Tandem | Taskforce Community Agency Inc. | Tenants Union of Victoria | The Centre Connecting Community in the North | The Gianna Centre Inc. | The Salvation Army | The Workshop Pty Ltd | The Youth Junction Inc. | Thorne Harbour Health | Tweddle Child and Family Health Service | Unison Housing | Uniting (Victoria & Tasmania) Ltd | Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership | UsherKids Australia | Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd | Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc | Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association | Victorian Clinical Genetics Services | Victorian Community Transport Association | Victorian Health Promotion Foundation | Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council | Victorian Primary Care Partnerships | Victorian Public Tenants Association | Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc. | Volunteer West | Volunteering Geelong | Volunteering Victoria | Wellsprings for Women Inc. | West Footscray Neighbourhood House Inc. | Western Community Legal Centre Limited | Whittlesea City Council | Windermere Child & Family Services Inc | WIRE | WISHIN Inc. | Women & Mentoring - WAM Limited | Women with Disabilities Victoria | Women's Health East Inc. | Women's Health Grampians Inc. | Women's Health Loddon Mallee | Women's Health Victoria | Women's Health West | Women's Liberation Halfway House | Women's Property Initiatives | WRISC Family Violence Support | Wyndham City Council | Yarraville Community Centre | Yoowinna Wurnalung Aboriginal Healing Service Ltd | Youth Affairs Council of Victoria | Youth Projects Ltd | Youth Support and Advocacy Service | YouthLaw

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