

ANNUAL REPORT

2019
20



VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF
CRIME COURT SUPPORT INC

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we drew closer to the end of June 2020 I thought it timely to address VWCCS' position relating to the following:

The 2019-2020 financial year witnessed another highly successful period for VWCCS with mid-year statistics again highlighting the much-needed support and care of prosecution witnesses. Its highly trained volunteer Court Support Officers and also its Reception and Information Desk Volunteers all worked assiduously to assist prosecution witnesses and inform the general public of various court locations and other general information relating to the courts. On behalf of VWCCS' Management Team I wish to convey its appreciation of the generosity shown by you all through the work you all undertook during what became an extraordinary year.

NSW along with other States of Australia experienced devastating fires towards the end of 2019 and the commencement of 2020. Many of VWCCS' Volunteers worked through this period giving their time to prosecution witnesses and other stakeholders.

Shortly after the fires the rampant COVID-19 arrived in Australia and placed a serious impediment on the implementation of VWCCS' services in the Courts.

It was decided in early 2020 that VWCCS would temporarily shut its operation down during the COVID-19 epidemic in order to protect its Volunteers from the possibility of contracting such a virulent

epidemic. It was thought that by April 2020 VWCCS would return to the Courts and resume its operation. Sadly, this was not the case and COVID-19 continued. As a consequence, all Operational Management Meetings were held away from the Downing Centre via Zoom and the office was closed until further notice.

I was very pleased to be able to advise VWCCS Management that after an email was delivered to all Volunteers to assess whether or not they wished to continue their volunteering for VWCCS in 2021 almost all Volunteers plan to recommence either their Court Support or Reception and Information Desk work. Again, a huge thanks to all of VWCCS Volunteers for their commitment and loyalty to the agency and the delivery of work they do so efficiently and professionally for the benefit of VWCCS clients, victims and witnesses of crime.

Bearing in mind the serious concerns of COVID-19 throughout this year, I would like to acknowledge and thank those CSOs who have been in a position to offer their support to victims and witnesses in the District Court. Local Court work has been limited but nevertheless some referral activity by various agencies to VWCCS Coordinators has been noted and we also wish to thank those of our Volunteers for also being able to so generously offer their support.

I am presently optimistic that it will be most likely that VWCCS will recommence its operation at the commencement of Law Term 2021 which has always been VWCCS' normal commencement date each year.

I wish to sincerely thank all VWCCS Volunteers for their outstanding work throughout the most extraordinary year. Special thanks must go to the District / Supreme Courts Referral Coordinators, Sue Cook, Stephanie McCoy, Denis O'Connell, Edna Koritschoner, Christine Tyler and the overall Manager, Dr Sheila Curson. Your spirit of generosity of time and commitment has been exemplary.

On behalf of VWCCS I wish to thank the Manager of the ODPP Witness Assistance Service, Ms LEEANNE KELLY for her presentation at VWCCS' June Quarterly Refresher / Training Day via Zoom. There were many comments and emails to VWCCS from its Volunteers expressing gratitude and thanks for her presentation. As one of VWCCS Volunteers said:

I have learned more in this presentation of LEEANNE'S than I have in any University lecture on the subject matter.

VWCCS gratefully acknowledges the ongoing financial support from the Scully Fund. Its recognition of the significance of VWCCS' voluntary work in the criminal courts is gratefully acknowledged by the agency.

VWCCS would also like to acknowledge and thank the NSW Attorney General, the Hon Mark Speakman SC, and his staff for the support and encouragement received by the agency.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the work undertaken by VWCCS Legal Officer, Mr Peter Thornton, who passed away on 6 September 2019. Peter was VWCCS' Legal Officer from 2006 and thereafter until his recent retirement. VWCCS would not be the organisation it is today without the encouragement, support and legal assistance given by Peter throughout the years.

Vale Peter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pieta Thornton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

PIETA THORNTON, OAM
VWCCS Inc President

2019/20 REPORT

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principal objectives of VWCCS are to provide the following:

- A unique, high standard and non-judgmental court support service for its clients: victims and witnesses of crime, their family members and close friends in both State and Commonwealth criminal matters.
- A unique and high standard court support service providing continuity by extending its service to cover clients whose matters begin in the Children's or Local Courts of New South Wales and which later may progress to a higher Court.
- A unique and high standard court support service which does not duplicate any other court support service operating in the New South Wales and Commonwealth criminal jurisdictions, but supplements such services when required.

ORGANISATION PROFILE

VWCCS PATRONS

Professor S Caroline Taylor AM

Professor S. Caroline Taylor AM is recognised as one of Australia's leading experts and consultants in the field of child and adult sexual violence and domestic violence and the criminal justice response to victim/survivors and social models of trauma and recovery.

Professor Gordian Fulde AM

MBBS, FRACS, FRCS (Ed), FRACS/RCP (A&E) Ed, FACEM
Prof Fulde was awarded the 2016 Senior Australian of the Year.

Professor Fulde was the Director of the Emergency Department at St Vincent's Hospital and Sydney Hospital and was the longest serving Emergency Department Director in a major hospital in Australia. He is actively involved in teaching and training students and staff in many facets of medicine and emergency medicine as well as consistently contributing and offering his time to many schools and organisations in the Community. He is a member of the curriculum committee for the Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales. He is a founding father of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) and has played an integral role in establishing the ACEM training course. He continues to examine for the College, as well as the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the University of New South Wales and the University of Notre Dame.

INCORPORATED COMMITTEE

VWCCS became incorporated in March 2008 and the current Committee is made up of the following members:

Pieta Thornton	President, Founder and Director of VWCCS.
Maggie Weiley	Vice President and Secretary
Leanne Hillman	Treasurer and General Manager
Sheila Curson	Committee Member and VWCCS Principal Coordinator Downing Centre
Chris Burgess	Committee Member
Denis O'Connell	Committee Member and VWCCS Parramatta Courts Coordinator
Joy Christian	Committee Member
Angela Boyd	Committee Member and Lawyer
Dr John V Basson	Committee Member and Consultant Psychiatrist (Forensic & General Adult Psychiatry) and VWCCS Consultant.

VWCCS' legal representative, Mr Peter Thornton, oversaw VWCCS' legal requirements.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE:

A Management Committee was established in 2010 to oversee and make decisions about the operational issues of VWCCS. The Committee comprises representatives of VWCCS' Incorporation Committee, Court Support Officer (CSO) Coordinators and Reception and Information Desk Coordinators from each of the locations in which VWCCS provides a service. Specific time limited working parties are established as required. Members of the Management Committee have taken on some specialist responsibilities:

Pieta Thornton	Executive Chairman – oversight of all Projects
Maggie Weiley	Special Projects and Publicity
Leanne Hillman	Funding, Training Coordinator
Sheila Curson	Human Resources
Denis O'Connell	Information Technology
Maria Pirrello	Psychologist

SERVICE LOCATIONS

VWCCS operates at the following locations:

- Parramatta Justice Precinct covering Local and District Courts Monday to Friday
- Downing Centre covering Local and District Courts Monday to Friday and the Supreme Court on request.
- Waverley Local Court Mondays and Fridays
- Newcastle Court covering Local and District Courts Monday to Friday

ROLE OF COURT SUPPORT OFFICERS

Court Support Officers (CSOs) provide information and support to victims or witnesses of crime, attending court to give evidence.

ROLE OF RECEPTION AND INFORMATION DESK VOLUNTEERS

There are Reception and Information Desk Volunteers based at the Downing Centre and its 2 locations at Parramatta. These volunteers provide an initial point of contact and referral for any member of the public (including victims and witnesses) entering the court buildings. In addition, these services also provide a general information function for all court attendees.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

During the 2019/20 Financial Year VWCCS provided Court Support to **1,496** victims/witnesses and Court Support Officers volunteered a total of **3,589** hours. The Reception and Information Volunteers at Parramatta,, Downing Centre and Newcastle assisted **23,181** court attendees and volunteered **2,427** hours. It should be noted that the COVID-19 Pandemic severely restricted service delivery from 1 March to 30 June 2020 when the Local Courts were closed and District Court matters were handled by referral only.

COURT SUPPORT OFFICER DATA

Location	Number of Clients	Number of Court Support Hours
Parramatta	403	943
Downing Centre	656	1,767
Waverley	90	166
Newcastle	347	713
Total	1,496	3,589

RECEPTION AND INFORMATION DESK DATA

Location	Number of people assisted	Reception and Information Desk Hours
Parramatta	10,022	762
Downing Centre	8,894	1,425
Newcastle	4,265	240
Total	23,181	2,427

TRAINING

INDUCTION AND TRAINING PROGRAM

Prior to commencing as a Court Support Officer all volunteers undertake:

- Three interviews – two prior to the induction and training program and the third after their observations and reflections assignment
- A comprehensive induction and training program over 7 days
- Minimum of 15 hours court observation followed by a written report of court observations including self-reflection
- Court Support Mentoring Program with a three months' probation period.

ONGOING TRAINING

- Volunteers are offered four days refresher / training per annum. Each Volunteer must attend no less than 2 of these training days.
- Volunteers can access formal debriefing as required

FINANCIAL REPORT

TREASURER'S REPORT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF VWCCS INC
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2020

This report is given pursuant to the provisions of the Associations Incorporation Act 2009. For the financial year ending 30 June 2020 the income of VWCCS Inc (VWCCS) was **\$1,372.00**.

Expenditure was an amount of **\$18,434.14** comprising costs incurred with Blue Knot Foundation for training, office supplies (stationery and printing), insurance, costs of telephone and internet use, and Centre for Volunteering Membership. This also includes asset purchases (computer equipment) to the value of **\$2,191.96**.

After taking into account a credit surplus of **\$49,199.36** as at 1 July 2019 the bank balance with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia at 30 June 2020 was an amount of **\$32,137.22**.

The outstanding liabilities of VWCCS as at 30 June 2020 were **NIL**.

There were no mortgages or charges or securities of any description affecting any part of the property of the Association as at 30 June 2020.

The assets of the Association as at 30 June 2020 comprise:

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| a) Credit with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia Neutral Bay | \$32,137.22 |
| b) Office furniture and computer purchased during 2019/20 | \$2,191.96 |

In accordance with the Act, the Treasurer will submit a receipt and expenditure accounts balance sheet for the previous year that accords with this report.

Dated: 5 November 2020



LEANNE HILLMAN
VWCCS Inc Treasurer

