

ANNUAL REPORT
2021
/22



VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF
CRIME COURT SUPPORT INC

2020/21 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is my first Annual Report, having taken up the role of Chairman of VWCCS' Incorporation Committee in December 2021 following the retirement of the Founder and former President of VWCCS, Pieta Thornton OAM.

I was honoured to take up this role following my retirement as Chief Magistrate of NSW, and very pleased that Pieta agreed to continue supporting VWCCS as an on-going Incorporation Committee Member.

Pieta led VWCCS from its establishment in 2006, initially as a very modest service at Bidura Children's Court. Under her leadership the service has become an integral part of support for victims and witnesses in the NSW court system. By the time of Pieta's retirement VWCCS had supported more than 23,000 victims and witnesses, and VWCCS' Reception and Information Desk Volunteers had assisted more than 250,000 Court attendees.

Pieta announced her retirement at the 15th Birthday celebrations of VWCCS hosted by Her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley, AC, QC, Governor of NSW at NSW Government House on 15 December 2021. Present at the Birthday celebrations were current and former VWCCS volunteers, sponsors and senior representatives from NSW Police Prosecutions.

VWCCS has received on-going support from successive NSW Governments, in particular from Attorneys-General commencing with the Hon John Hatzistergos, MLC (recently appointed Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)), through to the current Attorney General, the Hon Mark Speakman SC, MP. This support has included accommodation for VWCCS offices in all courts where VWCCS provides its service as well as training facilities at NSW Parliament House. Most recently the current Attorney General the Hon Mark Speakman SC, MP was the opening speaker at the VWCCS Induction and Training Program in 2021. Mr Speakman recently wrote to VWCCS expressing his appreciation for the work and service of its volunteers and wishing the organisation all the best for its future plans.

2021-22 has been another challenging year for the organisation, as it has for the entire world due to the Covid-19 outbreak. In June 2021 VWCCS suspended operations due to the closure of courts and lockdowns in the courts where VWCCS operates.

Fortunately, VWCCS was able to recommence limited court support from February 2022 and return to full service after Easter of 2022.

The volume of work has accelerated greatly in the last few months of 2021-22 and I am delighted to report that most of our volunteers have now returned to service and I acknowledge their loyalty and commitment to the organisation and our clients.

Training of a new cohort of Court Support Officers (CSOs) commenced in May 2021 but was significantly interrupted and delayed by the Covid shut downs. However, thanks to herculean efforts to reinvigorate the training, a Refresher Course was able to be held in March 2022. I am very grateful to Allens Lawyers who provided a venue and NSW Police Prosecutions who presented at the course. I would also like to acknowledge and thank VWCCS volunteers Carrol Miller, Denis O'Connell, Leanne Hillman and Irene Addison for their professionalism and management of this program. The new recruits have subsequently undertaken the work experience and mentoring phases of their training and commenced their new roles in August 2022. This will take the total number of VWCCS volunteers to 103.

VWCCS has also recruited and trained additional Roster Coordinators for the Sydney and Parramatta District Courts. Thank you to Sue Cook, Mary-Anne Sakkara, Maggie Weiley and Jill Paton for facilitating this important transition to a distinct function.

2021-22 has been a year of change and transition and I would also like to extend a huge thank you to Carrol Miller for her professionalism and interpersonal, managerial and administrative skills during her term as Executive Officer. Carrol not only assisted in the management of training for new CSOs but also has now completed her own CSO training and will be commencing in the Courts as a CSO very soon.

Lesley Craig, a long standing CSO and Roster Co-Manager of the Downing Centre Local Court along with her late husband John Craig, was invited by Pieta Thornton and VWCCS' Human Relations Manager Dr Sheila Curson, to take up the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) during the course of 2021-22. Lesley

retired from the position on June 17, 2022 to prioritise sudden family health issues, however VWCCS is looking forward to her being able to return as a CSO in the not too distant future. In her time as CEO Lesley collaborated and assisted in a revised management structure to enable VWCCS to respond to the requirements of an expanded and growing organisation.

Recruitment is underway for a new CEO and Leanne Hillman, formerly VWCCS General Manager and Treasurer, is acting Operations Manager until that recruitment process is completed. In addition to her administrative and financial responsibilities, Leanne has played a pivotal role in the organisation since 2009 through facilitating VWCCS' ability to apply for funding, and recruiting and training new volunteers, and I'm very pleased she has agreed to lead VWCCS during this transition period.

Other changes this year included the retirement of our former patrons Professor Gordian Fulde AO and Professor Caroline Taylor AM in March 2022. On behalf of the VWCCS' Incorporation Committee and all VWCCS Volunteers, I extend thanks to them for their faith in and allegiance to the work of VWCCS since 2014.

VWCCS was very pleased to announce in April 2022 that Her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley, AC, QC, Governor of NSW had accepted the position of patron for VWCCS.

Other retirements from VWCCS have included Denis O'Connell as Co-Manager of VWCCS Parramatta, a position he had held since its establishment. He was also a member of the VWCCS Operational Management Group and Incorporation Committee. Denis has left an outstanding legacy to the organisation as a positive role model for all subsequent CSOs with his depth of knowledge, professional standards and loyalty. I am delighted that Denis is continuing as a CSO.

The year has also seen the retirement of volunteers who have made a significant contribution to VWCCS with more than ten years of service. They include Barbara Blair, Liz Claridge, Jean Lording, Maria Pirrello, Pamela Oswald, Colleen Harrison and Trish Proctor. Those with between five and ten years service to VWCCS include the late John Craig, Patricia Lane, Maxene Page, Ute Geissler, and Ray Perez.

I would also like to acknowledge Simon MacKenzie for his IT support, technical know-how and training for existing and new volunteers. Simon is a great all-rounder and also manages the VWCCS web site.

Once again VWCCS is indebted to its Operational Management Group, which has steered the organisation through this unpredictable year. Sheila Curson remains on this Committee, continuing to make a significant contribution as the head of VWCCS Human Resources. Sheila has recently resigned from the VWCCS Incorporation Committee of which she was a foundation member. On behalf of VWCCS' Incorporation Committee I wish to thank Dr Curson for her years of sound, professional expertise which has and continues to greatly benefit VWCCS and its Operational Management Committee.

VWCCS has recently been approached by the Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) to extend its support model to victims and witnesses in their proceedings. This request recognises the reputational strength in the support of clients and the organisation looks forward to working with the HCCC to provide trained volunteer support officers.

The only certainty in the future for VWCCS is that there will be change post pandemic, and its internal strength needs to be capable of meeting various challenges. As such, VWCCS is looking forward to meeting those future challenges with a highly developed volunteer organisation, building on its professional status with not only its present volunteers but new volunteers, new CEO and a more significant management structure.

Finally, on behalf of VWCCS' Incorporation Committee I would like to gratefully acknowledge the ongoing financial support from the Scully Fund that enables VWCCS to support its operations, train volunteers and provided the much needed support to those who find themselves in the unenviable position as victims and witnesses of crime.



Graeme Henson AM
VWCCS Inc President

14 September 2022

2020/21 REPORT

ORGANISATION PROFILE

CURRENT VWCCS PATRON

Her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley, AC, QC, Governor of NSW from April 2022

PREVIOUS VWCCS PATRONS

Professor S Caroline Taylor AM

Professor Gordian Fulde AO

INCORPORATION COMMITTEE

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

Graeme Henson AM	President and Chair
Maggie Weiley	Vice President and Joint Secretary
David Whitfield	Treasurer and Joint Secretary
Pieta Thornton OAM	Committee Member
Leanne Hillman	Committee Member & Operations Manager
Dr John V Basson	Committee Member and VWCCS Consultant (Psychiatry - Forensic & General Adult)
Angela Boyd	Committee Member and Legal Consultant
Denis O'Connell	Committee Member (retired June 2022)
Sheila Curson	Committee Member and Manager Human Resources (retired June 2022)

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, Local Managers and 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 are:

Carol Miller	Chair and Executive Officer August 2021 - April 2022
Lesley Craig	Chair and CEO until 17 June
Leanne Hillman	Chair and Operations Manager from 17 June and Manager, Training and Development and Incorporated Committee Representative
Maggie Weiley	Secretary, Special Projects Manager and Incorporation Committee Representative
Sheila Curson	Human Resources Manager
Irene Addison	Manager Information Desk Volunteers, Downing Centre
Denis O'Connell	Manager, Parramatta (retired February 2022)
Jill Paton	Parramatta Court Coordinator
Christine Tyler	Manager, Newcastle

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.

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
- Newcastle Courts 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 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.

The service in Newcastle did not operate during 21/22 financial year.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

During the 2021/22 Financial Year the service was closed from June 2021 to February 2022 due to Covid-19. From February 2022, VWCCS commenced a limited service and from April 2022 a full service has been offered. However both the Courts and VWCCS continue to be affected by disruptions caused by Covid - 19.

VWCCS provided Court Support to 365 victims/ witnesses and Court Support Officers volunteered a total of 1,161 hours between February and June 2022. The Reception and Information Volunteers at Parramatta and Downing Centre assisted 2,432 court attendees and volunteered 628 hours between February and June 2022.

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 including face to face over 5 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
- An Induction and Training Program (I&TP) for new Volunteers commenced in April 2021 but was severely interrupted by Court shutdowns caused by Covid. Stage Five of the I&TP – Mentoring and Supervised Court Support was able to commence in April 2022.

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.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The accompanying Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2022 and Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2022 are in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act 2009.

INCOME

During the year, VWCCS received three Volunteer Grants from the Australian Government totalling \$4,000.00 to support the efforts of our volunteers. The grants were used to purchase computer equipment for volunteers working in the Downing Centre, Parramatta and Newcastle Courts.

No donations were received during the year.

Total income for the year was \$4,023.00.

EXPENDITURE

One of our largest expense items was \$3,236.08 for the running of the Induction and Training Programme which commenced in May 2021. The programme continued during the 2021/2022 financial year.

Other significant expenses were internet and telephone \$3,756.10 and public liability and volunteer insurances totalling \$1,155.86.

Total expenditure and depreciation for the year was \$10,806.15.

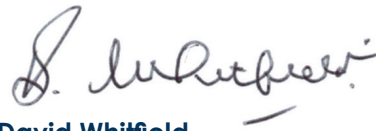
BALANCE SHEET

The Trust Funds at the end of the year totalled \$52,549.31, compared to the previous financial year of \$59,332.46. The decrease of \$6,783.15 represents the Net Deficit for the year. In the previous year there was a Net Surplus of \$24,506.28.

The assets are made up of cash at bank \$43,892.25, a GST refund due from the Australian Taxation Office of \$1,144.00 and depreciable office furniture and computers of \$7,513.06. During the year VWCCS purchased new computers for \$7,229.06. The Volunteer Grants totalling \$4,000.00 received from the Australian Government were used to purchase computer equipment.

There were no liabilities as at 30 June 2022.

There were no mortgages, charges and other securities affecting any property owned by VWCCS as at 30 June 2022.



David Whitfield

Treasurer
VWCCS Incorporated

9 August 2022

VWCCS INCORPORATED
CHARITY ABN 34 783 564 316

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

		2022	2021
	Notes	\$	\$
Revenue			
Admission and Annual Membership Fees		23.00	0.00
Donations - The Scully Fund		0.00	37,421.00
Donations - Others		0.00	1,890.00
Volunteer Grants - Australian Government	2	4,000.00	0.00
Total Revenue		4,023.00	39,311.00
Less Expenses			
Centre for Volunteering Membership		90.91	136.36
Depreciation	1	1,013.00	1,744.96
Induction and Training Program		3,236.08	8,305.82
Insurance - Public Liability and Volunteer		1,155.86	1,110.12
Internet and Telephone		3,756.10	2,515.14
Miscellaneous Expenses		245.18	0.00
Office Supplies		1,309.02	552.14
Parking		0.00	33.63
Staff Training		0.00	406.55
Total Expenses		10,806.15	14,804.72
Net Deficit (Surplus in 2021) for the year		6,783.15	-24,506.28

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash at bank	43,892.25	56,954.46
Receivables - ATO GST Refund	1,144.00	1,081.00
Total Current Assets	45,036.25	58,035.46
Non-Current Assets		
Office Furniture and Computers	10,271.02	3,041.96
Less Accumulated Depreciation	2,757.96	1,744.96
Total Non-Current Assets	7,513.06	1,297.00
Total Assets	52,549.31	59,332.46
Trust Funds		
Opening Surplus as at 1 July 2021	59,332.46	34,826.18
Net Deficit (Surplus in 2021) for the year	-6,783.15	24,506.28
Total Trust Funds	52,549.31	59,332.46

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- During the year new computers totaling \$7,229.06 were purchased for use by volunteers. Assets are depreciated over three years.
- Volunteer Grants totaling \$4,000.00 were received from the Australian Government during the year, the grants were used to purchase new computers for use by volunteers. The new computers are included in Office Furniture and Computers.

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