

ANNUAL REPORT

2023  
/24



VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF  
CRIME COURT SUPPORT INC

# 2023/24 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

**I am pleased to report that the 2023-24 financial year was another highly successful year for VWCCS. While many volunteer organisations experienced a period of high attrition post COVID-19, VWCCS maintained a strong volunteer retention rate. This continuity of highly trained volunteers has ensured on-going, much-needed care and support of prosecution victims and witnesses at the Downing Centre, Parramatta and Newcastle Local and District Courts.**

As well as continued commitment by volunteers, VWCCS benefited from strong leadership and on-going financial support from the Scully Fund. Since 2014, the Scully Fund has enabled VWCCS to maintain its high standards through Induction and Training Programmes for volunteers. This year, the Scully Fund also generously contributed funding for the first VWCCS General Manager employee. This support recognised the important role of VWCCS in the criminal justice system and the challenges of relying on volunteer leaders to manage a busy and expanding range of court support services.

Ms Kiki Paul led the organisation for the first six months of 2024. She worked energetically to build VWCCS' networks with other organisations and steered the development of a new IT system. This new system will improve efficiency, and importantly, enhance security of the sensitive information VWCCS deals with. I would like to thank Kiki for her leadership during her tenure.

VWCCS was saddened by the death of Dr. Sheila Curson on September 24, 2023. Sheila was a foundation member of VWCCS and continued her outstanding contribution until the time of her sudden death. Building on her extensive experience as a Court Support Officer, Sheila was an extremely active participant in the VWCCS Operational Management Committee as the Head of Human Resources. All VWCCS volunteers acknowledge Sheila's unwavering support, professionalism and most of all her enduring friendship and wise guidance.

At the end of 2023, VWCCS was delighted when Leanne Hillman was announced as NSW Volunteer of the Year by the Centre for Volunteering. Leanne joined

VWCCS as a Court Support Officer in 2009. Since that time, she has become Operations Manager, a key member of the Operations Management Group, and a member of the Board. Her professional contribution crosses into training, fund raising, regulatory, governance, and administrative support. This award is a worthy acknowledgement for her outstanding contribution as a highly valued fellow volunteer by all at VWCCS.

All members of the Board deserve my thanks for their on-going support during the year. David Whitfield has been a Board member of VWCCS since 2019 and has played a pivotal role since that time as Treasurer and Joint Secretary. David's outstanding management of financial and governance matters of VWCCS is highly appreciated and I personally thank him for his professionalism and commitment.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution made by VWCCS Legal Officer Phil Crowley, whose legal experience and professional expertise has been invaluable on the Board in which he serves.

Additionally, our recruitment sub-committee David Whitfield, Clive Addison and Lesley Craig has undertaken extensive work in the recruitment of the VWCCS General Manager. Clive has also, very capably, taken the lead in the introduction of the new IT system.

I would like to extend a special welcome to Julie Garrard, who has been appointed as Counsellor for VWCCS volunteers. Julie brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience to provide the on-going support Court volunteers need. VWCCS is particularly concerned that volunteers are given the support to manage their emotional well-being, particularly in regard to issues of vicarious trauma.

The year has seen the retirement of volunteers Barbara Peters, Downing Centre and Jennifer Fraser, Parramatta who each contributed more than a decade of service, together with Lyn Adam an inaugural volunteer in Newcastle since its establishment in 2018. VWCCS acknowledges their significant contribution to the support of victims and witnesses.

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I would like to make special mention of the volunteers who manage referrals for District Court matters: Mary-Anne Sakkara, Tony Young, Marilou Camu (2023) and Carey Gyde (2024) for the Downing Centre; Denis O'Connell and Edna Koritschoner for Parramatta; and Christine Tyler for Newcastle. This is a challenging role, dealing with the complexity of scheduling in the District Courts and liaising with referral agencies including the Witness Assistance Service and the Health Care Complaints Commission.

Irene Addison, Manager Reception and Information Desk at the Downing Centre deserves on-going recognition for her professionalism and willingness to take on a range of responsibilities beyond her stated role. This has included invaluable support to the Operations Manager and Board Members in all administrative tasks associated with complying with government regulatory requirements and the collection of data.

I send my sincere thanks to the NSW Attorney General, the Hon Michael Daley, MP for his continued support in providing a room at Parliament House for VWCCS' quarterly training days.

I would like to extend my thanks to Allens law firm for their provision of training rooms and their generous hosting of the end of year training function for VWCCS volunteers.

A special thanks to Western Suburbs (Newcastle) Leagues Club, which has until their recent renovations, provided free parking to VWCCS Newcastle volunteers since their inception in 2018. Travel to Newcastle Courthouse remains notoriously difficult as it is hampered by the lack of affordable parking and a network of convenient public transport.

Finally, I would specifically like to thank members of the Management Committee without whom VWCCS could not operate:

**Leanne Hillman** (Operations Manager)

**Maggie Weiley** (Vice President)

**Tina Giannetto** (Local and District Court Manager – Downing Centre)

**Piers Codling** (Local Court Manager – Downing Centre)

**Jen Rollins** (District Court and HCCC Manager – Downing Centre)

**Lesley Craig** (Manager Human Resources – Downing Centre)

**Irene Addison** (Reception and Information Manager – Downing Centre)

**Jill Paton** (Manager – Parramatta)

**Rosie Crossing** (Coordinator – Parramatta)

**Christine Tyler** (Manager – Newcastle)

**Pat Harper** (Coordinator – Newcastle)

**Mary-Anne Sakkara** (District Court Referral Coordination Manager)

The Management Committee has commenced work on a number of new initiatives during the year including a Privacy Policy and Diversity Strategy (led by Lesley Craig) and a Reconciliation Action Plan (led by Mary-Anne Sakkara).

I also want to thank all VWCCS volunteers for their loyalty and professionalism and their much-valued continued contribution for the benefit of victims and witnesses. The spirit, dedication, generosity and camaraderie have, and continue to be VWCCS' greatest strengths. Additional Court Support Officers will be recruited and trained in the next financial year and I look forward to continuing to work with all existing and new VWCCS volunteers in 2024-25.



**Graeme Henson AM**  
VWCCS Inc President

30 September 2024

# 2023/24 REPORT

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principal objectives of VWCCS are to provide a unique, high standard and non-judgmental service for its clients: victims and witnesses of crime, their family members and close friends, in State and Commonwealth criminal matters, across Children's, Local, District and Supreme Court matters, and without duplicating any other Court support service operating in New South Wales and Commonwealth criminal jurisdictions, but supplementing such services when required.

## ORGANISATION PROFILE

### VWCCS PATRON

Her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley, AC, QC, Governor of NSW.

### INCORPORATED COMMITTEE

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

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Graeme Henson AM</b> | Chair/President  |
| <b>Maggie Weiley</b>    | Vice President and Joint Secretary   |
| <b>David Whitfield</b>  | Treasurer and Joint Secretary  |
| <b>Leanne Hillman</b>   | Committee Member   |
| <b>Dr John V Basson</b> | Committee Member and Consultant Psychiatrist (Forensic & General Adult Psychiatry) and VWCCS Consultant. |
| <b>Philip Crowley</b>   | Committee Member and Legal Consultant  |
| <b>Clive Addison</b>    | Committee Member   |
| <b>Andrew Sargant</b>   | Committee member   |

### 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:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Leanne Hillman</b> | Chair and Operations Manager, Training and Development Manager and Incorporation Committee Representative |
| <b>Maggie Weiley</b>  | Special Projects Manager District Court Referral  |
| <b>Lesley Craig</b>   | Human Resources Manager   |
| <b>Tina Giannetto</b> | Coordinator, District and Local Courts, Downing Centre  |
| <b>Piers Codling</b>  | Coordinator, Local Courts, Downing Centre   |
| <b>Jen Rollins</b>    | Coordinator, District Court and HCCC, Downing Centre  |

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|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Mary-Anne Sakkara</b> | Referral Manager, District Court, Downing Centre        |
| <b>Irene Addison</b>     | Manager, Reception and Information Desk, Downing Centre |
| <b>Jill Paton</b>        | Manager, Parramatta                                     |
| <b>Rosie Crossing</b>    | Coordinator, Parramatta                                 |
| <b>Christine Tyler</b>   | Manager, Newcastle                                      |
| <b>Pat Harper</b>        | Coordinator, Newcastle                                  |

## SERVICE LOCATIONS

VWCCS operates at the following locations:

Parramatta Justice Precinct covering Local and District Monday to Friday, Childrens' Court on request.

Downing Centre covering Local and District Courts Monday to Friday and the Supreme Court and Health Care Complaint Commission (HCCC) on request.

Newcastle 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, its two locations at Parramatta and at Newcastle. 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

VWCCS provided Court Support to **1,731** victims/witnesses and Court Support Officers volunteered a total of **4,802** hours for the financial year. Reception and Information Volunteers assisted **13,730** court attendees and volunteered **1,718** hours during this period.

## 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 face to face Induction and Training program 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 month probation period.

An Induction and Training Program for new Volunteers was commenced in April 2021 but was severely interrupted by Court shutdowns caused by Covid. The final stage of Mentoring and Supervised Court Support was completed in early 2023 with 29 new CSOs joining the Courts.

### ONGOING TRAINING

- Volunteers are offered four days refresher / training per annum. Each Volunteer must attend no less than two 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 2024 and Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2024 are prepared in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act 2009.

## INCOME

Total income this year was **\$56,370** compared to **\$21** in the previous year. Grant income brought to account for the first time this year totalled **\$52,039** which equalled the related outflows. Interest received was **\$3,815** and a donation of **\$500** was received.

## EXPENDITURE

Expenditure for the year totalled **\$62,324**, compared to **\$9,111** in the previous year. The largest expense items were **\$47,813** for salaries, superannuation and employment expenses of **\$4,226**. Depreciation amounted to **\$3,252**.


## BALANCE SHEET

Total Equity at the end of the year totalled **\$37,505**, compared to the previous financial year of **\$43,459**. The decrease of **\$5,954** represents the Net Deficit for the year. In the previous year there was a Net Deficit of **\$9,090**.

The assets are made up of cash at bank **\$157,257** and depreciated computers of **\$3,552**.

Liabilities are made up of payables **\$5,343** and deferred grant income of **\$117,961**. Grant income is deferred until the related outflows occur. There were no liabilities as at 30 June 2023.

There were no mortgages, charges and other securities affecting any property owned by VWCCS Incorporated as at 30 June 2024.



**David Whitfield**  
Treasurer  
VWCCS Incorporated.

16 July 2024

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

|   | Notes | 2024<br>\$     | 2023<br>\$     |
|---|-------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Revenue</b>  |       |                |                |
| Admission and Annual Membership Fees                        |       | 16             | 21             |
| Grant Income  |       | 52,039         | –              |
| Donations   |       | 500            | –              |
| Interest Received   |       | 3,815          | –              |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>  |       | <b>56,370</b>  | <b>21</b>      |
| <b>Less Expenses</b>  |       |                |                |
| Accommodation   |       | 581            | 614            |
| Depreciation  | 1     | 3,252          | 3,044          |
| Employment Expenses   |       | 4,226          | –              |
| Induction and Training Program                              |       | 491            | 61             |
| Insurance – Public Liability, Volunteer and Assn. Liability |       | 1,969          | 1,196          |
| Internet and Telephone                                      |       | 1,869          | 2,756          |
| Miscellaneous Expenses                                      |       | –              | 62             |
| Office Supplies   |       | 1,535          | 1,287          |
| Salaries and Superannuation                                 |       | 47,813         | –              |
| Subscriptions and Memberships                               |       | 588            | 91             |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                                       |       | <b>62,324</b>  | <b>9,111</b>   |
| <b>Net Deficit for the year</b>                             |       | <b>(5,954)</b> | <b>(9,090)</b> |

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

|                                   | Notes | 2024<br>\$     | 2023<br>\$    |
|-----------------------------------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Current Assets</b>             |       |                |               |
| Cash at bank                      |       | 157,257        | 36,484        |
| Receivables                       |       | –              | 391           |
| <b>Total Current Assets</b>       |       | <b>157,257</b> | <b>36,875</b> |
| <b>Non-Current Assets</b>         |       |                |               |
| Computers                         | 1     | 10,414         | 12,386        |
| Less Accumulated Depreciation     |       | 6,862          | 5,802         |
| <b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>   |       | <b>3,552</b>   | <b>6,584</b>  |
| <b>Total Assets</b>               |       | <b>160,809</b> | <b>43,459</b> |
| <b>Less Current Liabilities</b>   |       |                |               |
| Payables                          |       | 5,343          | –             |
| Deferred Grant Income             | 2     | 117,961        | –             |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b>          |       | <b>123,304</b> | <b>–</b>      |
| <b>Net Assets</b>                 |       | <b>37,505</b>  | <b>43,459</b> |
| <b>Equity</b>                     |       |                |               |
| Opening Surplus as at 1 July 2023 |       | 43,459         | 52,549        |
| Net Deficit for the year          |       | (5,954)        | (9,090)       |
| <b>Total Equity</b>               |       | <b>37,505</b>  | <b>43,459</b> |

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- 1.Computers are depreciated over three years.
- 2.Grant Income is deferred until the related outflows occur.
- 3.There were no reportable related party transactions during the period.

Artwork design generously  
prepared by Peta Nugent