

Disability Discrimination Legal Service

ABN 36 079 687 722

Annual Report

2022/2023

Contents

Statement of Purpose	3
Vision, Mission and Values	4
Service Profile	5
Committee of Management	7
Staff	10
Chairperson's Report	11
CEO's Report	12
Collaboration/Partnerships	13
Casework Program Report	14
Community Legal Education Program Report	20
Policy and Law Reform Report	21
Volunteer and Student Program Report	22
Auditor's Report/Financial Statements	23

Statement of Purpose

1. To promote the objectives of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) ('the Acts') and other relevant domestic and international human rights instruments (human rights legislation) in relation to disability. These objectives include:
 - the elimination of discrimination on the basis of disability;
 - that people with disabilities have a right to equal treatment before the law; and
 - to promote community understanding that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.
2. to provide leadership in State and Federal arenas for legal and policy reform in areas where there continues to be a systemic failure that leads to discrimination on the grounds of disability or impairment.
3. To provide free and easily accessible legal advice, referral and casework services to people with disabilities and to people/organisations who assist or work with people with disabilities in relation to the Acts.
4. To prioritise cases that will further develop disability discrimination law.
5. To initiate and participate in the development of education outreach and information distribution to promote further awareness of the Acts and human rights legislation.
6. To achieve law reform outcomes that reduce disability discrimination by initiating and participating in reviews of Federal, State and international human rights legislation specifically relevant to the needs of people with disabilities.

Vision

There are no barriers to full inclusion of people with disabilities.

Mission

To provide a high quality, professional, accountable and timely legal service to people with disabilities in the area of disability discrimination. To provide legal education and lead legislative and policy reforms. To promote opportunities for people with disabilities to achieve their life goals, unhindered by prejudice, disability discrimination or injustice.

Values

People with disabilities have the right to:

- the same opportunities as others;
- be treated with respect as clients and members of the community; and
- full access to the judicial system in order to pursue their human rights at law.



Service Profile

The Disability Discrimination Legal Service Inc. (DDLS) is a state-wide Community Legal Centre dedicated to the elimination of discrimination based on disability.

DDLS is funded by the Federal and the State Attorneys-General, and administered by Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) under the Community Legal Centre (CLC) Funding Program. We thank them for their ongoing assistance and support. Government funding for the financial year was as follows:

Commonwealth \$453,846

State \$60,732

DDLS undertakes casework for people with disabilities under the *Disability Discrimination Act (Cth 1992)* (“DDA”), and the *Equal Opportunity Act (Vic 2010)* (“EOA”). This involves providing advice and on-going assistance to people with cases before the Australian Human Rights Commission (“AHRC”), the Federal Court of Australia, the Federal Circuit & Family Court of Australia, the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission (“VEOHRC”) and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (“VCAT”) under the Human Rights Division. In addition, the Service supports people who decide to conduct their own cases and assists disability advocates to manage cases on behalf of their clients.

Since January 2023, DDLS has commenced a workplace sexual harassment and discrimination service for women with disabilities.

DDLS recognises the importance of not only direct casework assistance, but also the need to increase awareness of the rights and responsibilities under disability discrimination laws through strategic community legal education (“CLE”) projects. Increasingly, these projects engage people with disabilities in the delivery of services or developing CLE resources and publications produced in hard copy or available on the internet.

DDLS also works toward legislative and policy reforms for issues pertaining to disability discrimination in the private and public sectors by conducting activities such as research, projects, lobbying and submission writing. Through challenging and changing discriminatory laws and procedures, the DDLS can assist many more people with disabilities than would otherwise be possible.

The DDLS is open five days per week, 9.00am to 5.00pm with one evening clinic per week. Legal advice is provided by telephone or face-to-face appointment where necessary. Community legal education is increasingly targeted and planned in advance, and inquiries can be made directly to the Service. Information about the DDLS, the relevant law and useful links can be accessed through the DDLS Internet site located at www.ddls.org.au.

However, websites can never be a substitute for informed advocacy. Rather, websites provide an alternative avenue for information access for people with disabilities who have the skills and resources to enable access to relevant technologies.

The challenge for the DDLS has always been to provide targeted strategies to assist as many people as possible given the very limited resources. The criteria for casework assistance, therefore, are primarily based on public interest principles. The other consideration is, of course, whether or not the client can find appropriate legal advice and representation elsewhere, and their capacity to meet any associated costs. Information and community legal education are provided free to people with a disability. DDLS providers, businesses and other organisations with the capacity to meet the associated costs of providing these services are duly charged for them. As an ATO registered Donation and Gift Recipient, the DDLS can only charge a set amount determined as the 'cost price' for these services but can, of course, accept donations.

The DDLS consists of a community based management committee which undertakes management of strategic decision-making, finances, policy direction and evaluation of service delivery. The committee comprises members from interested organisations that are elected from the membership annually. It meets every two months with subcommittees meeting in between, and otherwise as required. People with disabilities are strongly encouraged to be involved.

Membership of the organisation is free and open to all who share the philosophy of the DDLS. Interested people are encouraged to contact the DDLS to find out about how to become a member. Volunteers are a vital part of the work of the DDLS and this will continue to be a focus for the continued provision of services. Various roles within the organisation provide an array of opportunities for people who wish to contribute their time and energy to the important work the DDLS does.

Please contact the DDLS for details of how to become a DDLS Volunteer.

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Level 2
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Melbourne VIC 3000

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Country Callers: 1 300 882 872
Email: info@ddls.org.au
Web: www.ddls.org.au



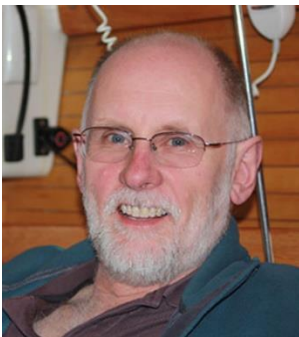
Committee of Management

The Committee of Management is responsible for the DDLS' strategic direction and the development of organisational policies, procedures and practices in collaboration with staff and management. Members for the financial year were as follows:

Chairperson:	Dr Liddy Nevile
Vice Chairperson:	Mr Marius Smith
Treasurer:	Ms Winnie Gu / Ms Resmin Popowski
Members:	Mr Wayne Kiven
Dr Elizabeth Knight	Dr Claire Spivakovsky
Mr Geoffrey Waite	Ms Resmin Popowski
Mr Peter Batchelor	
Secretary:	Ms Julie Phillips



Andrew Arch has been working in the field of digital accessibility for over 20 years and brings this experience and expertise to the DDLS. During this time, he helped establish and grow the digital access team at Vision Australia, worked for the W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative in Europe and spent 7 years as the senior accessibility expert in the Australian Government. At Intopia since 2017, he provides strategic consulting support to private, not-for-profit and government sector organisations. Andrew also chairs the ICT Accessibility committee at Standards Australia and participates in the W3C Accessibility Education and Outreach Working Group.



Peter Batchelor has worked on Internet-related projects since the mid-1990s. He worked as a primary and secondary teacher before running his own business. He then worked at RMIT, where he developed an interest in Web Accessibility. He was involved in the development of OZeWAI, the Australian Web Accessibility Initiative that runs an annual accessibility conference, and presented at several of these conferences. Since 2000 Peter has been running a web consultancy business aimed primarily at the education sector.



Winnie Gu is an experienced risk and governance professional who has worked in large organisations in both public and private sectors. Most recently Winnie was Group Risk Manager in Telstra responsible for implementing and maturing the Enterprise risk management framework. She has led and delivered risk advisory, compliance, assurance and business improvement projects for large and complex organisations in Australia and overseas. Winnie has also been actively driving social and community initiatives. She was a member of YIPAA Advisory Committee and most recently a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Council in Telstra and a Telstra Digital Ambassador promoting Code Clubs in schools. Winnie is also a member of the Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand.



Wayne Kiven is a former lawyer who in addition to private practice as a barrister and solicitor, worked at other organisations with a community focus including the Citizens Advice Bureau and Legal Aid. Wayne acquired a disability 10 years ago and has been a member of the Mornington Peninsula Disability Consultative Committee Scooter Committee, and peer support volunteer at Limbs 4 Life, an organisation that provides information and support to amputees.



Dr Elizabeth Knight is a career counsellor and Research Fellow at the Centre for International Research on Education Systems at Victoria University. She has worked in disability support for over 20 years. She has worked for over 20 years in supporting students with disabilities during transition to higher education and has researched the history of support for students with disabilities. She is very interested in human rights, access to assistive technology and provision of information in appropriate and useable formats.



Dr Liddy Neville is an accessibility expert. Liddy's particular interests in recent years have been the accessibility to all of digital resources and the use of metadata. She has worked as an author and editor for accessibility and accessibility metadata specifications with W3C, the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, the European Committee for Standardization and the IMS Global Learning Project. Her lifelong interest has been in new technologies and how they can be used to serve human purposes. Liddy also works with ISO/IEC JTC1 on international standards for accessibility.



Marius Smith is the CEO of VACRO, a non-profit organisation working with people in contact with the criminal justice system and their families. Prior to joining VACRO, Marius was the Manager of the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, based at Monash University. He has also worked in commercial law and on development aid projects in the Philippines and Africa. He has a BA, LLB and LLM from Monash University.



Dr Claire Spivakovsky is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Melbourne. Claire's research and advocacy focuses on challenging the ongoing confinement and control of people with disability in society. Claire has previously worked in the community and government sectors, developing a range of social and criminal justice projects which advocated for the rights and needs of marginalised populations.



Julie Phillips is the CEO of DDLS. She has worked in the disability sector for most of her working life, in direct advocacy, senior management, and Board positions.

Resmin Popowski



Resmin Popowski has spent most of her career to date in finance management. For over a decade in the Telco/Technology industry, Resmin has managed capital budgets for large IT software development programs of work. Her corporate experience also extends to managing the risk and compliance governance framework of a health software subsidiary, where she further developed her interest in privacy and cyber security management and compliance controls.

Resmin has a strong sense of service to her community, regularly supports community outreach activities through her family in the Philippines, and is keen to be even more active in serving her local communities in Victoria and the Mornington Peninsula.

Outside of her budget management and community service passions, Resmin also loves to renovate and travel.



Geoffrey Waite has been a Psychologist in private practice for 25 years and was the Clinical Psychologist at the Colac Hospital. He was recently he was elected a Fellow of the Australian Society of Clinical Hypnotherapists and to the National Board of Directors of the Australian Psychological Society. In his retirement he has been a Regional Director of a Division of the Emergency Services for the Australian Red Cross, and is a member of the committee of the Combined Refugee Agency Group. He is also active in various community groups.

Staff Members

CEO

Julie Phillips

Principal Solicitor

Placido Belardo

Solicitor & Community Legal
Education Coordinator

Kerry O'Hagan

Solicitor

Hannah Gostelow

Administrative Officer/Volunteer
Coordinator

Anna Leyden

Finance Officer

Darrell Harding

Chairperson's Report

I would like to thank my fellow Management Committee Members, the CEO, and our wonderful staff and volunteers for all the work they have done throughout the year. We finish another interesting year, where our staff continue to do what they do best, assisting people with disabilities facing discrimination in their everyday lives, but we are left wondering about the worth placed on people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups in Victoria.

We have seen our funding consistently reduced in comparison to the increase in our costs, which is distressing given the vital role DDLS plays in the lives of Victorians with disabilities and their quest for fair and equal treatment. DDLS very much appreciated 'Covid funding', which has ceased, and now we find ourselves having to fund raise to keep our core staffing, including only approximately 1.6 EFT solicitors who do an amazing job in their time.

It was noted In the Productivity Commission's review of the *Disability Discrimination Act* that:

Many inquiry participants noted inadequate levels of Government funding for legal assistance and HREOC as particular concerns limiting the effectiveness of the DDA.

Several inquiry participants commented on continuing perceived underfunding and understaffing of the DDLS.

Looking back at DDLS' annual reports indicates the Productivity Commission Report, insofar as it related to ensuring appropriate levels of legal assistance through staffing of anti-discrimination community legal centres, had no impact on DDLS funding. Sadly, this can be seen as a reflection on the value of people with disabilities.

This of course, should not reflect on the value of anti-discrimination community legal centres. It is their clients who suffer most when they cannot get the assistance they need to fight discrimination. In the end, everyone suffers.

Currently there is a review of the National Legal Assistance Partnerships which is a mechanism by which government fund legal assistance schemes. Let's hope there is a positive response to the sector submissions, leading to improved services for our clients.

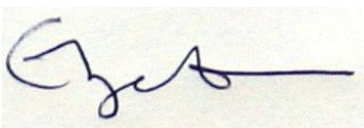
I would like to thank those who have served on our Committee and stepped aside this year:

- Winnie Gu, has been a wonderful treasurer and helped our new treasurer ease into the role. On Committees like ours, managing finance requires exceptional diligence and we have enjoyed that. Thank you, Winnie.
- Dr Lizzie Knight has been a very sharp and welcome member of our Committee and we will miss her participation but always welcome her advice. Thank you, Lizzie.

And

- Geoffrey Waite, another member of our Committee who has made all our work possible. Thank you, Geoffrey.

Above all, of course, I would like to thank our CEO, Julie Phillips. We decided Julie is really a CEO rather than a Manager because we depend upon her in so many ways to keep the show on the road. This has happened despite set-backs in recent years that have been outside our control but challenging, especially for people who act as volunteers for the DDLS. Julie, an incredible thank you for all you do!



Dr Liddy Nevile, Chairperson

CEO's Report

DDLS sees the end of another financial year with our staff continuing to make a positive difference to the lives of people with disabilities. I thank our hard-working and compassionate staff, volunteers and Management Committee for contributing to this outcome.

2023 saw the finalisation of the Disability Royal Commission into Violence Abuse Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disabilities, which was of immense interest to our organisation given the pain and suffering exacted on people with disabilities who have been discriminated against. The effects of discrimination can affect someone for the rest of their lives, shaking their faith in communities, schools and employers. We are still going through the over 200 recommendations in the Disability Royal Commission Report, but are gratified to see many of our recommendations in relation to reform of the *Disability Discrimination Act* accepted.

There are no signs that discrimination against people with disabilities is lessening in any way. It was interesting to see the media coverage this year of the sexual, physical and psychological abuse of hundreds of students in Victorian schools, and the government response, which was fairly proactive, taking into account their responsibility. Those of us who work in the sector can compare this to the government response to the abuse of students with disabilities in Victorian schools, where those students have to fight hard for any redress.

It is in these situations that one can see systemic discrimination, and the barriers for people with disabilities whose disabilities prevent them from relying on speech. For those people with disabilities, it is even more important that a proactive, positive climate exists that leads to trust in high quality and respectful support.

A large part of what goes in to embedding a proactive and positive environment for people with disabilities, is inclusion. People without disabilities need to be educated, work and live alongside people with disabilities, in order that the community feels as one. The continued building of segregated schools in Victoria sets young people with disabilities on a path to exclusion, and is in breach of our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Victoria has a long way to go, therefore, before it sees people with disabilities and people without disabilities regarding each other as fellow community members rather than "others".

January 2023 saw the beginning of our new service providing assistance to women with disabilities who have experienced sexual harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace. This is a new area for DDLS and we have appreciated being part of a network of community legal centres who also received funding for sexual harassment in the workplace. We look forward to being of service to women with disabilities and are keen to provide services and legal education for any interested parties.

Julie Phillips
CEO

Collaborations/Partnerships

DDLS continues to have representation on the Governance Group of Disability Advocacy Resources Unit, the Board of Disability Advocacy Victoria, Speech Pathology Australia's Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, and providing advice to the Australia Communications Consumer Action Network.

We represent Disability Advocacy Victoria on the DARU Governance Group alongside Leadership Victoria.

DDLS is an active member of Victorian Council of Social Services, continuing to work on a variety of campaigns, policy and legislation issues that affect people with disabilities.

We are also involved in state and federal networks for workplace sexual harassment legal services.

We continued to work closely with the Disability Resource Centre on a discrimination complaint regarding Melbourne's tram system.

We would like to thank the Australian Government Solicitor for their secondees which have made a great deal of difference to our work.



Casework Program Report

Post Covid Casework Mandate

Many would say that the phrase “*post covid*” is a misnomer because whilst the dramatic impositions of the pandemic are practically relegated to reminisce, fondly or sadly, Covid 19 and its numerous variants are in fact pretty much around and the medico-scientific community is not complacent and remains quite vigilant .

DDLS continues to receive (albeit rarely) Covid related health directive inquiries and has at least one active case that arose from the mask requirement. The casework turn over of 2022-2023 however received a substantial boost, and added advancing cases on an additional front in our crusade on behalf of people with disabilities. This took the form of legal advocacy for women with disabilities who experience disadvantage in the workplace, including discrimination and sexual harassment. It is anticipated that DDLS shall engage in such casework for at least the next three years.

Consequently, since January 2023, DDLS lawyers commenced scaffolding cases under the Fair Work Act 1989, when such a cause of action may provide a more expeditious complaint resolution process, or afford a remedy superior to the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* or the Federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Whilst DDLS continues its traditional casework, the sexual harassment and discrimination project is a much welcomed challenge, and is a long overdue recognition of the sad fact that women with disabilities have been vulnerable targets of discrimination and harassment in the workplace. The DDLS project will significantly augment their access to justice.

Casework Data

Between 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, DDLS:

1. provided information to 71 inquiries via telephone;
2. provided 160 referrals to persons whose needs were deemed better serviced by other community legal centres, advocacy groups or dispute resolution agencies;
3. provided legal advice in person, by telephone or video conference to 454 clients;
4. opened 42 new cases;
5. closed 50 cases.

Case studies

Of the cases closed for the financial year, settled matters included the following:

1. Employment

This case was lodged with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (“VCAT”). Our client was diagnosed with post natal depression which made her unfit to return to work for a significant period of time. She applied for an extended period of leave to manage her disability but her employer refused. The matter went to a mediation and was resolved with the employer agreeing to pay our client financial compensation.

2. Employment

This case was lodged with the Fairwork Commission following the termination of our client's employment. Our client is a sex worker and claimed discrimination on the basis of her secondary occupation. The matter was settled with the termination withdrawn and being deemed as a resignation, and payment of compensation.

3. Employment

Our client was employed for a short period of time before requesting a reasonable adjustment be provided due to a visual impairment. Following the request, the client's employment was terminated. We assisted by attending a conciliation at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the matter was settled with a payment of compensation.

4. Goods and Services

This was a complaint at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission against a medical clinic by a patient who was unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition. The complaint alleged discrimination in the provision of services and failure to provide reasonable adjustments. The complaint was resolved with the provision of an apology, agreement to undertake training in discrimination law and the payment of financial compensation.

5. Goods and services

This case was lodged with VCAT and concerned an individual being unable to access services on a number of occasions between 2020 and 2022 due to having a medical condition which meant they were unable to wear a mask. The matter went to a mediation and was resolved with the organisation agreeing to pay our client financial compensation.

6. Employment

This complaint was at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and concerned an employee with vision impairment who was not provided reasonable adjustments to access the computer systems utilised by the business, which ultimately terminated her employment. The matter was resolved at conciliation with a payment of financial compensation to the client.

7. Employment

This matter concerned an employment application which was unsuccessful at the medical stage due to our client having a hearing loss. We assisted our client with a complaint at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The matter settled prior to the hearing with a confidential settlement.

8. Education

This case related to a child who suffered from epilepsy and required life saving medication to be administered by a teacher at the Respondent's after-school program, should the child suffer from a seizure. The Respondent initially refused to administer the medication and the client filed a complaint at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. The matter was settled through conciliation and shuttle negotiation.

9. Employment

This matter concerned an employment application which was unsuccessful at the medical stage due to our client having multiple sclerosis. We assisted our client with a complaint at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The matter settled prior to the hearing with a confidential settlement.

10. Employment

This matter concerned an offer of employment which was made and accepted by our client and was subsequently revoked following our client's disclosure of a medical condition. We assisted the client with an application to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the matter was settled through conciliation, with an apology and financial compensation.

11. Education

Our client was in her final year of school when she developed mental health issues. Although her medical practitioners recommended that she continue attending classes and participate in extra-curricular activities, the school would not allow her to attend in person. Our client was restricted to remote classes, and as a result her marks declined and her mental health condition deteriorated. The matter was settled with the school agreeing to pay our client financial compensation and agreeing to review their policy with regard to mental health conditions.

12. Education

Our client was expelled from her high school, after complaining about a disparaging comment she understood a teacher had made to other students about our client's behaviour in class and her disability. Our client's behaviour is affected by her disability. Since commencing high school, our client had not been provided with any reasonable adjustments for her disability. We assisted our client with a complaint of discrimination and victimisation to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. The matter was settled with the school agreeing to pay our client financial compensation, and providing a statement of regret.

13. Goods and Services

Our client's daughter was refused entry to a trampolining centre, because she was unable to wear the required footwear. Trampolining was a key part of our client's daughter's weekly activity schedule, as due to her severe sensory processing issues, many other recreational activities were inaccessible to her. Our client was unable to wear the required footwear because of her severe sensory processing issues. DDLS assisted by sending a letter to the trampolining centre seeking more information about the footwear requirement, and outlining the law. The matter was resolved with an agreement from the centre to permit entry to our client with a small number of restrictions, where there were genuine safety requirements related to footwear.

14. Goods and Services

Our client's daughter was expelled from her childcare service for alleged disrespectful behaviour towards staff and other children. The usual processes and procedures for terminating an enrolment were not followed, nor was there any evidence of an escalation in concerns around behaviour. Our client's daughter had a physical disability which affected her ability to communicate and her behaviour. Since enrolment, our client had requested several adjustments for her daughter's disability which had not been provided. We assisted our client with a complaint, including a claim of victimisation, to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. The matter settled with an offer of financial compensation.

Current Federal Circuit & Family Court matter:

15. Brown v State of Victoria (Department of Education) FCFCOA Ref No. MLG399 2023

This matter relates to provision for a student's medical needs at school and access to a school bus service.

Current Tribunal Matters

16. Smith v Austin Health VCAT Ref H55/2022

This matter is currently before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and relates to a policy of the Respondent hospital that allows only one assistance animal in the ward at any given time. Hence, a patient who needs an assistance animal is unable to proceed with their admission until the earlier patient with an assistance animal is discharged.

17. Brown v Fire Rescue Victoria VCAT Ref H61/2022

This matter is a currently before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal relating to our client's unsuccessful application to be a firefighter because of his Type 1 Diabetes. The client was referred to DDLS by Diabetes Australia- Victoria.

Volunteers

The success of DDLS casework is largely dependent on the work and time donated by our volunteers and law student interns. We also thank the following members of the Bar who have kindly accepted various briefs from DDLS lawyers pro bono: Ian Munt of Foley's List, Monique Hardinge and Sam Profitt, both of Young's List.

Placido Belardo
Principal Solicitor

Kerry O'Hagan and Hannah Gostelow
Solicitors

Community Legal Education Program Report

Community Legal Education (CLE) at DDLS aims to raise community awareness about the law and legal processes related to disability discrimination, to increase the ability of community members to understand and critically assess the impact of anti-discrimination laws, improve community members' ability to participate in the legal system, and create a climate that promotes participation in the law-making process and inspires efforts to pursue law reform through collective action.

CLE covers everyday activities that range from listening to community members, talking with tertiary school groups, explaining what DDLS does to various organisations, engaging in interviews with local media, developing seminars and associated material as well as providing web information. CLEs provide information and opportunities to ask questions, share ideas and develop strategies that may address gaps in the legal system. CLEs may assist someone to find a solution to a legal problem before it becomes difficult, complicated and possibly expensive. Furthermore, they can influence law reform work and make broad systemic change.

DDLS designs Community Legal Education workshops specifically to suit the needs of community organisations, community groups and the general public. DDLS has used media throughout the year to ensure that disability and discrimination issues have been raised.

Our Strategic Plan continued to prioritise the area of education for both our casework and community legal education, reflecting community feedback and the findings of annual reports by human rights bodies, statutory authorities and parliamentary committees.

DDLS invites those interested in community legal education sessions to contact us directly. In the last year, we provided community legal education on the following topics:

- Disability Discrimination Law (General)
- Discrimination in the provision of services
- Discrimination in accommodation
- Advocacy/legal advocacy for students with disabilities

These sessions were provided to law students, residential groups, the general public through radio, disability advocacy organisations and information centres.

Kerry O'Hagan



CLE Co-ordinator

Policy and Law Reform Program Report

Submissions made throughout the year included:

- To the Victorian Auditor General's Office about the support of students with disabilities in schools
- To the Federal Senate Education and Employment Committee looking into "disorderly conduct" in schools to provide insight into the consequences of not providing students with disabilities sufficient support
- To the Federal Attorney General's Office in relation to a cost model for people using antidiscrimination legislation
- To the Department of Families Fairness and Housing in relation to a Disability Inclusion Bill
- To the Federal Department of Education and Training in relation to the Disability Standards for Education
- To the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights regarding Australia's human rights framework
- To the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts regarding the Transport Standards



Volunteer and Student Program Report

DDLS volunteers continue to play a significant part in the organisation's ability to meet its targets and provide a quality service.

Derived from law students and lawyers, our volunteers approach us independently, or are put forward by organisations/universities for placement. Our students come from a variety of universities across Victoria.

We are now in our sixth year working with Deakin University on their internship training program. It has been our pleasure to regularly have some of these students volunteer with us after their placements are finished. While the program was put on hold last year due to lockdown, it is now clear that lockdown may be a part of our lives for some time to come and as a result, we have made changes to the program that can accommodate remote training.

Volunteering has substantial benefits for the DDLS, and we like to think that we have been instrumental in developing an interest in social justice and disability issues in many of our volunteers.

Our volunteers far outnumber our employees and without them we would struggle to provide the high level of service to our clients that we do. Volunteers undertake tasks from answering telephone calls to legal research and drafting, and attendance at conciliations.

We are very grateful for their assistance.

