

Justine Donohue

From: Melissa Hardham <melissah@westjustice.org.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 15 July 2020 8:34 PM
To: homelessnessinquiry
Subject: Re: Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria - Transcript - 1 July 2020
Attachments: Evidence at the Homelessness Inquiry (Suggested Changes) (140720).docx

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Hi

Thank you for the opportunity to review the evidence. I have made several changes but have ensured that they do not materially alter sense or fact – see attached.

I also provide the following information to the questions that I took on notice:

Have you seen an increase in terms of the clients—the new clients or the ones which you already had in the system and they have returned?

We have seen a reduction in overall numbers. In Jan-June 2019 we saw approximately 1608 clients (new, repeat, existing). In Jan-June 2020, this reduced to approximately 1174 (approx. 25% decline). We surmise that this is largely due to the challenges that many clients experienced in accessing our remote services, particularly people experiencing family violence and young people.

Are you seeing different clients to those you would have seen pre-COVID-19?

Based on our data it is difficult to determine whether the **types of clients** that we are servicing this year (including during the COVID-19 period) are different. However, we can comment on the **change in types** of issues. Here are some of the larger variations:

- Fines services have decreased by 56% (although it should be noted that we have closed our fines clinics temporarily)
- Family Violence services have decreased by 38% (due to the large reduction in people accessing the duty lawyer service at the Magistrates Court)
- Family Law services have decreased by 29%
- The Mortgage Wellbeing Service has seen a decline in services by 55% (likely caused by the moratorium – however we anticipate that this will increase significantly once the moratorium is lifted)
- Tenancy services have **increased** by 12% due to significant increase in demand.

Of the diverse challenges WEstjustice deals with, where would mortgage stress and rental stress sit it in terms of demand for your services?

The 5 highest service areas are:

- Tenancy 26%
- Youth 14%
- Family Violence 29%
- MVA 6%
- Family Law 10%

Would that make up the top third of your business?

If we combine the tenancy and mortgage stress services, then they make up 28% of our overall services. However, due to the impact of the mortgage moratorium, our mortgage stress matters have reduced. We anticipate that once this lifts, our services will be in high demand and this number will increase significantly.

Warm regards

Melissa Hardham
Chief Executive Officer

M: 0409 334 160

E: melissah@westjustice.org.au

WEstjustice

We acknowledge the many disadvantaged people impacted by the fires and COVID-19. These are difficult times and we will do what we can to advocate for their rights and provide access to justice.

Werribee Branch Level 1, 8 Watton St, Werribee VIC 3030 (03) 9749 7720

Footscray Branch Level 1, 72 Buckley St, Footscray VIC 3011 (03) 9749 7720

Sunshine Youth Office Visy Cares Hub, 80B Harvester Rd Sunshine VIC 3020 (03) 9091 8237

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WEstjustice acknowledges the ancestors, elders and families of the Kulin nations, who are the traditional owners of Western Melbourne, the country we are located on. As we work to achieve a just and fair society we pay our respects to the deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal custodianship of Country. We acknowledge this land as a place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal, and that the Kulin peoples' living culture has a fundamental role in the life of this region.

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From: homelessnessinquiry <homelessnessinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au>

Date: Tuesday, 7 July 2020 at 4:44 pm

To: Melissa Hardham <melissah@westjustice.org.au>

Subject: Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria - Transcript - 1 July 2020

Dear Ms Hardman

On the behalf of the Legal and Social Issues Committee, I would like to pass on our appreciation for the evidence you provided on 1 July 2020 for the Committee's Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria.

Attached is a copy of your evidence for you to review and return to the Committee, by email (if possible) to homelessnessinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au or by post.

When making corrections to the transcript, please be mindful of the following:

1. Only corrections which are deemed necessary to ensure the accuracy of the transcript may be made. Corrections which materially alter sense or fact may not be accepted by the Committee.
2. Corrections must be signed by the witness.

Please return the corrected copy of evidence by close of business **Wednesday 15 July 2020**. Transcripts will then be tabled with the Committee's report. If no corrections are received, the Committee will accept the transcript without change.

Please note that the transcript is a formal record of your presentation and may be cited in the Committee's final report.

At the hearing, the following matters were taken on notice:

On page 37: Ms VAGHELA to Ms HARDHAM:

Have you seen an increase in terms of the clients—the new clients or the ones which you already had in the system and they have returned? Are you seeing different clients to those you would have seen pre-COVID-19?

On page 38:

Mr BARTON TO Ms HARDHAM:

Of the diverse challenges WEstjustice deals with, where would mortgage stress and rental stress, where would sit it in terms of demand for your services? Would that make up the top third of your business?

Could you please respond to these matters once you have obtained the relevant information.

Once again, thank-you for your valuable input.

Regards

Justine Donohue

Administrative Officer

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