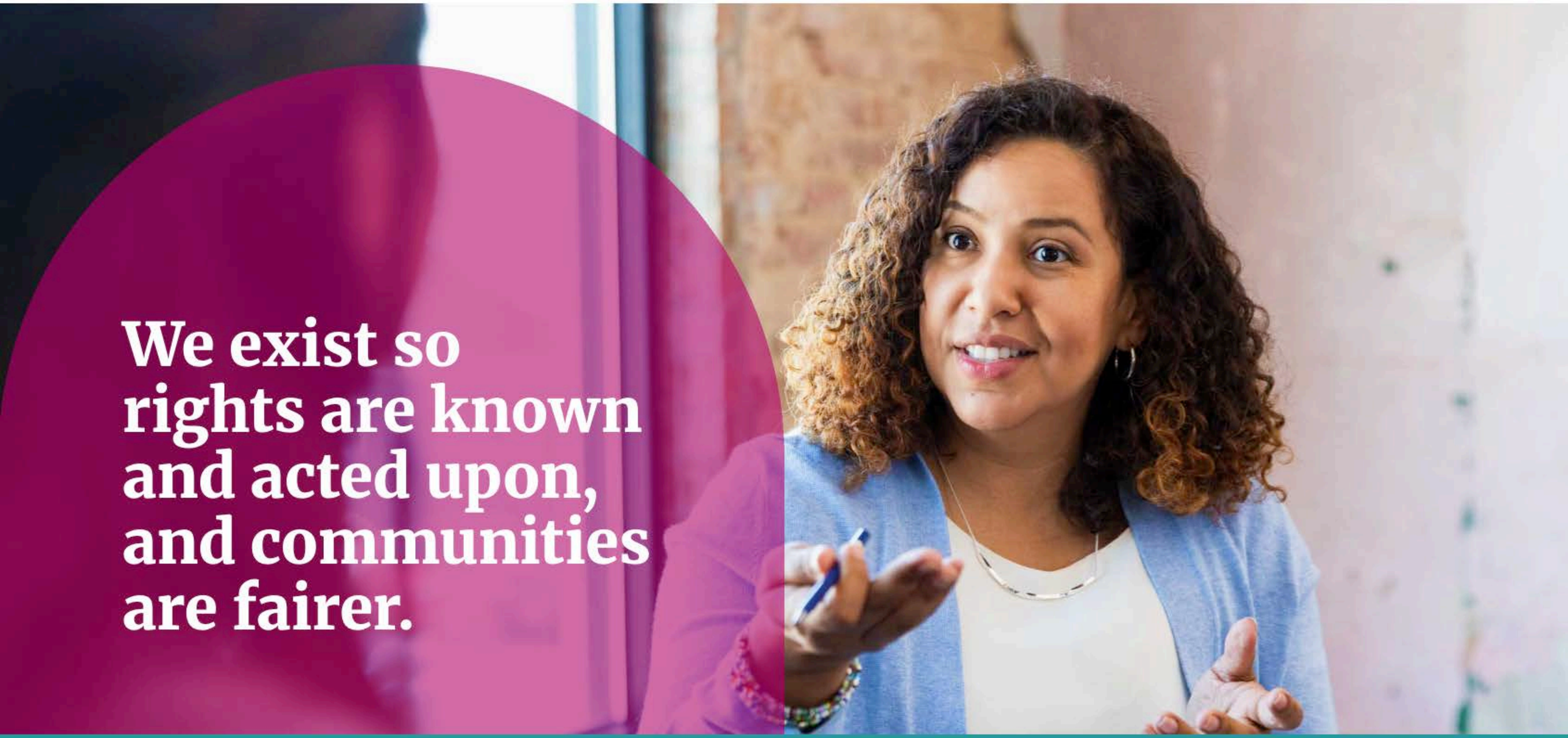
arc justice

Fairer communities | People-centred, rights-based support | Positive, systemic change | Strong & sustainable ARC Justice



We exist so rights are known and acted upon, and communities are fairer.

Welcome to the 2025 ARC Justice Impact Report

Measuring our impact, deepening our focus

Our 2025 Impact Report shows ARC Justice's growing reach and deeper understanding of what drives real change in rural and regional Victoria.

This year, we helped 7196 people,

delivered 9245 services

and were part of 770 community activities

- with 71% of our clients women.

Now in its second year, our impact framework is helping us measure what matters, guide decisions and stay accountable to the communities we serve.

Damian Stock, CEO

About ARC Justice

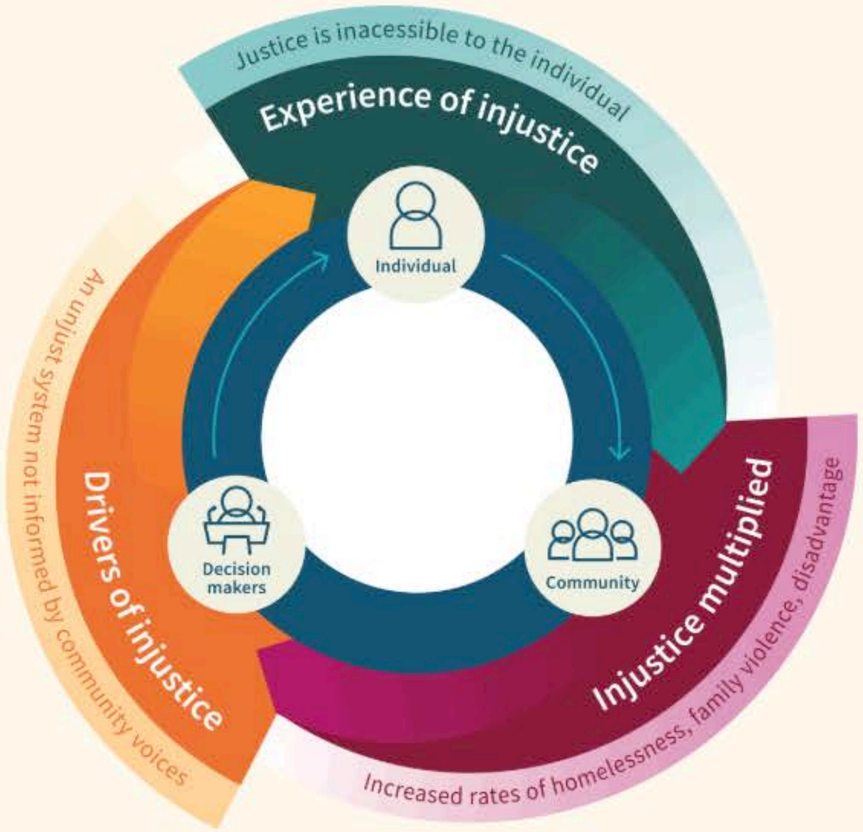
ARC Justice Strategy 2024-2029



Our impact

ARC Justice provides people-centred services, education, engagement and advocacy. We work at an individual, community and policy level to create fairer access to justice.

We are focused on breaking the spiral of injustice.



Our strategy informs each of our four impact domains, ensuring our strategic efforts and actions are aligned with nine key outcomes that we measure and report against. A summary of the program logic underpinning our impact framework is **available here.**



How to use this report

The report is structured by our four impact domains. Each domain has a different colour and icon to represent it. In each section, look out for buttons that reveal case studies and other useful content.



Fairer communities

We understand our communities and work together to increase access to justice.



People-centred, rights-based support

We empower our communities with knowledge and well-designed services to prevent legal issues and enhance access to justice.



Positive, systemic change

By amplifying regional insights and community voices, we drive meaningful change for more just outcomes.



Strong & sustainable ARC Justice

We foster an engaged, expert team and strong organisational practices to sustain impactful support for our communities.



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Fairer communities

Outcome 1: Prioritise local solutions specific to community needs

Stakeholder engagement activities by priority groups





ARC Justice works with communities across northern and central Victoria, building relationships that help create stronger, more resilient and fairer places. Our engagement work is grounded in being present in communities, listening to what matters to people and understanding where we can add value.

By tracking our relationships and engagement activities, we can see which communities we are connecting with, where partnerships are deepening and where more work is needed. This keeps us accountable for reaching all parts of our region and meeting people where they live.

Engagement has grown significantly this year, with a total of 461 activities recorded (an increase from 191 in 2023/24), as we strengthened relationships across our 13 local government areas.

Statewide organisations now feature more strongly in our data, reflecting our increasing role as a sector leader and our growing presence across the broader social services system.

Lower engagement in some areas is also shaping decisions.

Reaching communities that are harder to engage – including First Nations, migrant and refugee communities and LGBTIQA+ groups – is a priority for 2026. This is helping us shift from reactive outreach to planned, targeted engagement that reflects local needs.

A major highlight this year has been progress across our three health justice partnerships. Consistent work by leadership and project teams is now delivering stronger collaboration, increased service activity and better client outcomes. These partnerships show how integrated work with trusted local organisations can create earlier, more effective pathways to legal help.

Our climate justice work also expanded with the commencement of a Climate Justice Lead in October 2024. This role has helped shift post-disaster collaboration from immediate recovery to long-term, community-led resilience.

Following the 2022 floods, ARC Justice partnered with Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places and the Federation of Community Legal Centres to advance the Campaspe Climate Partnerships.

More than 40 local health and community sector representatives have now contributed to a shared action process. The project continues, with a community-driven Action Plan to be developed in 2026.

By building strong relationships and working alongside local organisations, ARC Justice is helping communities identify their priorities and shape the solutions that support fairness, resilience and better long-term outcomes.

Campaspe Climate Partnership



Outcome 1: Prioritise local solutions specific to community needs

Campaspe Climate Partnership: Local voices, local solutions

Climate shocks in the Campaspe Shire – especially the 2022 floods that devastated Rochester and hit other towns and villages – exposed deep vulnerability across the region ARC Justice services. Homes were destroyed, renters displaced and local services overwhelmed.



ARC Justice saw the impact up close: more people in crisis, legal needs surging, and often, no co-ordinated system to respond.

In 2024, ARC Justice launched the Campaspe Climate Partnership as part of a three-year project funded through the Federal Government's Disaster Ready Fund.

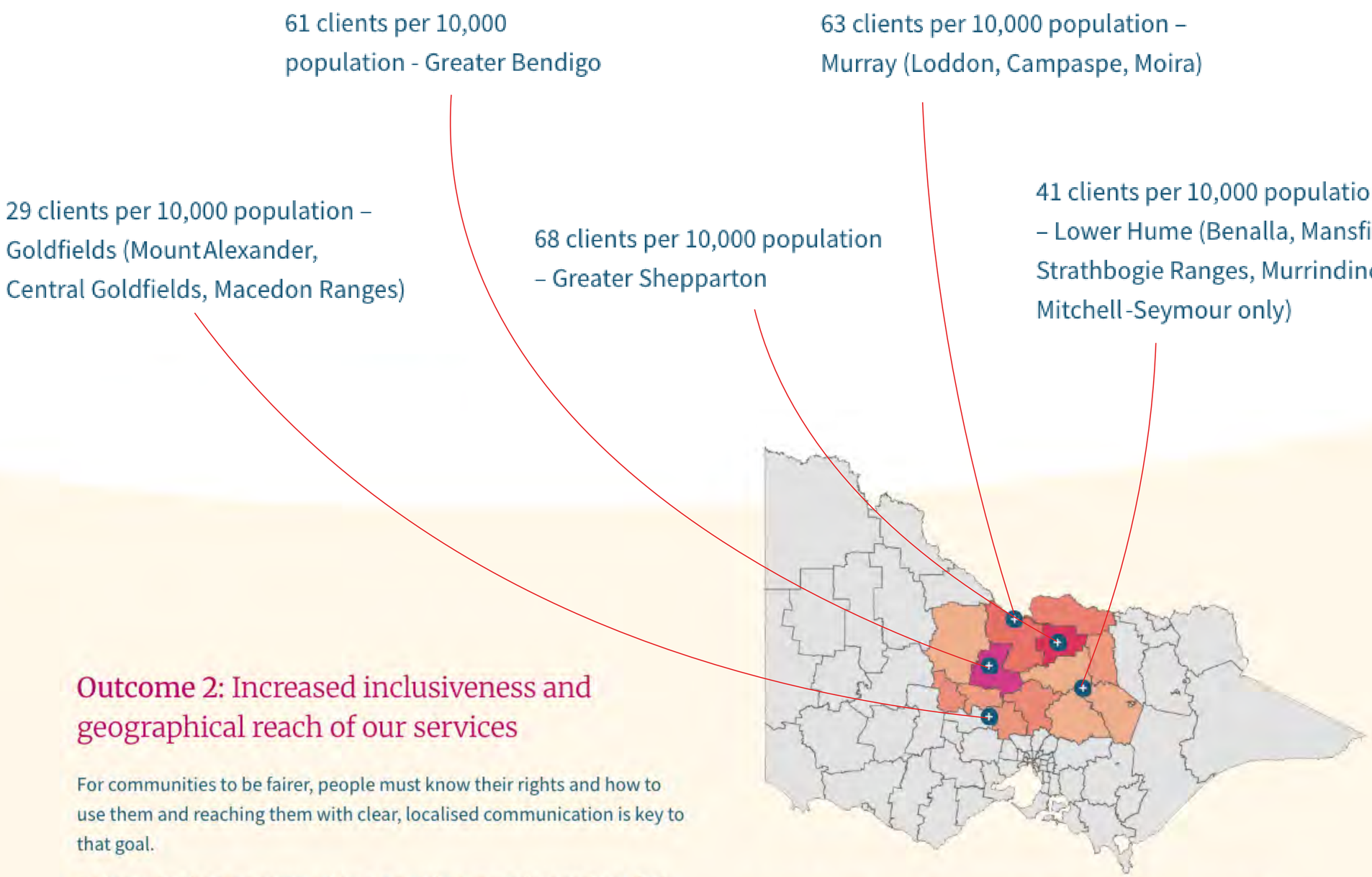
Campaspe was prioritised because it's a flood-prone region where existing disadvantage is made worse by disaster. The service system is fragmented and rural towns often get overlooked in emergency planning.

This project backs local solutions. It's bringing together more than 20 organisations – including legal, health, housing, council and emergency services – to co-design a Collaborative Action Plan that will reflect lived experience, support frontline workers and strengthen local networks. It won't be a report for someone's desk – it will be a plan for real, practical action.

In May 2025, 16 frontline organisations came together to map shared risks and challenges. In September, senior leaders attended an Action Forum to agree on next steps. By June 2026, the region will have a tested strategy focused on community-led resilience, not just crisis response.

Success will be tracked through the number of new partnerships formed, whether community priorities shape the plan and whether services feel more connected and confident. Early signs show the process is already helping organisations shift from isolated service delivery to collaborative problem-solving.

This is what local solutions look like: investing in place, backing the people who live and work there and letting communities lead the way.



Heat map showing services by local government area

Outcome 2: Increased inclusiveness and geographical reach of our services

For communities to be fairer, people must know their rights and how to use them and reaching them with clear, localised communication is key to that goal.

By improving how we communicate, we make our services easier to find, understand and use – and we're already seeing results.

By comparing our service data with population data across our region, we can see where our services are being used and where gaps remain. This data also shapes our communications, helping us reach under-served towns and highlight local issues in regional and national media.

The client-to-population data shows our 'One ARC' approach is working. Teams in Bendigo and Shepparton are working together more closely and shared systems mean people in both areas are getting fairer access to help. Clearer, more co-ordinated messaging across our services has strengthened this connection.

Our strong results in the Murray region reflect ongoing work with the Centre for Non-Violence in Echuca. This supports our belief that when you know a community well, people are more likely to seek legal help.

Recent media coverage of our work on housing, renters' rights and climate disaster recovery has extended that local trust and placed regional perspectives in state and national conversations.

In contrast, the Goldfields region has a lower service rate overall, but Central Goldfields alone records 76 clients per 10,000 residents.

Macedon Ranges and Mount Alexander have fewer areas of economic disadvantage, showing we're reaching the people most in need. The data also confirms that having a local, place-based presence – beyond court duty work – makes services more accessible.

Localised communications have helped drive real service outcomes, with strong attendance at fines clinics, community events and education sessions. We still need to build our presence in under-serviced areas, including Shepparton, Seymour and nearby towns.

Our new *2025–2029 Communications Strategy* supports this work, helping us move from reactive to planned communication. It's already lifting our visibility within the sector and prompting greater collaboration with partner community legal centres, who are now cross-promoting our campaigns and policy advocacy.

Using a simple measure of impact – Focus + Action = Outcome – the strategy reinforces that clear, co-ordinated communication doesn't just inform people; it expands our reach and strengthens fairness across regional Victoria.



Renting in the regions



Outcome 2: Increased inclusiveness and geographical reach of our services

Renting in the regions: Giving voice to renters' struggles

In regional Victoria, renters face mounting pressures: low vacancy rates, poor housing quality and rising costs.

ARC Justice has made housing justice a priority, and in our recent communications work this came together in the *Renting in the regions* campaign – an example of how communication can extend our reach and make our services more inclusive.

Though not planned as one project, a series of media initiatives created a consistent narrative that amplified local voices and showed the broader community what's at stake. By connecting our frontline work with our advocacy and communications, we reached new audiences who might not otherwise engage with a community legal centre.

In May 2025, ARC Justice supported Bendigo mother Ashlee Long to share her story with the Bendigo Advertiser after she and her children were forced to live in a car when a pipe burst in her rental.

Ashlee's story ran the same week ARC Justice hosted Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for Renters Kat Theophanous and Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards at our Bendigo office. The timing meant we could share Ashlee's experience directly with decision-makers, showing how local stories can inform systemic change and highlight the realities of regional life.

That same month, CEO Damian Stock appeared in ABC News coverage of Victoria's housing inquiry, emphasising how regional renters are often hit hardest. Managing Lawyer (Housing) Anna Dorevitch and Director of Strategy and Impact Kate Clohesy also featured in the VCOSS Renters' Rundown video, bringing legal and advocacy expertise to a statewide audience.

Together, these moments built a clear, consistent message: regional renters are being left behind and systemic change is needed. They also demonstrated the power of communication to amplify regional perspectives, strengthen partnerships and make our work more visible across Victoria.

We measure success not just in coverage, but in impact: front-page stories that frame renting as a justice issue, direct engagement with regional audiences and our expertise sought by state media and policymakers.

Renting in the regions shows how targeted, evidence-based communication can extend our geographical reach, make our services more accessible and elevate regional voices in policy debates – advancing Outcome 2 of the Fairer Communities domain.



People-centred, rights-based support

Outcome 3: Community members demonstrate increased legal understanding and capability to address or prevent legal problems



75% clients agreed with the statement: "I know what to do next about my legal problem"

"I'm really grateful for the help because I did not understand the language and laws in Australia"

"Because of ARC Justice, I've started to understand the law better"

When people understand their rights and how the law works, they can take action to solve problems and prevent them from getting worse, which is why building legal capability is central to our work.

We use several tools to measure how well we're doing this. Clients complete short surveys after using our services and we seek feedback from the community organisations we partner with. This helps us see where people feel more confident and where more support is needed.

Improving how we collect feedback has been a focus across ARC Justice. We're working with other community legal centres to make sure the language in our surveys is plain, respectful and accessible and that the way we gather feedback is safe and ethical.

Most clients who achieve a positive legal outcome report a positive experience. When clients are unhappy, it usually relates to an outcome not meeting their expectations rather than the service itself.

We're now developing new survey tools to reach more people, including those supported by our duty lawyer and family law programs, while protecting their privacy and safety.

Formal surveys are only one part of the picture. Our teams learn from each other by reflecting on client experiences in regular meetings. This helps staff identify what works and apply those lessons in future cases. We've also added new fields in our case management system, Actionstep, to capture informal feedback as part of day-to-day work.

We know that not everyone can provide written feedback. Many participants in our Community Legal Education sessions face language or literacy barriers or take part through interpreters. These sessions are always delivered with local partners who help us tailor the content to participants' needs.

After each session, we debrief with organisers to capture their insights and use this information to refine future programs.

Together, these changes are giving us a clearer, more consistent picture of what clients and communities need, what they value about our services and how we can keep improving the way we help people understand and use the law.

'Our Place' Hub in Seymour



Outcome 3: Community members demonstrate increased legal understanding and capability to address or prevent legal problems

Building legal capability at Our Place Seymour



In Seymour, the Our Place hub brings education, health and family services together on the local primary school site, so families can get the support they need in one familiar location.

Teachers, early years educators, health workers and family support staff work side by side, often becoming the first people families turn to when problems – including legal ones – arise.

In 2025, ARC Justice collaborated with Our Place Seymour to create a tailored 12-month Community Legal Education (CLE) program for these frontline workers after many said they lacked confidence in identifying legal issues and understanding when and how to refer families for legal help.

Working with the Northern Community Legal Centre, we co-designed the CLE calendar based on what staff wanted to learn: family violence, Child Protection, legal rights, navigating court processes and more. Sessions are being delivered in person by ARC and Northern lawyers throughout 2025 and 2026.

The program is already increasing legal understanding among local service providers, who are now more confident in recognising when a family's issue has a legal dimension and where to seek help. By improving the legal capability of these trusted professionals, families can get advice earlier and prevent problems from escalating.

This early-intervention approach directly supports Outcome 3, helping community members build the knowledge and confidence to address or avoid legal problems before they become crises. Staff are now better equipped to connect families with the right support, including our Friday duty lawyer service in Seymour.

This collaboration builds on ARC Justice's long-standing commitment to the region, including our role in the Seymour Flood Recovery Hub after the October 2022 floods. Through Our Place, we've also linked with the Brotherhood of St Laurence's SEED project, strengthening referral pathways and collaborative support for families.

We see this as the first step toward a permanent presence at Our Place – part of our long-term goal to embed legal help within community settings and strengthen people's ability to understand and use the law in everyday life.



Outcome 4: Services are accessible

We measure our clients' and communities' legal capability to understand where support is most needed. This includes short surveys after services are delivered and regular feedback from the community partners we work alongside.

Casework – both legal and non-legal – remains the most direct way we help people take control of their legal and life problems. These cases often involve complex issues that need specialist expertise and sustained support.

This year, new team structures and growth have led to a 36% increase in the number of casework services opened. This increase shows the benefits of a stable, well-resourced team and a stronger focus on client outcomes.

Casework services are prioritised for people who are most marginalised or have the fewest resources to resolve issues on their own. As a result, most clients come from multiple priority groups, reflecting our commitment to fairness and access.

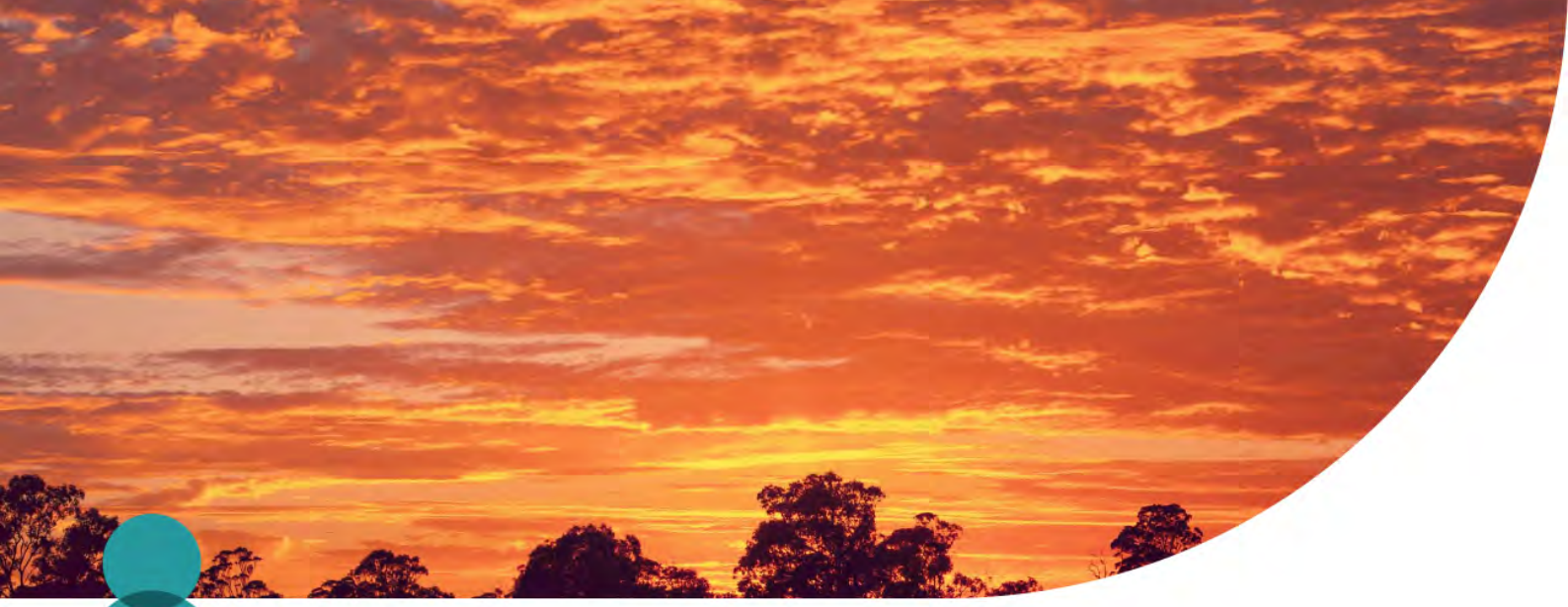
Last year, only 5% of cases involved older people. In 2024–2025, that figure rose to 14%, showing growing capacity to respond to elder abuse and age-related legal issues.

In 2026, our program plans continue to target First Nations people, migrants and refugees, LGBTIQA+ people and older people as key priority groups. Teams are also embedding climate-conscious lawyering into their practice to recognise how environmental factors affect clients' legal problems.

Consistent with our rights-based approach, we use insights from individual casework to guide systemic advocacy and law reform.

By learning from our clients' experiences, we identify patterns, challenge unfair systems and push for broader change that prevents legal issues from arising in the first place.

Lydia's story ⊕



Outcome 4: Services are accessible

Lydia's story: 'You saved my life'

At 65, Lydia* was discharged from hospital after surgery into homelessness, with no belongings and no will to go on. A First Nations woman who had survived decades of family violence, addiction and poverty, she told staff at the Bendigo hospital there was ***"no future, really".***

Then came a phone call that changed her path: she had been allocated a one-bedroom public housing unit in Kangaroo Flat.

But instead of hope, Lydia felt fear. She had no furniture, no food and no reason to keep living. She planned to return to the unit, lie down in the hospital bed being moved there for her and stop eating or drinking.

Before she was discharged, Lydia was referred to ARC Justice's Housing Justice team, giving her access to timely, practical support without needing to navigate complex systems or advocate for herself.

With Tenancy Plus brokerage funds, Housing Justice helped turn her empty unit into a safe, comfortable home. Lydia received essential appliances, new linen, cookware and food. Staff also made sure she had the specific fruit juice she relied on to manage her eating disorder, restoring both dignity and stability.

The support didn't just remove practical barriers – it showed what accessible, person-centred services can achieve when help is easy to find and tailored to people's needs.

> ***"You saved my life, it's that simple,"*** **Lydia said.** ***"I had nothing. Words can't express what this help means. It means I have a life, hope, a future."***

By being present, responsive and connected with local hospitals, ARC Justice made sure help reached Lydia at the right time. She didn't have to search for it or retell her story over and over. That's what accessibility looks like – services that meet people where they are, when they need them most.



*Name changed

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Outcome 5: Increasing access to holistic services

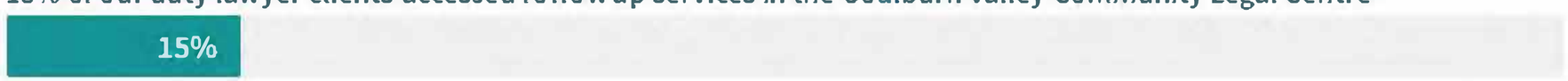
49% of our legal advice clients were helped with multiple legal problems



37% of our duty lawyer clients accessed follow-up services in the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre



15% of our duty lawyer clients accessed follow-up services in the Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre



Many of our clients face more than one legal problem at a time. Issues like family violence, family law and tenancy are often connected. By offering holistic support, we help people deal with these overlapping legal and non-legal needs, rather than treating each problem in isolation.

Our duty lawyer services in family violence hearings, family court matters (where family violence is a factor) and Child Protection cases are a key part of this work. They provide immediate help at critical moments – much like an emergency department in the health system.

This year we supported more than 2000 clients through these duty services. For many, it was their first contact with a lawyer and their first step toward understanding their rights.

Ideally, people who need further support move from duty services into follow-up appointments for advice or casework. This allows lawyers to explore the underlying issues, connect clients with other supports and work through solutions more deeply.

The biggest challenge to offering this kind of trauma-informed, wraparound service is capacity – having enough time and staff to meet demand.

While this is ultimately a resourcing issue, we're also focusing on building lawyer capability and improving systems so we can deliver more joined-up, people-centred services.

We're investing in smarter processes and self-help tools to make it easier for clients to get follow-up support.

Continuous improvement at every stage of the client journey helps us strengthen access to holistic services and make sure people don't fall through the cracks after that first call for help.

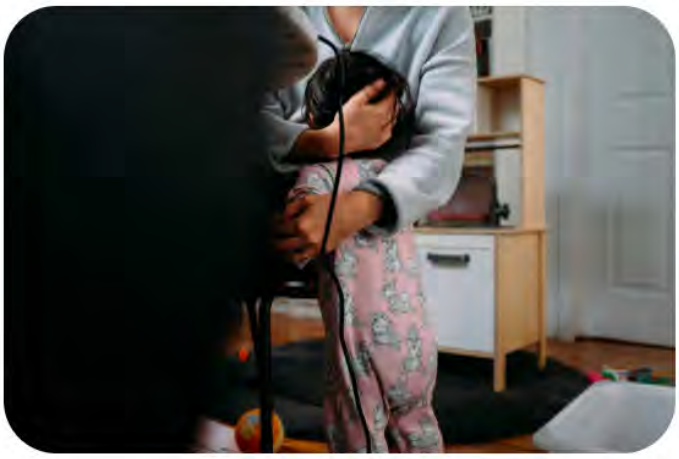


April's story



Outcome 5: Increasing access to holistic services

April's story: From crisis help to lasting stability



April* first received help from ARC Justice's duty lawyer at a regional court, where our lawyer was helping people on the Family Violence Court list.

She was defending an intervention order application brought by the father of her children. That day, both sides agreed to withdraw their applications, but it was clear April's legal problems were far from over.

She had fled the family home with her children and was living in a cramped two-bedroom unit at a relative's place.

The house she'd left had equity, but her former partner had convinced her she had no right to it. She was also facing criminal charges for allegedly breaching the interim intervention order.

After we understood the full picture, ARC Justice provided holistic support across family violence, criminal and family law matters.
One of our lawyers represented April in the criminal case, where the breach charge was withdrawn and she received a good behaviour bond.

At the same time, April got advice on parenting and property issues. This integrated approach meant she didn't need to tell her story multiple times or navigate separate systems alone.

The first mediation didn't fully settle parenting arrangements, but the children's participation in Kids Talk – a child-inclusive service – revealed how deeply the violence had affected them.

Meanwhile, tensions during handover were increasing. By working with family violence services, we made sure April and her children stayed safe, arranging for all handovers to happen at school so she didn't have to face her former partner.

A second mediation settled both property and parenting issues. April received a fair cash and superannuation split and her former partner agreed to new parenting orders.

From her first contact with our duty lawyer to the final agreements, April experienced truly holistic support – continuous legal help, links to specialist family violence services and practical steps to build safety and stability. She left the relationship safer, financially stronger and with a more stable future for her children.

*Name changed



Positive, systemic change

Outcome 6: Trusted and authoritative voice on regional social issues, influencing better justice outcomes

54 legal system and law reform activities

20 ARC Justice law reform activities mentioned in media

10 meetings with decision-makers

ARC Justice has strengthened its role as a trusted, evidence-based voice on the social issues most affecting people in regional Victoria – housing insecurity, family violence and climate change.

We identify our law reform priorities by combining three key sources: what we see through frontline client work, the legal expertise of our staff and collaboration with sector partners. This ensures our advocacy reflects real community experiences rather than abstract policy.

Client stories about unsafe housing, family violence and barriers in the justice system are carefully de-identified and used in submissions, case studies and briefings to parliamentarians. These stories are supported by data and service insights, shaping clear and practical recommendations for reform.



We use a mix of strategies depending on the issue, including:

- submissions to government inquiries;
- joint advocacy with other community legal centres;
- targeted campaigns;
- direct engagement with MPs, ministers and other decision-makers.

Tracking these activities gives us a strong baseline to measure our impact and plan future advocacy. Each activity contributes to our goal of influencing fairer, more effective laws and systems.

Our reputation as a credible, regional voice continues to grow. Policymakers, media and partner organisations now seek our insights, request case studies and data and invite us to join key reform discussions.

Our team is increasingly called on to provide regional perspectives in campaigns and consultations across Victoria. This growing recognition reflects our consistent, informed and practical approach to advocacy.

By grounding our work in lived experience and evidence, ARC Justice ensures the realities of regional Victorians are understood by those shaping law and policy – and that justice outcomes are fairer for the communities we serve.

Nicole's story



Outcome 6: Trusted and authoritative voice on regional social issues, influencing better justice outcomes

Standing up for fairness in the Children's Court

For years, ARC Justice has seen how difficult the Child Protection system can be for families in regional Victoria.

In late 2024, when the Children's Court of Victoria removed Conciliation Conferences from Family Division proceedings, we saw the impact immediately: delays, confusion and most of all, a loss of voice for parents – especially First Nations families and those already facing systemic disadvantage.

ARC Justice's Managing Lawyer (Families), Nicole Day, an Accredited Specialist in Children's Law, has led our response on this issue and the Court's more recent consultation about proposed changes to Judicial Resolution Conferences (JRCs) and Case Readiness Events (CREs).

Drawing on nearly a decade of practice experience and working closely with the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative and other legal services, Nicole helped shape ARC's formal submission to the Court's consultation on JRCs and CREs.

Nicole's work is grounded in what ARC sees every day in court: regional families losing trust in a system that feels rushed, remote and adversarial. By capturing these lived experiences and translating them into practical, evidence-based recommendations, ARC Justice has become a trusted regional voice in the reform conversation.

With real case examples, Nicole outlined how JRCs, unlike Readiness Hearings, offer a meaningful chance for families to be heard and for decisions to be made with their voice in the room.

The submission doesn't just argue for reform – it demonstrates the consequences of current policy settings and proposes workable solutions informed by on-the-ground experience. It highlights how regional disadvantage compounds legal complexity, why in-person, informal hearings matter and how removing funded, structured alternatives to litigation risks deepening injustice.



This work reflects Outcome 6 in action – ARC Justice influencing better justice outcomes by combining local insight, legal expertise and collaboration to shape policy and system reform.

Nicole's leadership shows how ARC Justice speaks with authority on regional legal issues, not just by identifying problems but by advocating for reforms that make the justice system fairer and more accessible for regional Victorians.

Outcome 7: Amplifying client and community voice

10 client voices featured in advocacy activities

ARC Justice puts client and community voice at the centre of our advocacy and communications because we know sharing people's lived experiences helps decision-makers understand that systemic issues are not abstract problems but real pressures on regional Victorians.

Our communications approach supports this. Using the Focus + Action = Outcome method from our *2025–2029 Communications Strategy*, each story starts with a clear purpose, is developed through deliberate, ethical engagement and is then shared in the right places to create change.

First, we identify clients who are willing and able to share their experiences and who want their stories to improve the system for others. Our lawyers and advocates collaborate with the communications team to determine what each story needs to highlight, such as housing insecurity, family violence, or gaps in the justice system.

Next, clients are contacted personally and offered a safe, supported space to speak in their own words and at their own pace. Most conversations take place in person to build trust.



Transparency is central: clients choose what they share, how it's framed and where it will appear. We now embed participant feedback into our procedures to ensure this process remains ethical, safe and validating.

Their stories are then shaped into clear, accessible narratives for different audiences. Some appear in impact reports, others in meetings with ministers, MPs and senior officials. Short extracts are shared on digital platforms. Inquiries and submissions include de-identified case examples that illustrate the lived reality behind our recommendations.

This approach amplifies regional voices in places where they are rarely heard. Client perspectives informed our first Impact Report in 2024 and strengthened discussions with state and federal decision-makers on housing, renters' rights, climate recovery and access to justice. Stories shared online reached broader community and sector audiences, building understanding and empathy.

By grounding our advocacy in lived experience and using a planned communications approach, ARC Justice strengthens trust with clients and increases the impact of our policy messages. Amplifying real voices ensures the experiences of regional Victorians shape the laws and systems that affect their lives.

Lois and Harry's story

Outcome 7: Amplifying client and community voice

Lois and Harry's story: 'We didn't know where to turn'

Lois* and Harry*, both in their 70s, were told in early 2025 they had 60 days to leave their rental. The interstate landlord was selling and a Notice to Vacate arrived without warning.

It was a devastating blow. Their modest home in regional Victoria held deep ties – it was once owned by Lois's parents and hosted their wedding reception. They'd lived there for six years after being forced to sell their family home when a builder went bankrupt.

Now, they were out of time and options. The search for a new home fell to Lois. Harry is illiterate and had recently lost an eye. Lois has hypertension, arthritis and sciatica, but still applied for 25 properties by hand. Every application was rejected.

When the deadline passed and a Possession Order was lodged, Lois contacted ARC Justice. Through our Housing Justice program, the couple was supported by a multi-disciplinary team. Lois spoke face-to-face with intake staff, then with a housing advocate.



A lawyer took their case to the Magistrates' Court, arguing the eviction was not "reasonable and proportionate" and won. A social worker followed up with health and housing referrals and ongoing support.

ARC's Communications Lead met with Lois, listened to her story and made sure her voice came through clearly in pieces they produced about their work with ARC, including quotes like ***"We didn't know where to turn".***

Both the internal and public versions of this case study were de-identified but reflected Lois's real words and experiences.

Lois and Harry's story didn't just inform our advocacy – it became part of it. We shared their experience with MPs to show why legal protections matter.

The "reasonable and proportionate" test that helped keep them housed came from earlier law reform. This is what impact looks like: a law we helped shape was used in court to stop an unfair eviction.

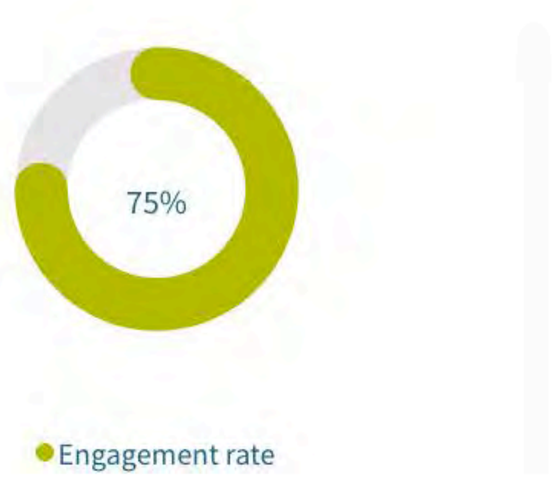
**Names changed*



Strong & sustainable ARC Justice

Outcome 8: Expert and engaged team making a real-world difference





ARC Justice is committed to supporting and growing a team that is engaged in work they find meaningful and where people are proud to say they work here.

Our annual employee engagement survey, done in October 2024, showed a strong lift in participation, up 13% from the previous year. This gives us a clearer picture of how our staff are feeling and what they need.

A key indicator of organisational health is the engagement score. This rose by 6% from 2023 and sits 5% higher than the Non-Profits Australia benchmark, reflecting the strength of our culture and the commitment of our staff.



Survey results highlighted several strengths.

- A well-connected team with a strong shared identity and purpose.
- Clear organisational vision and confidence in leadership.
- Good work–life balance and autonomy across roles.

The survey also pointed to areas needing attention. In 2024/25, we focused on:

- building more structured learning and development opportunities;
- improving internal communication, feedback and recognition;
- clarifying performance expectations and creating more space for innovation.

A major piece of work this year was the collaborative development of our organisation values. Staff from across ARC Justice contributed to defining what these values mean in practice, both in how we work together and how we show up in our communities.

These shared values – Together, Excellence, Impact – now sit at the centre of our culture and guide the way we support each other and deliver services.

By investing in our people, listening to staff feedback and creating space for growth, ARC Justice is building a workplace where staff feel connected, supported and motivated to deliver the best outcomes for the communities we serve.

Blaine's story

Outcome 8: Expert and engaged team making a real-world difference

Blaine's story: Finding meaning in community law



After years working with horses, 34-year-old Blaine Perkins never imagined he'd find his true calling in the law.

A decision to study as a mature-age student set him on a path that brought together his empathy, intellect and curiosity to help family violence victim-survivors every day.

Originally from Melbourne, Blaine moved to central Victoria in his 20s to work in the equine industry, training horses and running his own small business.

By 28, he was ready for a new challenge. *"I loved the work, but it wasn't sustainable long term,"* he said. *"I'd always enjoyed legal studies at school, so I decided to go to uni."*

Blaine began his degree at La Trobe University in Bendigo, balancing study with part-time work.

Like many mature-age students, he didn't have a clear plan for where the degree would lead. *"I just knew I wanted to do something meaningful,"* he said. That direction came late in his studies, when a volunteer role at ARC Justice introduced him to community law.

"I was helping with a client survey, calling people and hearing how much the lawyers had changed their lives. I remember thinking, 'Wouldn't it be amazing to be that person one day?'"

That experience led Blaine to a role with the intake team, where he was often the first point of contact for people facing family violence, housing stress and other complex issues.

After completing his practical legal training while working full-time in intake, Blaine joined ARC Justice's Family Violence team as a lawyer in January 2024.

He now appears in both Specialist Family Violence Courts and general Magistrates' Court lists across central Victoria as a duty lawyer, as well as providing advice and ongoing support for clients with complex, intersecting legal issues.

"The more time I spend in court, the more I see where systems could be improved. At its core, this sector is people supporting people," he said.

Blaine's journey reflects Outcome 8 in practice. Supported through clear pathways for learning, trusted with responsibility early and encouraged to grow within a connected team, he has built a rewarding career that aligns with his values.

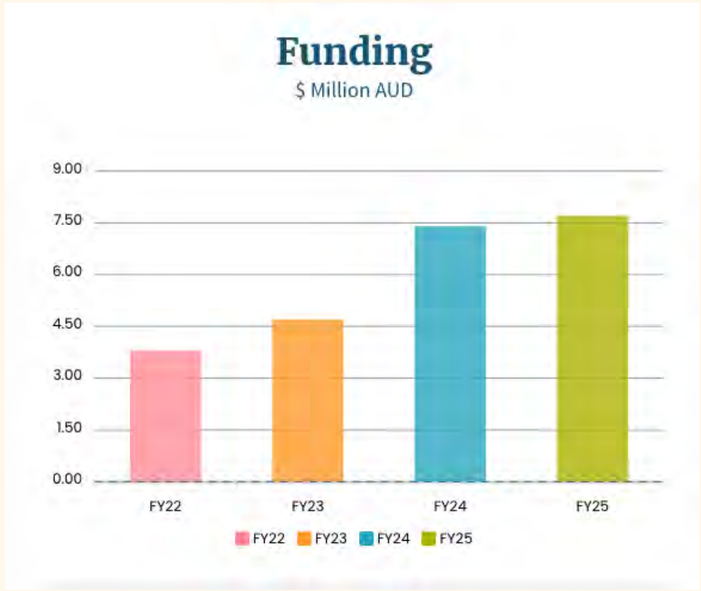
His story shows how investing in staff development, wellbeing and shared purpose helps ARC Justice build a motivated, skilled team and why our people are proud to work for the organisation.

Outcome 9: Sustainable, reliable, effective and responsible organisation

ARC Justice continues to strengthen its foundations as a sustainable and responsible organisation.

We are committed to meeting service contract requirements, improving quality and safeguarding our organisation through strong compliance and risk management. We also aim to lead by example in social and environmental responsibility.

Our funding has more than doubled since 2022, driven by new partnerships and untied organisation-strengthening grants. This growth has increased our reach and impact, allowing us to support more regional Victorians than ever before.



We have made strong progress towards our Reconciliation Action Plan ambitions. Engagement with Aboriginal-Community Controlled Organisations has deepened across the region, with partnerships that improve outcomes through our health justice work, climate justice collaborations and advocacy on court system changes affecting First Nations parents.

Relationships with Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service have all strengthened this year.

All staff did cultural self-reflection training and Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week activities were shared and attended across the organisation.

New artwork by local First Nations artists and by artists supported through The Torch now hang in both our Bendigo and Shepparton offices, reflecting our commitment to culturally safe and respectful workplaces.

A more systematic approach to cultural safety and anti-racism will be a priority in 2026, ensuring ARC Justice continues to be a culturally safe mainstream alternative legal service and a strong ally in First Nations-led advocacy.

We also continued our work to reduce our environmental impact.

Hybrid fleet vehicles, improved waste sorting and the move from paper-based systems to predominantly digital operations are now embedded as everyday practice. Our strongest environmental impact, however, comes through our climate justice advocacy, where we continue to push for responsible mitigation and adaptation measures to protect the liveability of regional Victoria.



ARC Justice's growth, strengthened partnerships and responsible practices ensure we remain a stable, effective and forward-looking organisation – one that can meet present needs while planning confidently for the future.

Financials