

Increased inclusiveness and geographical reach of our services

Angela’s story: Legal help where it was needed

When Angela’s* rental home in Harcourt burned to the ground in the January 2026 bushfires, she and her partner lost almost everything.

In the aftermath, they faced a question: If they ended their lease and handed back the keys, could they still return to search the rubble for their belongings? Angela took the question to Harcourt’s busy community recovery hub.

Harcourt is only about 30 kilometres from Bendigo, but for people dealing with the aftermath of a disaster, legal help based in another town can feel a long way away. That’s why ARC Justice was working on the ground in affected communities, once hubs were running.

A council worker at the recovery hub had been briefed by ARC Justice’s outreach team and knew Angela should get legal advice before handing back the keys. That early connection mattered.

Before she signed anything or unknowingly gave up any rights, Angela received advice about accessing the property, properly ending the tenancy and what she and her partner could claim.

For Angela, the immediate concern was returning to what remained of her home. The legal questions were bound up with the practical and personal work of recovering from the fire.

The question came up where Angela was already seeking support. A worker who knew legal help was available could connect her with it, without expecting her to work out the legal issues on her own.



** Name changed*

It’s a small example of why geographical reach matters. Distance is only part of the picture. Knowing who can help and finding them at the right time matters too.

People shouldn’t need to recognise that they have a legal problem, know where to get help or travel to a major regional centre to find it.

By taking legal help into community recovery hubs and building relationships with the people already working there, ARC Justice can reach people earlier, wherever they live.

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