Legal support for those who need it most

Strategic Plan 2026–2031

South-East Monash Legal Service



South-East Monash Legal Service acknowledges the Bunurong/ Boonwurrung People as the rightful and traditional custodians of the land where we work, and First Peoples language groups and communities across Victoria and Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We know that diversity makes us stronger. The perspectives, experiences and leadership of women, First Nations peoples, people of colour, LGBTIQA+ communities, people with disability and people from migrant and refugee backgrounds enrich our organisation and our work. We are committed to anti-racism, equity and inclusion, and to providing services where everyone feels safe, respected and supported.



About us

For more than 50 years, South-East Monash Legal Service has provided free legal help to communities across Melbourne's southeast, including the City of Casey, Cardinia Shire and Greater Dandenong.

We provide help through free legal advice and education, casework, social work support, and legal representation across a range of legal issues.

As a community legal centre, we work alongside our community to address everyday legal problems and advocate for fairer laws and better systems. We deliver support in places where people already are — including courts, community centres, schools and health settings — partnering with schools, community groups and other legal centres to improve access to justice across our region.

Our clients

We work with people needing legal support across Victoria, prioritising those in the southeast of Melbourne and who are experiencing financial hardship and other forms of intersecting disadvantage.

Values

- Respect
- Community
- Courage
- Excellence

Vision

A fair and inclusive community where everyone has access to justice.

Purpose

To be a trusted partner to our community by providing holistic legal and advocacy support focussing on those who need it most.



Guiding Principles

Together, these features underpin our identity and guide our ways of working.

Wraparound and integrated service delivery

We offer more than legal advice alone. Our model brings together a range of legal and social supports to respond holistically to the needs of our community and clients, recognising that legal issues often sit alongside broader personal, social, and economic challenges.

Early intervention through education and capacity building

We place a strong emphasis on intervening early to minimise the risk of issues escalating into legal problems, or to prevent existing legal issues from worsening. Through targeted community legal education, student education and capacity-building initiatives, we help people and communities understand their rights, build their capabilities, and support them to resolve issues and avoid more complex or serious legal problems.

A place-based organisation with a broader reach

We are deeply grounded in Melbourne's southeast, where we have built strong relationships and a trusted local presence for more than fifty years. From this foundation, we extend our services to other parts of Victoria where there is clear need that aligns with our capability. This approach enables us to broaden our impact, while remaining firmly connected to community.

A genuine commitment to going above and beyond for our community and clients

At the heart of our approach is a strong commitment to doing what is needed. Our staff consistently go further to support clients, respond to complex needs and situations, and achieve meaningful outcomes, guided by our vision, purpose and values.

A trusted partner committed to working collaboratively

We recognise that supporting the community requires a collaborative approach. We work with other trusted partners to deliver place-based and wraparound supports to our clients.

Review cycle

The 5-year Strategic Plan will undergo a formal review after 3-years to ensure ongoing strategic relevance to the needs of communities and our operating context.

Strategic Priority

01

Maximising our impact

Ensuring our services are accessible, effective and aligned to the needs of our community.

Areas of work	Intended Outcomes
Improving access to our services for priority communities (through addressing barriers, active outreach and growing community connection)	→ Priority communities are able to access our services easily and earlier → Re-prioritisation of our resources to target priority communities
Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of our service delivery models through improved integration and innovation	→ Clients have better experiences and outcomes → Program areas collaborate more to drive client-centred and holistic service delivery
Leveraging research and data to inform decision making	→ Consistent evidence-informed decision-making process embedded across the organisation

Strategic Priority

02

Strengthening our influence, capacity building and advocacy

Using our knowledge, relationships and evidence to drive systemic change.

Areas of work	Intended Outcomes
Amplifying our influence through data-driven advocacy	→ We have greater influence on law, policy and systems that affect the communities we serve
Embedding client and community voice throughout our organisation	→ Clients and communities have more opportunities to influence the way we deliver services → Client and community perspectives are actively embedded in organisational planning, service design, advocacy and/or program evaluations
Deepening relationships with key organisations, partners and communities	→ We have trusted and collaborative relationships that enable us to enhance our reach and impact
Continuing to invest in community legal education and capability building	→ Communities are better informed of their rights and can more confidently navigate the legal system to seek help → University students are equipped with skill, experience and values to offer assistance and have an impact in real-world contexts
Increasing our focus on program evaluation and outcomes reporting to better evidence our impact	→ We are able to demonstrate the impact that we have achieved to keep us accountable and support continuous improvement

Strategic Priority

03

Investing in our people and the way we work

Strengthening the foundations that enable our staff to do their best work.

Areas of work	Intended Outcomes
Expanding training and supports for our people	→ Our people feel supported and engaged in the work that we do and are able to thrive in their roles → Our placement programs provide an educational opportunity of excellence
Enhancing the systems, structures and processes that underpin our work	→ Streamlined systems, structures and processes that support the efficiency, consistency and effectiveness of our work
Strengthening financial sustainability, risk management and governance	→ Robust financial management, governance and risk practices that support long-term sustainability

South-East
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