



# Impact Report

## MEETING VICTIM- SURVIVORS WHERE IT MATTERS.

Victim-survivors arriving at family violence refuges often have multiple unresolved legal issues, each carrying serious implications for their safety and recovery. Over 12-months, Southside Justice partnered with a VincentCare family violence refuge to ensure every victim-survivor had access to free, trauma-informed legal help using a Legal Health Check model.

## WHY LEGAL HEALTH CHECKS?



A Legal Health Check is a practical tool used by community lawyers to identify legal issues early, often before an issue escalates. It asks clear, accessible questions to uncover issues clients may not recognise as legal or urgent. The check focuses on the problems most likely to undermine safety and wellbeing if left unresolved, including safety concerns, housing, debts, fines, and family law.

Conducting the checks in the refuge provides access to legal support in a trusted environment and in collaboration with other supports, such as specialist family violence practitioners.

## DATA SNAPSHOT

15

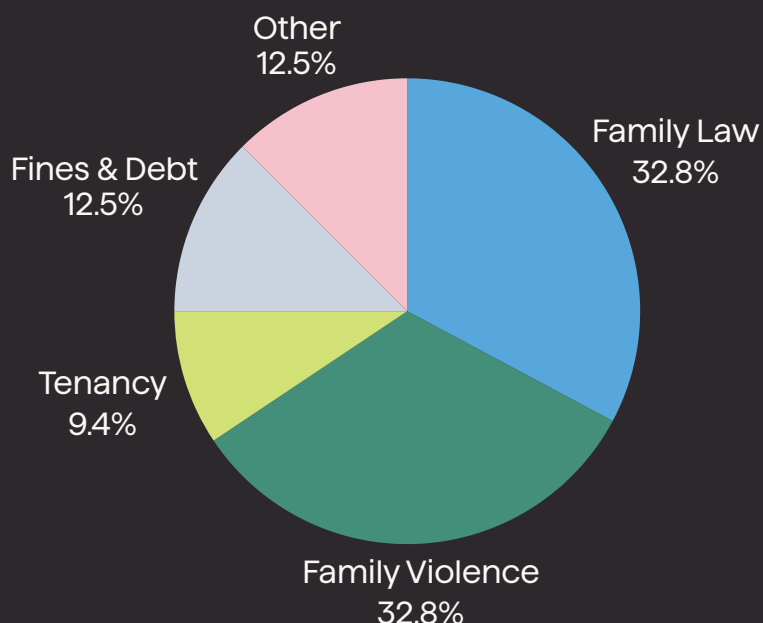
victim-survivors received a free legal health check, with 12 receiving ongoing legal support.

5.3

was the average number of legal issues faced by each victim-survivor, more than 5x the number typically experienced in the general population.

## LEGAL PROBLEMS

Most legal issues related to family violence and family law, including separation, property and child-related issues. Fines and debts incurred due to family violence were also prevalent, followed by issues arising from leaving tenancy arrangements.



## FATIMA'S STORY

**What began with an intervention order became a long-term relationship that is helping Fatima overcome multiple legal barriers to build a safe, independent future for herself and her child.**

When Fatima first met us for her Legal Health Check, we quickly discovered that her most urgent priority was the imminent expiry of her Family Violence Intervention Order. Still fearful for her safety, she wanted the order extended. Working closely with interpreters, we helped her understand her options and obtained an extension, ensuring continued protection for herself and her child.

As our relationship developed, Fatima shared another important concern. She wanted to visit family overseas, including relatives who were unwell, but was unable to obtain a passport for her child because it required the consent of both parents. After a previous application was unsuccessful, we helped her prepare a stronger application seeking special consideration due to family violence. The application was approved, giving her the freedom and peace of mind to reconnect with her support system overseas.

We then connected Fatima with our specialised REACHher program, which combines legal support and financial counselling to help women achieve fairer property outcomes after family violence. We continue to support her through property proceedings, working towards a fair division of assets that will set Fatima up for long-term financial stability and independence.

## STRENGTHENING THE HOLISTIC RESPONSE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

Data collected across the 12-month partnership showed increased legal capability and confidence among specialist family violence practitioners.

**By supporting refuge staff, we are strengthening frontline practice, enabling practitioners to work confidently within their scope while improving outcomes for victim-survivors.**

### **BASELINE → 12 MONTHS**

Confidence referring clients

**MODERATE → HIGH**

*100% strongly agreed their referral confidence had improved*

Knowledge of family violence legal issues

**MIXED → STRONGLY IMPROVED**

*100% strongly agreed their legal knowledge had improved*

*"The lawyers are great, they are persistent and patient working with our clients and bring out better outcomes for legal and financial matters that have not been addressed for a while."*

# Thank you

W.C.F. Thomas  
Charitable Trust as  
managed by  
Equity Trustees.

Our deep appreciation to the VincentCare refuge team for their trusted guidance and partnership.



**Our Partners in Place model connects legal support to 30+ community organisations in Melbourne's inner-south.**

**[www.southsidejustice.org.au](http://www.southsidejustice.org.au)**