




ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024





Acknowledgement

Court Network acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways across Victoria and Queensland upon which we conduct our business.

We pay our deepest respects to Elders past, present and emerging as the holders of knowledge, tradition, Lore and culture as related to their peoples, lands and histories. We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the First Peoples of Australia and respect their continuing connection to Country.

Court Network is committed to working towards equity in access to justice and the ongoing journey of reconciliation.

Language definition:

Throughout this document we use the term 'Aboriginal' or 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' to encapsulate the many distinct and connected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and language groups residing, working or accessing services within our region and beyond, unless specific definition is required.

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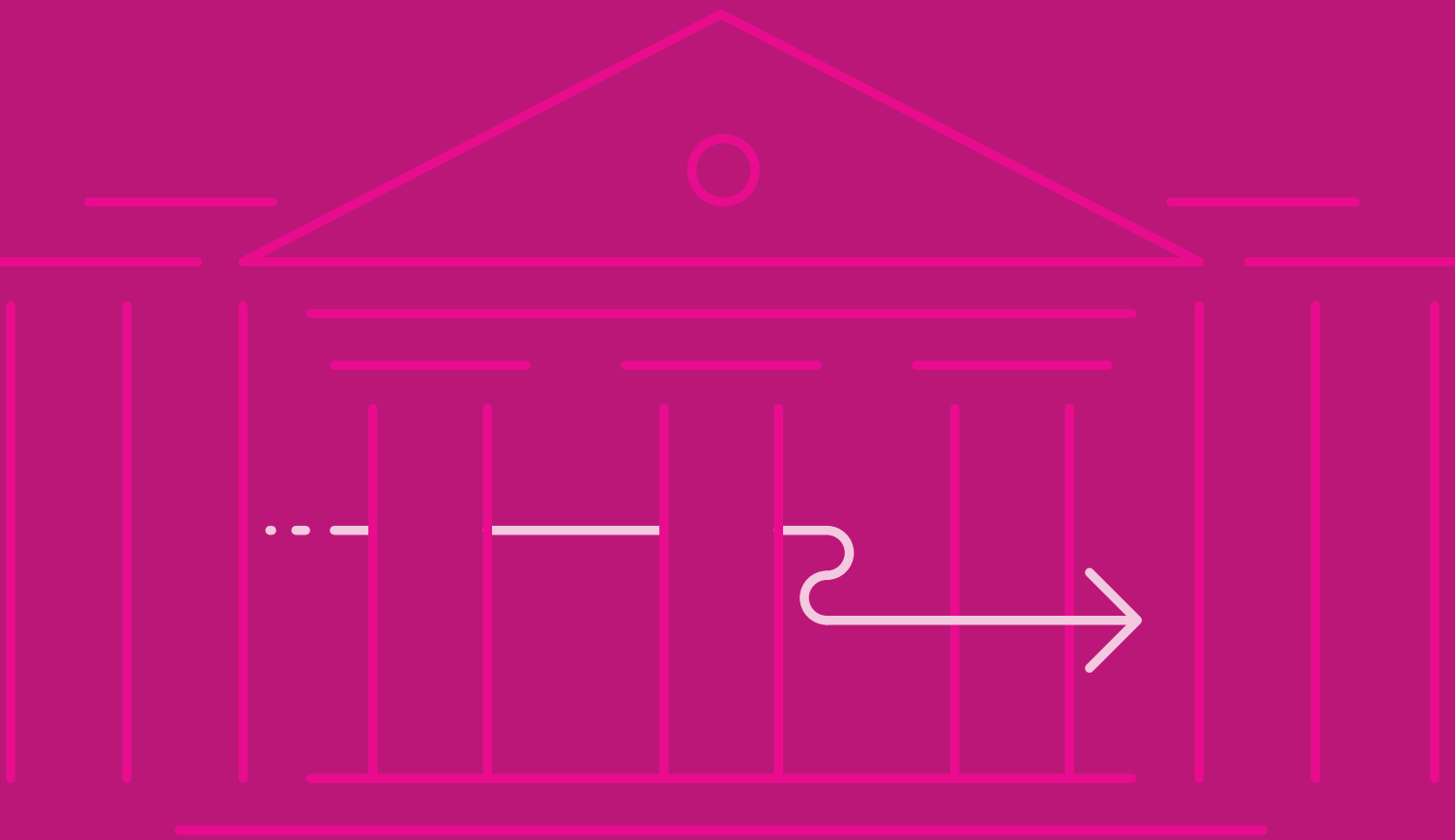
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WELCOME

A Community Organisation To Help Navigate The Court System

Court Network is a front-line community organisation dedicated to supporting all court users to access justice fairly and equitably.

For nearly 45 years, Court Network has sought to equip people to better understand and navigate the court system. The organisation strives to ensure service users are treated with dignity and respect throughout the process.



Who We Are

Free and Impartial

As a free and confidential service, Court Network's highly trained volunteers, known as Networkers, provide support, information and referral services on an impartial and non-judgmental basis to all persons, including applicants, respondents, victims, witnesses, defendants, and their families and friends.

Pre - During - Post Court Support

In addition to in-court support, Networkers assist court users via telephone support and online hearing support. The integration of existing and new service models has ensured court users get the help they need before, during and after their court hearings.



Mission

To provide the community with volunteers who stand beside, empower and instil confidence in all court users.

Vision

To provide the community with volunteers to support all court users and enhance access to justice, as a nationally recognised organisation.

Values



Inclusion and Empowerment

We respect, support and value diversity in all its forms.



Curiosity and Courage

We are committed to continuous learning, innovation and growth. As individuals and as an organisation, we have courage to explore and accept new challenges.



Excellence

We strive to be our best and meet the highest standards.



Collaboration

We work collaboratively to achieve shared goals and greater impact.



Empathy and Compassion

We support each other and people we serve with kindness, empathy and compassion and without judgement.



Integrity

We act ethically, honestly, with fairness and impartiality.

President and Executive Director's Report

Dear Colleagues, Friends and Supporters,

As we close the chapter on 2023-2024, it is with pride and heartfelt gratitude that we reflect on the strides Court Network has made this year. This year, once again, has been a testament to our unwavering commitment to supporting individuals navigating the complexities of the justice system.



**The Honourable
Kathy Williams**
President



Julie Jones
Executive Director

Celebrating Our Achievements

Our dedicated volunteers and staff have continued to provide invaluable assistance and empathy to those in need. Whether it was offering a reassuring presence in courtrooms, guiding individuals through court processes, or providing crucial emotional support, our teams have exemplified the spirit of compassion and professionalism that defines Court Network.

Here is a glimpse into what we have accomplished together:

- **Family Court Safety Net Program:** This year the program continued to strengthen and thrive, with increased visibility and referrals across major court locations in Victoria and Queensland. We are also laying the groundwork to, hopefully, extend this vital service into New South Wales in the upcoming year.
- **Wyndham Law Precinct:** We maintained our support for the Werribee Magistrates Court, whilst actively working with the Wyndham Advisory Committee to secure a space in the new Wyndham Law Courts. A dedicated area for our volunteers will enhance the quality of service and support their well-being. In the coming year, we will seek opportunities to fund our operations to transition to the new court when it is up and running.

- **Culturally Inclusive Support in Dandenong:** Thanks to a grant secured in November 2023, we launched a culturally inclusive support service at Dandenong Magistrates Court. This project, which began in March 2024, includes multilingual resources, community education, and increased awareness to better support diverse court users.
- **Queensland Family Violence Information Desk Service:** We proudly expanded our services to Cairns, bringing support to five courts. This expansion enhances our role in supporting specialist domestic family violence court operations and collaborating with stakeholders to improve safety and streamline processes.
- **A Growing Volunteer Team:** This year, we welcomed a diverse group of trainees and graduates, enriching our team with new skills and perspectives. Our volunteers' dedication to social justice and their ability to offer empathetic support are the cornerstones of our mission.
- **Strategic Planning and Governance:** In March 2024, our Board revisited our 5-year strategic plan, celebrating notable successes and making minor adjustments. Key achievements highlighted include the effective execution of strategic initiatives, increased community impact, robust financial performance, and the formation of innovative partnerships.
- **Reconciliation Action Plan:** We have embarked on a significant journey to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan. This initiative aims to formalise our commitment to reconciliation, to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and to foster cultural awareness across our organisation.
- **Support for Volunteering:** Joining the Coalition of Support for the National Strategy for Volunteering reflects our dedication to advancing volunteering in Australia. This affiliation enhances our reputation and provides access to valuable resources.
- **New Patrons:** We are honoured to welcome Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria, as a Court Network patron and to have the generous continuing patronage of the Honourable Anne Ferguson, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria. Their support is so important for our organisation and underscores the significance of our work.
- **Victorian Accreditation:** In December 2023, Court Network proudly completed the Victorian Accreditation process, meeting all quality standards set by the Quality Improvement Council and Human Services Standards. This accomplishment is a testament to our commitment to continuous improvement.
- **Celebrating Our Volunteers:** Our volunteers were the stars of the Victorian Annual Volunteer Conference and National Volunteer Week. These events celebrated their wonderful contributions and provided opportunities for learning and recognition.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, Court Network is committed to building on our achievements and tackling new challenges with innovation and determination. As our organisation strives for greater impact and effectiveness, we remain guided by our shared commitment to justice, compassion, and equity for all.

We thank our volunteers, our staff, our donors, and our partners for their unwavering support and dedication. We will continue to work together to make a meaningful difference in the lives of all those we serve.

**The Honourable
Kathy Williams**
President

Julie Jones
Executive Director

Victorian State Manager Report

The year 2023-2024 has seen a period of significant progress and achievement for Court Network. Throughout this period, we have built upon our mission to provide non-legal support, information, and referral services to those attending court. I am pleased to report on the key developments and successes that have shaped this year.



Sarah Harris
Victorian
State Manager

Establishing an Integrated Service Framework

Our staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to establish an Integrated Service Framework (ISF) across the state. This framework is designed to ensure that all teams within Court Network operate cohesively, providing a seamless service to court users, regardless of their location. The ISF promotes a unified approach to service delivery, ensuring that all our processes, from initial contact to post-hearing follow-up, are consistent and aligned with our organisational values. The ISF is a guide to what we do and how we do it. The rollout of this framework is ongoing, and we are confident that it will further enhance the quality and accessibility of our services as it is fully implemented across the state.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System Rollout to All Courts

In a feat that seems too large for an organisation of our size, we have tackled and succeeded in implementing a digital program across all courts. Hundreds of Networkers have been provided with education to use the CRM, complete their referrals, enter statistics and record details of incidents online. Mildura, Gippsland and the Coroners' Court are the final pieces in this sophisticated puzzle and will soon be linked into Court Network's tailored service user management software. The CRM has enhanced our ability to manage court user interactions, ensuring that our services are delivered efficiently and effectively. It has streamlined our operations, enabling us to better understand the needs of court users and respond to them in a timely manner. This data-driven approach has provided us with valuable insights, which will further inform our service delivery in the coming years.

In addition to the CRM rollout, we have also completed the implementation of our online Incident Management System (IMS). The IMS represents a significant leap forward in how we manage and record incidents across all our service locations. We have not only improved the accuracy and opportunity of incident reporting but have also ensured that our response to all issues is prompt and consistent. The IMS allows us to maintain high standards of safety and support for our volunteers, staff, and court users alike, reinforcing our commitment to providing a secure environment for all.

Grassroots Initiatives

This year, we were fortunate to receive new funding from the Legal Services Board and Commission, which has allowed us to launch a grassroots project aimed at supporting multicultural court users, particularly those within the Dandenong Court. This project reflects our commitment to inclusivity and our recognition of the unique challenges faced by diverse communities in the court system. The Dandenong Court initiative is the first step in what we hope will be a broader engagement with multicultural communities across Victoria.

Growth of the Safety Net Program

The Safety Net program, which continues to provide critical support to vulnerable court users, has seen considerable growth over the past year. As we have expanded our reach, we have also identified new trends and challenges emerging within the court system. These include an increased need for mental health support, more complex family law cases, and a growing demand for services in regional areas. In response, we have adapted the Safety Net program to address these needs, ensuring that we remain responsive and proactive in our service delivery.

Looking Ahead

As we look forward to the year ahead, several key initiatives will shape our focus:

- **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP):** The development and implementation of our RAP will be a significant milestone for Court Network. This plan will guide our efforts in fostering stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ensuring that our services are culturally appropriate and accessible to all.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Project – Final Evaluation:** With the final outcomes of the Dandenong Court Diversity and Inclusion project set to be realized, we anticipate that this initiative will serve as a blueprint for similar efforts across other regions. The lessons learned here will inform our approach to supporting multicultural court users statewide.

- **Re-Building the Volunteer Review, 1:1 Practice Conversations with Networkers:** We will be re-building our Volunteer Review process to better support and recognise the contributions of our volunteers. This updated process will focus on continuous improvement, ensuring that our volunteers receive the feedback and development opportunities they need to thrive in their roles. A re-building of this initiative will see us conducting 1:1 practice conversations with Networkers across all services and teams. These conversations will provide an invaluable opportunity for personalised feedback, professional development, and the sharing of best practices.
- **Expansion of the Safety Net Project:** We are excited to expand the Safety Net project beyond Victoria, with plans to introduce this vital support service in New South Wales, South Australia, and Tasmania. This expansion is a testament to the success of the program and our commitment to supporting court users across Australia. This is no small outcome, and the impact of this expansion will be profound.
- **Digital Platforms Reviewed:** We will now take some time to look at the systems we use on a daily basis, the engagement of our volunteers with those systems, and the efficiencies that have or have not been created. We will take the next 12 months to build a review tool to assist us in capturing this information and evaluate the time and effort that it takes to operate these systems.

These achievements will be significant, but none of this would be possible without the remarkable support of our Networkers. Their dedication, whether in court, on the phones, or working in the Brisbane Family Court, is truly inspiring. Their sustained commitment to our mission enables us to continue providing essential support to court users, and without them, our organisation would not exist.

I'd also like to acknowledge the amazing work of our staff and stakeholders, and express my deepest gratitude to everyone involved with Court Network—your efforts have made a profound difference in the lives of countless court users, and I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together.

As we move forward, I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and look forward to continuing our work together to support those who need it most.

Sarah Harris
Victorian State Manager

Queensland State Manager Report

The 2023–2024 financial year has been an exciting one for Queensland operations. During the final phases of the previous financial year, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) formally reached out to Court Network, as a preferred service, to provide a request for quote (RFQ) to establish a check-in reception service for the Domestic Family Violence (DFV) Specialist Court rollout in Cairns.



Grant Robin
Queensland
State Manager

With this exclusive invitation, Court Network can proudly be recognised as a trusted service with a strong reputation within the sector, and after demonstrating the excellent service model that underpins the four established sites across Southeast Queensland (SEQ), we gladly took up the opportunity. Following detailed consultation with DJAG and court stakeholders, and alongside the expansion of the Brisbane and Ipswich call-over days, Court Network launched the Cairns service in early-July 2023. In a matter of weeks, we were able to mobilise volunteers, employ a Cairns Volunteer Coordinator and lead the integration of the court user support with other local entities in time for the service’s ‘go-live’ date on 11 July 2023. Today, Cairns has a newly established, deeply experienced Volunteer Coordinator and a team of well-oriented and dedicated volunteers, all delivering support to the local Cairns community at the same high standard seen across all SEQ.

More recently, with the end of this financial year nearing and funding agreement expiry in sight, DJAG again reached out to Court Network to confirm the continuation of service provision across the existing five locations, adding a 2-year extension to the agreement, continuing through to 2026. Renewed confidence and growth in the Queensland service profile has seen a pleasing result for 2023/2024. We have enjoyed a year of stable staffing and leadership, culminating in the consolidation and expansion of existing services. We have remained focused in ensuring our services are consistent and that our volunteers are recognised, respected and encouraged throughout the challenges and rewards presented in the DFV space. In doing so, we also acknowledge the following key outcomes:

- Our close partnership with the Learning and Development Team continues to foster collegiate relationships, new innovations, and great results, with a continuous stream of trainees graduating to volunteer positions for the DFV reception service.
- A progressive, productive and open dialogue with our stakeholders, particularly DJAG, yielding tangible results regarding service provision and quality improvement.
- Improved relationships and communications with our likeminded partners and forging new collaborative connections with critical support services to better assist and empower vulnerable court users.
- A consistent, robust service model that ensures reception services remain occupied, with a consistently high percentage of volunteer attendance on call-over days for each respective court.
- A focus on building on our reputation as a reliable, trusted and outcomes-driven organisation with our consistent application of leading service delivery through the efforts of fully committed staff and volunteers.

With an eventful and successful year behind us – I am saddened to report that this will be my last penning of the Queensland operations annual summation as I finish up with Court Network 2 July 2024.

I sincerely and gratefully thank Court Network for the opportunity and wonderful experience I have enjoyed as QSM. I would like to extend my thanks to all the staff who have supported me, and to the amazing DFV Reception Desk volunteers. Without their continued passion, energy and commitment, providing this essential service would not be possible.

Kia Kaha my wonderful Court Network friends.

Grant Robin
Queensland State Manager

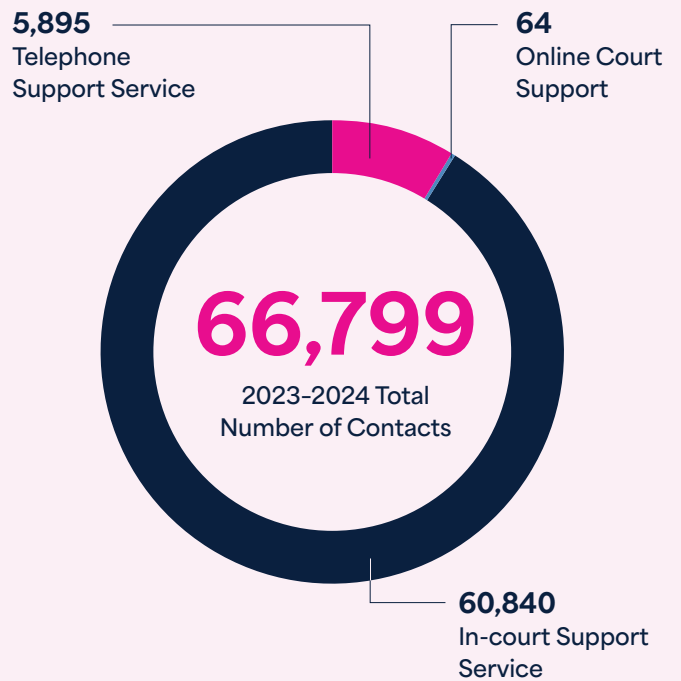
Statistics

Domestic Violence Reception Desk Contacts*

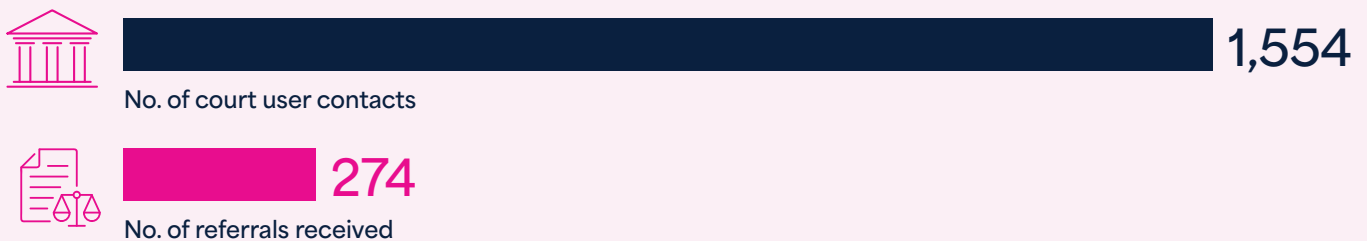
*Contact numbers are approximated from the number of hearings.



Support, Information and Referral Contacts



Federal Safety Net Program



Number of Pre-Service Training Cohorts



9

All services

Number of Graduates



64

Online Court Support



36

Outreach and Phone Service

90

Total Number of Graduates

Number of Volunteer Milestones (years of service)



12

Networkers celebrated 5 years of service



4

Networkers celebrated 10 years of service



1

Networkers celebrated 15 years of service



1

Networkers celebrated 25 years of service



1

Networkers celebrated 30 years of service



1

Networkers celebrated 35 years of service

Collectively, these milestones add up to 205 years of service

'Last week when I spent hours on the phone being given the runaround, the person from Court Network was the only one I felt took the time to try to understand and help me.'

Court user on the Telephone Service

'[The Networker] was excellent and incredibly helpful and compassionate. She is a volunteer who was gentle and patient with me as I was very anxious and stressed before my court appearance. Please pass on my thanks and gratitude to her.'

Court user at Ballarat Magistrates' Court

'You guys are the best, you're just so supportive. To go into the courtroom is scary and you're just a very calming presence.'

Court user on the Telephone Service

'I wouldn't have been able to attend court today had Court Network not been available to support me.'

Court user at Heidelberg Magistrates Court

'I cannot thank the volunteer Court Networkers enough who helped me on 2 occasions as an assault victim at Shepparton courthouse [...] This is a critically required service especially for individuals who need the support due to strained family circumstances.'

Court user at Shepparton Magistrates' Court

PRIORITY 1 SERVICE

Work where and when we are most needed
and can make a real difference for court users.

We will:

- ✓ Respond to the changing needs of court users and the dynamic court environment
- ✓ Collaborate or partner with other services that operate within and beyond the courts
- ✓ Identify and service new and emerging areas of need



Priority 1 Case Study: Brisbane Family Court

Court Networker, Kerry, received a referral from a local domestic violence service in Brisbane to help court user, Michelle, with a child custody hearing at court.

Michelle arrived early, clearly anxious, not having had the chance to connect with any legal support prior to her attendance at court.

When she got there, Kerry took her up to level two to meet with the Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) and assisted with a form to access the duty lawyer. Michelle's hearing was scheduled for 10am and Kerry knew she would need some support before stepping into the courtroom. Kerry advocated on Michelle's behalf, ensuring that the duty lawyer would touch base with Michelle to provide additional support before the hearing.

While they waited, Michelle started to feel increasingly anxious and mentioned she was having stomach pains. Kerry gave her water and asked if she had something to eat, to help settle her nerves. They talked about her hobbies to take her mind off the situation. Since Michelle wasn't keen on using her phone, Kerry handed her a notepad to scribble on as a distraction. Knowing she was worried about getting sick in court, Kerry grabbed a vomit bag from first aid, which seemed to put Michelle's mind at ease slightly.

Kerry and Michelle chatted further, and Michelle began to ask about the services that Court Network offers. Kerry could see she was starting to calm down a bit, especially after receiving some legal advice.

Things took a turn when Michelle's ex-partner showed up in-person, even though she'd been told he would attend via web conference. The duty lawyer informed Michelle that her ex-partner's request for remote appearance had been denied, but Michelle hadn't been notified of this until that moment. Her anxiety escalated and she felt unsafe.

Kerry quickly coordinated with security to get Michelle into a safe room, explaining the process and letting her know that security would escort her from then on. This support, along with the legal advice she received, helped to reduce Michelle's anxiety. She thanked Kerry and said she wanted to book in with a Networker again for her next hearing.

All names have been changed to protect the privacy of Court Network's service users.

The Safety Net Program

The Safety Net Program has finalised its second year, with extensive evaluation work conducted to measure the program's effectiveness over four years.

All teams have been involved in collecting feedback, gathering data, and providing case studies to support ongoing evaluation efforts. Court Network received positive feedback from the court users, stakeholders and Networkers involved or supported by the program, evidencing the program's growing strengths and impact.

Over the last 12 months, Court Network has worked alongside a consultant to create extensive evaluation materials, including a theory of change model, a monitoring-and-evaluation framework, survey questions, key data collection methods, and key evaluation questions. The development of evaluation material has been key in setting the program up for success and providing Court Network with a great foundation to support future funding and expansion opportunities.

Our in-court teams have been focusing on building strong relationships with court staff, including the development of great connections with the Family Advocacy Support Services teams. The Brisbane in-court team have seen an increase in referrals, and both courts in Brisbane and Melbourne have also received feedback from Judges thanking our Networkers for their support. Similarly, and as the Dandenong Federal Circuit and Family Court looks to increase in-person hearings from July 2024, the Networking team has recorded an increase in court user engagement and requests for support in-line with the growing number of hearings per day.

Telephone Service volunteers have participated in presentations from Legal Aid, Family Advocacy Support Service, Relationship Matters and other family law services. The Program team have also been focusing on the development of resources and information to help support Networkers responding to Family Court calls.

Program staff have been working on engagement with stakeholders to promote the service and increase referrals and engagement from the community. They have conducted over 200 promotional activities including, but not limited to, information sessions, presentations, mail outs, 1-to-1 meetings, and more. Highlights from the program of presentations include Court Network's engagement with Legal Aid's Family Dispute Resolution Service, the Family Law Pathways Network, relationship services, family violence services, the FCFCOA Strategic Support Hub, the FCFCOA Lighthouse team, family and parenting counselling services and Community Legal Centres.

The focus for the coming year will be the program's expansion into New South Wales. Safety Net staff have commenced consultation with Federal Circuit and Family Court staff in New South Wales registries to explore service delivery options and identify the needs of the community. Court Network has also commenced stakeholder engagement with community services to build strong relationships and referral pathways in preparation for the launch of the service in the 2024-2025 financial year.

Legal Services Board and Commissioner Project: Supporting Multicultural Court Users in Dandenong

In November 2023, Court Network was awarded a grant from the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner to launch a culturally inclusive support service for court users at the Dandenong Magistrates Court. Dandenong Magistrates' Court has one of the most multicultural court user profiles within Victoria, and, through Networker and stakeholder feedback, it was identified that court users in the region require additional support to successfully engage in court processes.

Since commencing her role in March 2024 as Court Network's Diversity and Inclusion Project Manager, Maike Wallace has been leading the development and implementation of the service. This has included the mapping of key stakeholders across Dandenong, followed by meetings with representatives from multicultural, refugee and migrant, homeless, in-court, and family violence services, and further consultation with representatives from local councils. Discussions with the community's stakeholders provided an opportunity for Court Network to further understand and document the needs of multicultural court users and barriers to successfully engaging in court processes. In addition, consultation also offered up opportunities to share information about Court Network, thereby increasing incoming and outgoing referrals and service provision for court users.

The identified needs of the community included making key information available in different languages, promoting an understanding of court processes and that of court user rights and responsibilities, and increasing knowledge of relevant support services.

Through this engagement, the following activities were identified as key project outputs:

- 1 The development of 'Your Day in Court' resources for multicultural court users, to be translated into key languages and shared with court users and service providers.
- 2 The delivery of community education sessions that provide information on attending court and information about the available services to support court users.
- 3 The delivery of service updates and the provision of education to adjoining services across the region, ensuring those who work with court users or potential court users are aware of Court Network's service and know how to make in-bound referrals.
- 4 The education of Networkers in understanding services for outbound referrals, and how different cultural groups can best be supported in court.

These identified project outputs will be completed by December 2024.

Project highlights across 2023-2024 include:

- 1** Court Network met with over 20 services providers in Dandenong to promote the work of the organisation and understand the needs of multicultural court users.
- 2** Court Network completed the first community education session on attending court with Afghan migrants in a Neighbourhood House. An additional 4 education sessions have been booked for the second half of 2024.
- 3** The content for two resources on attending court were developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, including court staff and local community legal centres.



PRIORITY 2 VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE

Provide high-quality services through a skilled volunteer workforce.

We will:

- ✓ Recruit a diverse and adaptable workforce that reflects the communities we serve
- ✓ Design and deliver training and development for volunteers that reflects best practice
- ✓ Develop retention strategies that are appropriate to the different cohorts of volunteers
- ✓ Prioritise the wellbeing and safety of our volunteers and staff



Priority 2 Case Study: Melbourne Magistrates Court

In a Melbourne court room, ETTY, an Affected Family Member (AFM), was becoming increasingly distressed. The Magistrate requested that Lucas, the Networker on shift who was in court observing proceedings, provide support to ETTY.

Lucas escorted ETTY out of the court room towards the Court Network office so they could have a chat, alleviate some of ETTY's anxiety and provide referral options.

On the way to the office, ETTY disclosed that they were distressed at the prospect of the Respondent being held in custody and indicated they regretted calling the police in response to the most recent Family Violence matter.

ETTY is Iranian and had no other family or friends in Australia, so the Respondent was their only support. As Lucas and ETTY neared the Court Network office, ETTY was becoming more distressed, and Lucas got a sense that the situation may escalate.

Thinking proactively, Lucas waited until they had reached the Court Network office and then approached the Protective Services Officers (PSOs) to let them know to keep an ear and eye out. Lucas continued conversation with ETTY, during which more details of the history of family violence was revealed. Lucas then approached the Legal Aid Team to see if they could locate the Family Violence Applicant Practitioner.

ETTY then disclosed their suicide ideation and Lucas again requested assistance of Legal Aid to locate the Mental Health Advisory and Response Service (MHARS) worker. While the workers were being located, the ETTY had a medical episode. Thanks to Lucas' pre-warning, the PSOs were alert and responded swiftly, and the other workforce members requested by Lucas arrived. The ambulance was called by a PSO, and Lucas and other workers were able to provide information to the ambulance officers to enable immediate and ongoing health care provision.

All names have been changed to protect the privacy of Court Network's service users.

Recruitment Learning and Development

Volunteering with Court Network demands a deep commitment to social justice, confidence, sharp observational skills, a willingness to listen, and a calm demeanour to engage with court users, often on what is a difficult and stressful day.

Our volunteers are skilled at building rapport and trust in an environment that many find intimidating, where the formal and often unfamiliar legal processes can feel inaccessible to those without prior experience. The courage to advocate for and alongside court users who face barriers to justice is a defining characteristic of our Networkers; standing beside and empowering these individuals requires both determination and heart.

This year has been another significant period of team building. Hundreds of community members expressed a desire to contribute their time, skills, and compassion to Court Network services. When the alignment between an applicant's availability and our roster needs is just right, new volunteers embark on their journey toward becoming Networkers. At the core of applicants' motivation is a strong desire to support those navigating the challenging court environment. This year's applicants bring a diverse range of skills, particularly strong interpersonal abilities and a deep sense of empathy. Many emphasise their excellent communication skills, highlighting their capacity to listen actively and provide clear, compassionate guidance.

Our 2023–2024 trainees and graduate Networkers come from diverse educational, volunteering, and employment backgrounds, reflecting a broad spectrum of experiences that will enrich their contributions to the Networker role. Many have completed tertiary education, with qualifications ranging from social work, psychology, and law to fields like business administration and education.

Several have extensive volunteering experience in community organisations, crisis support, or advocacy groups, where they have developed a deep commitment to helping others and gained valuable experience in navigating challenging interpersonal dynamics. In their professional lives, many have held roles requiring strong communication and organisational skills, such as in customer service, legal assistance, healthcare, and education. This varied background demonstrates a collective dedication to service and an ability to apply their knowledge and skills in a practical and impactful way, to support court users effectively.

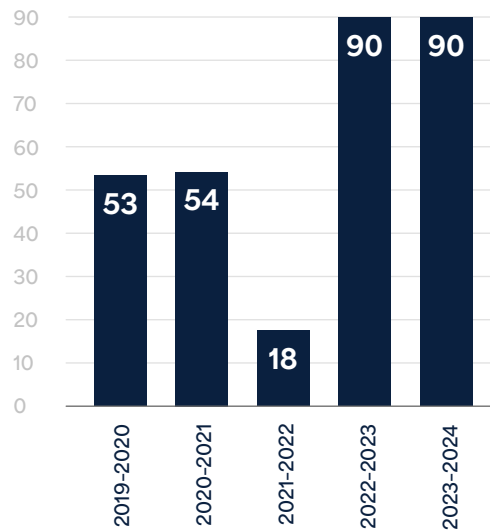
Our trainees and graduate Networkers represent a wide range of backgrounds, both in terms of age and linguistic abilities, contributing to a richer and more inclusive support environment for court users. Applicants span various age groups, from young adults in their 20s to individuals in their 60s and beyond, bringing a diverse array of life experiences and perspectives to the role. Additionally, many applicants are multilingual, speaking languages such as Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese, and Greek, as well as less commonly spoken languages like Dari and Swahili. This linguistic diversity is particularly valuable in our multicultural society, as it enables us to better serve individuals from different cultural backgrounds, ensuring that language barriers do not hinder the building of rapport and trust, thereby improving access to justice and support.

Our trainees bring a wealth of skills and abilities to our already vibrant volunteer community. Their varied ages, multilingual abilities, and interpersonal skills underscore the inclusive and compassionate ethos that is central to Court Network’s mission.

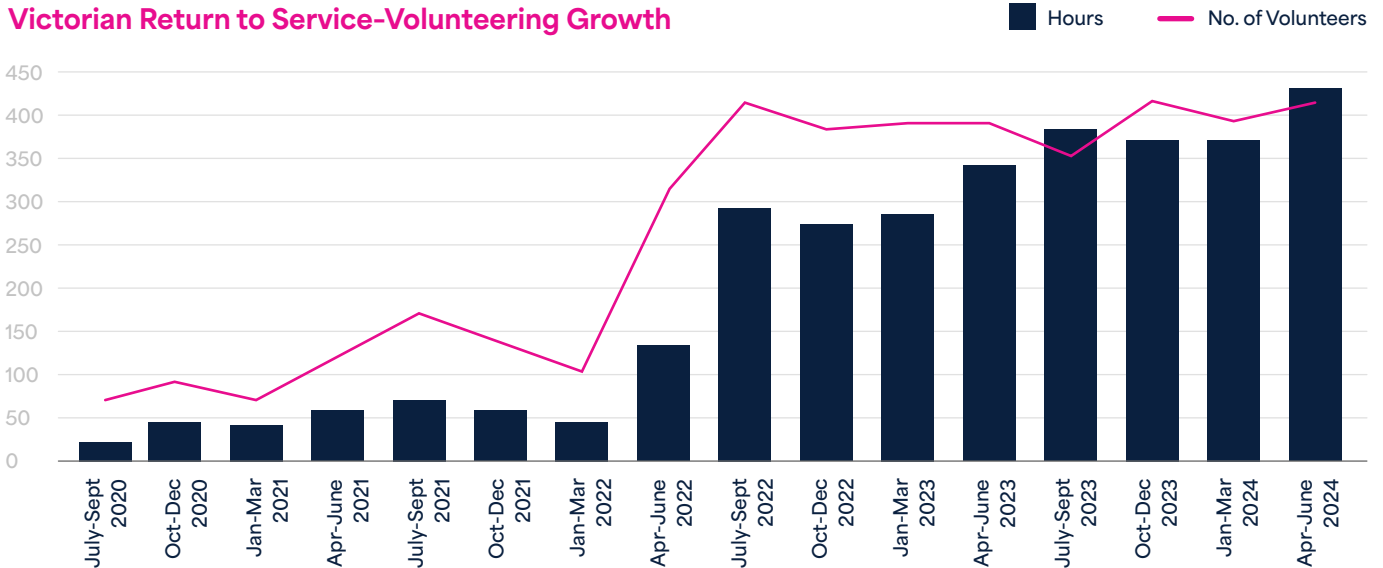
Key Data

- There were nine cohorts of new trainees (all services) who undertook pre-service training in 2023-2024.
- The number of volunteer graduates totalled 90, with 27 completing all DFV Reception Service training modules and 63 completing all Outreach & Phone Service training modules.
- Court Network launched two new eLearning Modules; Child Safety & Trauma Informed Support.
- The ‘Lunch & Learn’ Webinar series and resource packs were facilitated by representatives from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, CASA House, Deakin University, and Amaze. Topics included asylum seekers and refugees, survivors of sexual assault, understanding trauma and shame, and autism.

Court Network Trainee Graduates: Past 5 Years



Victorian Return to Service-Volunteering Growth



PRIORITY 3 PARTNERSHIPS AND REPUTATION

Build strong community and stakeholder relationships to expand our reach and influence.

We will:

- ✓ Build our reputation as an evidence-based service provider and a source of quality information and support
- ✓ Understand and respond to the needs of each jurisdiction
- ✓ Promote our services in the community through partnerships and proactive engagement
- ✓ Create new relationships that advance strategic goals



Priority 3 Case Study: Dandenong Magistrates Court

Court Networker, Sandra, who provides service at Dandenong Magistrates' Court met with Affected Family Member (AFM), Aalia, who was very distressed about having an intervention order at court.

Aalia was verbalising that it was all her fault, and that she shouldn't have contacted the police. She further commented that if she had only done what her husband had asked, they would not be in this position. She also stated that she had asked her husband to punish her.

Aalia was extremely agitated and wary of the police. Sandra reassured Aalia that she would be there to support her throughout her day in court. When the police requested Aalia's presence in the interview room, Sandra accompanied her and stayed with her while the officer explained the orders they would be pursuing in court. Aalia remained distressed while she attempted to convince the police to change their position on her case, and Sandra was able to provide emotional support during this difficult conversation.

When Aalia and Sandra left the interview room, Sandra put in a request for the Applicant Practitioner to see Aalia. Sandra also referred Aalia to two support services after Aalia had mentioned she wanted counselling for herself and her husband; Indian Care and Relationships Australia. The Applicant Practitioner attended to Aalia prior to court, and then again after court, to explain the conditions of the Order.

During court, when Aalia expressed concern that her husband would have nowhere to live, a friend who had accompanied Aalia told Sandra that Aalia's husband would be able to stay at her family's house, which was located approximately 150 meters from Aalia's residence. As the Order was about to be served with a 200-meter exclusion zone, Sandra then asked Aalia and the friend whether they would like to seek a modification to the Order that would allow for a 150-meter distance. They both confirmed they would like this, and asked that Sandra see what could be done. At the appropriate time, when a break in the proceedings was taking place, Sandra interjected and alerted the Prosecution team of the new proposed arrangement. The Prosecutor then put the request forward to the Magistrate, and the modification was accepted.

The Prosecutor and Magistrate thanked Sandra for her valuable assistance to the Court.

All names have been changed to protect the privacy of Court Network's service users.

The National Strategy for Volunteering: Coalition of Support



In May 2024, Court Network registered as an official supporter of the National Strategy for Volunteering. The Strategy is the culmination of a 12-month co-designed process and outlines a ten-year plan for a reimagined future for volunteering in Australia.

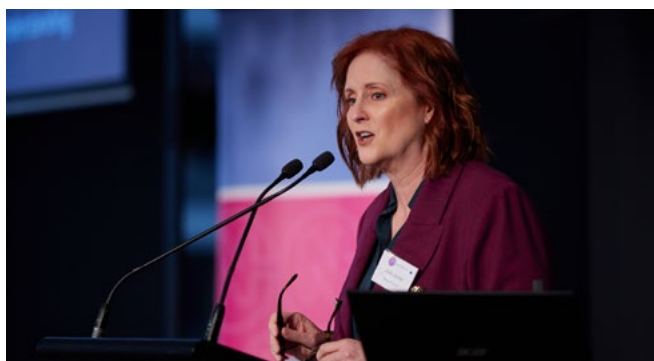
The project is a huge undertaking and Court Network acknowledges the efforts of Volunteering Australia in leading the project and the funding support provided by the Department of Social Services.

By aligning ourselves with this important initiative, we are dedicated to advancing the National Strategy's vision and strategic objectives. We recognise the immense value of volunteering in Australia, driving positive social impact, and creating a more cohesive society.

Court Network encourages all organisations working in the volunteer sector to join us as official supporters of the National Strategy for Volunteering. Together, we can amplify our collective impact and create lasting change in communities nationwide.



The 2023 Victorian Volunteer Conference: Trauma Informed Practice – A Shared Understanding



On 1 November 2023, Court Network held its annual Victorian Volunteer Conference at the RACV City Club. Court Network welcomed over 120 attendees and 6 guest speakers to participate in a collective investigation into ‘trauma-informed practice’. Our Networkers learned what it means to be trauma-informed and how to provide best practice trauma-informed support from an expert panel, led by Court Network’s Board President, the Honourable Katharine Williams. Panel members included Dr Bonnie Albrech, a Senior Forensic Psychologist with the Problem Behaviour Program at Forensicare, Tessa Terlouw, a Program Leader for Training, Education and Quality Improvement at CASA House, and Susanna Quinn, Manager of the Victim and Witness Assistance Service with the Office of Public Prosecutions.

Networkers also heard from keynote speakers, the Honourable Justice Lisa Hannan from the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria and Hannah Dickinson, Principal Solicitor and Head of Legal at the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, who presented updates from the MCV and ASRC, and touched on the importance of trauma-informed support for court users and asylum seekers being confronted with complexities of the justice system.



The day's events also included recognition of Networkers who had reached commendable milestones in service provision.

Court Network congratulated the following Networkers on 5 years of service!

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Alan Dennis | Cheryl Russell |
| Ann Kearney | Chris McInnis |
| Anna McNally | Christine Pinniger |
| Bernadette Hosking | Richard Maxwell |
| Carolyn Stedwell | Vlad Kowal |
| Cathy Smith | Wendy Bradly |

Court Network congratulated the following Networkers on 10 years of service!!

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Cathy Huse | Jenni Warren |
| Cherie Titman | Sandra Thwaites |

The following Networkers blew us away, collectively dedicating 105 years of service to the courts in their local communities:



Howard Jackson, who celebrated 15 years of service in Shepparton.



Shirely Elliot, who celebrated 25 years of service in Bendigo.



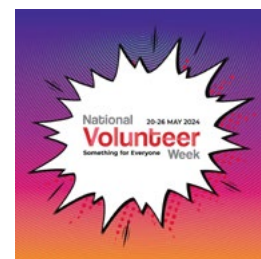
Sara Rosenberg, who celebrated 30 years of service in Melbourne.



Gunn Carlson, who celebrated 35 years of service in Geelong.



National Volunteer Week 2024: Something For Everyone



National Volunteer Week 2024 was a huge week for Court Network. On Monday, 20 May, celebrations kicked off and continued over the following five days with a multitude of curated activities designed to highlight this year's theme, "Something for Everyone".

Across Victoria and Queensland, our volunteer Networkers met with Court Network staff and court stakeholders to celebrate over morning tea and catch up over lunch. Court Network's telephone service Networkers attended an insightful discussion about Victoria's rental crisis, facilitated by ABC Radio Presenter, Rafael Epstein, with VCAT's Head of the Residential Tenancies Division, Deputy President Lindsay Warren, and Tenants Victoria's Director of Client Services, Amy Frew.

Our Networkers based in the Brisbane area were hosted by the wonderful staff at MinterEllison, and listened to stakeholder perspectives of initiatives being led in the DFV space, with presentations from MinterEllison's Special Counsel, Robert Reed, the Team Leader from the South Brisbane District Youth Co-Responder Team at the Department of Justice and Attorney General's office, Brooke Sanders, and Court Network's own Networker and Board Member, Samantha Willets.





On Wednesday, 22 May, Networkers travelled from near and far to Court Network's head office and listened to presentations from the County Koori Court and Magistrates' Koori Court. Thank you to County Koori Court Manager, Terrie Stewart, County Koori Court Officer, Kylie Spencer, and Team Leader at Koori Court

Unit of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Casey Atkinson. Presentations from the Koori Courts were followed by guided tours of the Supreme Court, the County Court and the Federal and Family Circuit Court, giving Networkers an opportunity to preview the inner workings of jurisdictions outside their day-to-day practice.

Patrons



**Her Excellency Professor
the Honourable Margaret
Gardner AC**

Court Network is pleased to announce that as of 13 October 2023, the organisation receives patronage from Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC.

Professor Margaret Gardner was the 9th and first woman President and Vice-Chancellor of Monash University from 1 September 2014 until 4 August 2023.

Prior to joining Monash, Professor Gardner was Vice-Chancellor and President of RMIT from April 2005 until August 2014. She has extensive academic experience, having held various leadership positions in Australian universities throughout her career, including at the University of Queensland and Griffith University.

In 2007, Professor Gardner was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in recognition of service to tertiary education, particularly in the areas of university governance and gender equity, and to industrial relations in Queensland. Subsequently in January 2020, Professor Gardner was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) for her eminent service to tertiary education through leadership and innovation in teaching and learning, research and financial sustainability.

Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC was inaugurated as the 30th Governor of Victoria on 9 August 2023.



**The Honourable Anne
Ferguson, Chief Justice
of the Supreme Court**

Chief Justice Anne Ferguson was appointed as the 12th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria in October 2017 having first been appointed as a judge of the Court in 2010 and to the Court of Appeal in 2014.

Before her appointment to the Court, she was a partner in Allens Arthur Robinson (now Allens Linklaters) specialising in commercial litigation and insolvency.

The Chief Justice also serves as the Chair of the Courts Council, which is the governing body of Court Services Victoria. Courts Services Victoria is the independent statutory body providing services and facilities to Victoria's courts, VCAT and other Victorian statutory entities.

The Chief Justice is also the chair of the Judicial College of Victoria and the Judicial Commission of Victoria.

PRIORITY 4 ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY

Secure the organisational base needed to deploy our highly skilled volunteers.

We will:

- ✓ Promote Court Network as an indispensable element of the justice system
- ✓ Preserve existing and explore new potential funding sources
- ✓ Optimise our systems to ensure we are efficient and effective
- ✓ Implement a regime to measure impact
- ✓ Build the capability of our workforce to implement, review, learn, and innovate

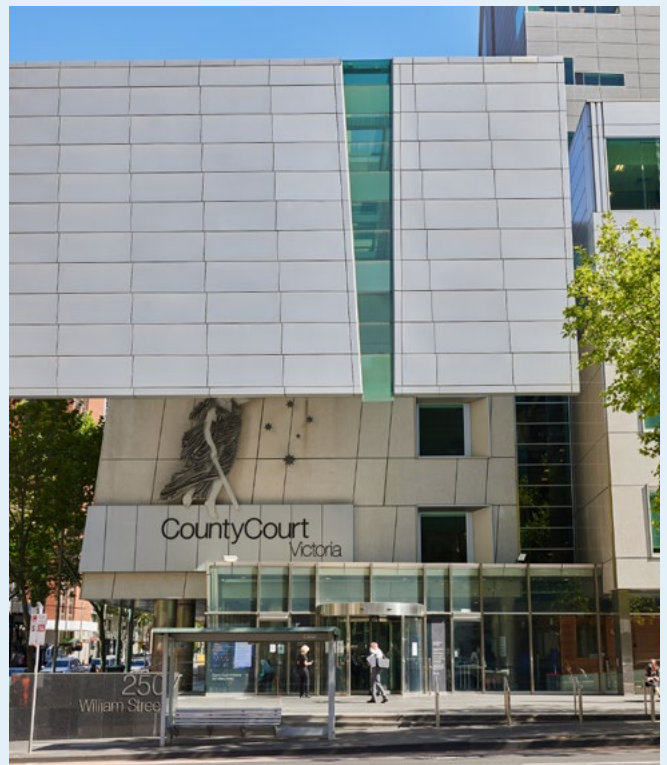


Priority 4 Case Study: Meeting with the Victorian Heads of Jurisdiction

Over the past year, the President and Executive Director actively engaged with senior representatives from major courts, including the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, the County Court, VCAT, the Coroners' Court and the Supreme Court.

During these high-level meetings, Court Network was able to showcase its ability to effectively support traditional court processes and emerging online proceedings, reinforcing its role within the judicial community and confirming capacity to adapt and tailor services to meet the evolving needs of the court. Reflecting on these sessions, Executive Director Julie Jones stated:

“The recent engagements with Victoria’s courts have significantly elevated Court Network’s profile, with the feedback being overwhelmingly positive and affirming our essential role in court operations. This ongoing collaboration underscores our ability to meet and exceed the expectations placed upon us, ensuring that we remain a valuable partner in the court system.”



Victorian Accreditation



In March 2024, Court Network received full accreditation against the Human Services Standards and the QIC Health and Community Services Standards following a rigorous three-day assessment in early December 2023.

The assessment was undertaken by two assessors from Quality Innovation Performance (QIP) and took place across head office, the Heidelberg Magistrates' Court, the Melbourne Magistrates' Court and the Sunshine Magistrates' Court. Preparation for the assessment was months in the making, culminating in a series of interviews with Court Network's staff, volunteers, board members and court stakeholders, with further examination of documents to support the organisation's commitment to good governance, effective management systems, active community engagement, active demonstration of diversity and cultural appropriateness and quality service delivery.

In their final report, the assessment concluded that

“Court Network presented as a professional and high functioning volunteer organisation that plays a vital role in the court system for all court users. Stakeholders were extremely positive about the support provided and how this improved the experience for court users. They also noted that the presence of Networkers at court made their own work easier.”

Court Network would like to thank all those involved in maintaining the organisation's commitment to quality improvement.



Reconciliation

In April 2024, Court Network registered its intention to develop a Respect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) with Reconciliation Australia. This will be Court Network's first RAP, and it is an important step in the organisation's journey towards Reconciliation.

A RAP is a strategic document that enables organisations to make their contribution to a reconciled Australia by strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and creating meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

At Court Network, we recognise the importance of reconciliation and acknowledge our role in contributing to a fair and inclusive society. By developing a RAP, we aim to:

- **Demonstrate Our Commitment:** We want to formalise our commitment to reconciliation and ensure it is embedded in our organisational values and practices.
- **Build Relationships:** Establishing and nurturing respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, stakeholders, and individuals is essential to Court Network's Mission.
- **Drive Positive Change:** Through our RAP, we will implement actions that promote cultural awareness, support reconciliation initiatives, and contribute to closing the gap in opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **Educate and Advocate:** We aim to raise awareness among our Board, staff, and volunteers about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and issues, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation.

To support the development of our first RAP, Court Network established a RAP Working Group, consisting of staff from across the organisation to support RAP development and implementation. The Working Group is working towards a RAP launch in 2025.

Alongside RAP development, Court Network has completed several activities to support the understanding and engagement of staff and Networkers. These activities include:

- The development of Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country Guidelines for staff and Board members to support understanding of cultural protocols.
- The delivery of in-person Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training for all staff and Board members in Victoria, with training for Queensland staff planned, to support staff understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture.
- The celebration of NAIDOC week and Reconciliation week, with internal activities and encouragement and opportunities to attend external events.
- Deepened relationships with Aboriginal services across Victoria and Queensland to support inbound and outbound referrals for court users.

In the past year, our efforts in advancing reconciliation through dedicated projects and the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) have contributed to fostering a more inclusive, supportive and knowledgeable environment within Court Network. These initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to equity and lay the foundation for future work.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIALS



Board of Directors

The Honourable Katharine Williams

President

Appointed April 2021

Katharine Williams is a former Judge of the Victorian County Court and the Supreme Court of Victoria. During her time on the Supreme Court, she led the Court's Common Law Division and also served as President of the Forensic Leave Panel. Kathy was appointed to the bench in April 1999 and retired in February 2015. Prior to that she was a Barrister specialising in commercial law. Kathy currently sits on the Board of Launch Housing, a community organisation committed to ending homelessness. She is also a Director of St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research. Kathy experienced what she regards as the invaluable work of Court Network, both as a barrister and as a Judge.

Juan Munoz

Treasurer

Appointed AGM 2019

Juan was admitted as a lawyer in 2009 and has experience advising boards and in relation to strategy, risk management and governance. Juan holds a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) and Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from Monash University. Juan has been a member of Finance Committee at Court Network and served as Chair of Finance Committee and Treasurer.

David Bartlett

Vice President

Appointed AGM 2019

Dr David Bartlett is a consultant criminologist who focuses on helping organisations solve governance, risk and compliance challenges. David commenced his career in Queensland's Magistrates Courts Service, where he developed a strong appreciation for the important contribution made by court volunteers. Today he brings over 20 years government experience, board expertise and more than a decade of teaching at one of the world's largest criminology schools. David currently serves on several not-for-profit Boards and committees across the justice, health and education sectors. He is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and holds qualifications in psychology, criminology and management.

Catherine Hopper

Appointed AGM 2019

Catherine Hopper is a finance professional with over fifteen years of experience in corporate finance within investment banking, funds management and Australian corporates. She brings a range of skills to the Board, particularly strategic and financial expertise focused on strategic planning and financial governance. Catherine holds a Master of Applied Finance from Macquarie University and a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) / Bachelor of Commerce from Monash University. She is also a Certified Practising Accountant (CPA) and a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD) with a strong understanding of financial and tax matters for not-for-profit entities.

Karen Gelb
Appointed AGM 2019

Dr Karen Gelb is an experienced criminologist, social scientist and researcher. She is passionate about the need for informed, data-led and evidence-based policy to underpin practice in the justice arena. Karen has spent more than two decades researching the criminal justice system, including eight years with the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council and 10 years as a consultant. Her key areas of expertise are family violence, sex offenders, public opinion, youth justice and female offenders. She has extensive experience in critically analysing research material, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, stakeholder consultation and writing accessible reports. Karen is currently a Consultant Criminologist, a Senior Lecturer at the University of Melbourne's Department of Criminology and the Manager of Research and Workforce Development at Penington Institute. Karen brings to Court Network her expertise around monitoring and evaluation, data collection, and compliance.

Susan Wakeling
Appointed AGM 2019

Susan Wakeling is a Victorian Magistrate with over 20 years of experience and currently holds the position of Deputy Chief Magistrate of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria. Prior to undertaking this role, Susan held the position of Regional Coordinating Magistrate at Heidelberg and at Melbourne Magistrates Courts and of Supervising Magistrate of the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal for 5 years. Susan is a member of the Court's Family Law and Family Violence Portfolio Committee, Criminal Law Committee and Sexual Offences Committee. Susan's particular interest is in the challenge of facilitating a court experience which is safe and meaningful for every participant. Prior to her appointment as a Magistrate, Susan worked as a solicitor advocate in criminal law, family law and family violence. In her experience as a legal representative and as a Magistrate, Susan has observed the invaluable contribution made by Court Networkers to the justice process.

Samantha Willetts
Appointed AGM 2020

Samantha is an experienced Queensland Victim Support Unit volunteer. She is also an experienced nurse, with a degree from Queensland University of Technology, with expertise in mental health, theatre and post-operative nursing with adults and children. Samantha is also currently undertaking her second Degree in Psychology (honours) at the University of Queensland. Samantha has always been passionate about helping others. She has a thorough understanding of the needs of others and the importance of advocacy for those who feel disempowered. As a Court Network volunteer, Samantha is very much aware of the importance of what Court Network volunteers do and how they make a difference. The skills that Samantha brings to the Board include her people skills, problem solving, diplomacy, advocacy, teamwork, crisis management and decision making in complex situations.

Wendy Bradly
Appointed AGM 2022

Wendy began networking at Ringwood Law Courts in 2018. In 2020, she joined Court Network's telephone service and remains an active volunteer for the program. Wendy is also involved with Court Network's online service model, which enables court users to access support remotely. In her professional life, Wendy has had a number of roles in the education sector including Group Manager, Communications and Research with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Research Officer in the Department of Education and Training, Campus Coordinator of a VCE campus at a large government secondary school, and VCE teacher. She holds a Master's degree and post graduate Diploma in Education and a Bachelor of Arts. Wendy has served on primary and secondary school councils both as a parent and teacher as well as on the board of management of a community neighbourhood centre. Prior to joining Court Network, Wendy was a volunteer tutor at Swinburne University supporting the Migrant English Program.

Amanda Shipway Appointed AGM 2022

Amanda Shipway has worked for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General since 2009. Her first role with the DJAG was at Victim Assist Queensland where she worked for five years as the Victim Services Coordinator, before moving to her current role as Director of Integrated Service Response, Office for Women and Violence Prevention, within the Deputy Director-Generals office. She is responsible for the contracts for domestic and family violence, sexual assault and wellbeing services in Queensland, and has oversight of Queensland's nine High Risk Teams and 24 staff members located across the state. Amanda has extensive experience in stakeholder engagement and management, with connections in the Queensland Public Service, Queensland Corrective Services, and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. She is currently Chair of the Integrated Service System Oversight Committee, which has representation from all Queensland Government agencies and the domestic and family violence sector. The committee is tasked with overseeing four recommendations from the Women's Justice and Safety Taskforce.

Angela Moy Appointed AGM 2023

Angela Moy is the Executive Director of Reform and Support Services at Court Services Queensland. She has a high level of experience in the legal and justice sector and is a qualified lawyer who has worked in a variety of legal settings throughout her 16-year career in government. Angela has worked in Queensland Corrective Services managing offenders on community-based orders, in sentencing advisory and legal officer roles and in policy roles. She also has experience working with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in policy and legislation, as well as working for Court Services Queensland in various roles.

Angela has significant experience in providing effective and strategic leadership within Government. Her key strengths include the ability to think strategically and then translate these thoughts into practical, operational processes and programs on the ground that bring about change.

Angela also has significant experience in consulting, collaborating and influencing stakeholders, particularly in the justice arena. With her strong working relationships across Government, as well as those in the legal profession and judiciary, Angela brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Court Network Board.

Deborah Trengove Appointed Casual Member 2024

Dr Deborah Trengove is a former school psychologist and head of wellbeing. Deborah joined Court Network in 2022 and has been an active member of the Telephone Service, as well as part of the Collingwood Neighbourhood Justice Centre literacy project. Deborah worked for many years in the education sector in her role as a counsellor and educational leader, supporting young people and their families. As part of her role on the school executive, Deborah contributed to policy development and implementation, risk management and educational strategy. She initiated a range of programs to enhance the wellbeing of staff, students and families. Deborah also facilitated social justice projects and groups, engaging with issues such as food insecurity, human rights and gender equity. Deborah holds a Bachelor of Arts, Master of Educational Psychology and a Doctor of Philosophy. Deborah continues to support parents through her role as a parent educator and writer.

Christine Pinniger Appointed Casual Member 2024

Christine joined Court Network in 2018 and became part of the team at Neighbourhood Justice Centre in Collingwood. When in-court networking stopped during the pandemic, she joined the telephone service and later the online support service as each of these was established. She continues to be actively involved in these services, together with networking at the County Court. In her professional life Christine worked in a range of roles in education, initially secondary teaching and later in administrative and student support roles for international students. She holds a Bachelor of Arts, post-graduate Diploma in Education, and graduate certificates in Student Welfare and in the Management of International Education. Outside of work, Christine has been actively involved in a range of community organisations, including an international student exchange program for which she hosted students, ran workshops for students and families and served on the National Board. She is always interested in the bigger picture, and in justice and fairness. She values the opportunity networking provides to support people who might otherwise become lost in the system.

Treasurer's Report

We are pleased to present the financial statements on Court Network for the year ended 30 June 2024.

Court Network continues to provide support services to court users face-to-face, and through telephone and online support services thanks to its volunteers, staff and funders.

Funding

Court Network receives funding from Court Services Victoria, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. In FY23-24, Court Network also renewed a 2-year service and funding agreement with the Queensland Department of Justice for service provision at key DV specialist court locations across Queensland. The organisation also received funding for a 12-month fixed term project from the Victorian Legal Services Board for cultural inclusion support services at Dandenong Magistrates' Court.

We are very grateful for the support of our funders to enable us to provide our wonderful services and programs.

Expenditure

Expenditure for the year increased by \$476,926, totalling \$2,766,530. The result was influenced by increased employment costs, attributable to the new VLSB program, and increased spending for IT and Governance and Planning to support the roll-out of the SafetyNet program.

Financial position

Court Network continues to diligently manage its cash reserves to ensure the organisation remains solvent and can meet its financial obligations. The FY24 year has again demonstrated the importance of Court Network's strong cash position. The financial position of the organisation remains sound with a cash balance of \$1,389,221 and net assets of \$2,546,854. The strong financial result for FY24 has been achieved through capable management and our ongoing partnership with our key funders.

I would like to extend my thanks to Ms Ming Zhou, our Finance Manager, for her support during the year and for her skilled stewardship of Court Network's financial matters.

Juan Munoz
Treasurer

Financials

Statement of Comprehensive Income For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Income			
Grants from Government and Statutory Bodies	2	2,856,286	3,828,212
Interest Revenue		89,421	9,110
Other Revenue		229	8,090
		2,945,936	3,845,412
Expenditure			
Employment Costs		2,173,102	1,778,357
Travel Expenses – Staff		49,674	38,335
Volunteer Expenses		21,990	20,812
Telecommunication Costs		23,911	30,200
Board Costs		12,523	1,341
Consultants		33,031	13,912
AGM and Conference Event		19,346	25,232
IT and Office Equipment Maintenance		83,936	63,206
Publications, Marketing, Printing and Stationery		15,898	15,342
Staff Recruitment, Learning and Amenities		28,565	22,432
Court Support and Meetings		2,791	6,474
Insurance		4,243	1,814
Rent		277,824	277,824
Other Administration Expenses		19,696	15,303
Provision for Project		-	(20,980)
		2,766,530	2,289,604
Operating Result for the Year		179,406	1,555,808
Other comprehensive income for the year		-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year		179,406	1,555,808

Statement of Financial Position For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	1,389,221	2,834,256
Financial Assets	4	1,517,825	-
Receivables and Prepayments		25,093	11,022
		2,932,139	2,845,278
Non-Current Assets			
Fixed Assets	5	-	-
		-	-
Total Assets		2,932,139	2,932,139
Current Liabilities			
Creditors and Accruals		177,857	193,655
Income in advance	6	7,746	99,315
Employee Benefits	7	199,682	184,860
Total Liabilities		385,285	477,830
Net Assets		2,546,854	2,367,448
Members' Funds			
Accumulated Surplus		2,546,854	2,367,448
Total Members' Funds		2,546,854	2,367,448

Statement of Changes in Equity For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	Note	Accumulated Surplus \$	Total \$
Balance 1 July 2022		811,640	811,640
Surplus for the Year		1,555,808	1,555,808
Balance 30 June 2023		2,367,448	2,367,448
Surplus for the Year		179,406	179,406
Balance 30 June 2024		2,546,854	2,546,854

Statement of Cash Flows For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Cash Flows From Operating Activities			
Receipts			
Grants from Government and Statutory Bodies		2,720,582	2,847,279
Interest		79,247	9,110
Other		229	8,090
Payments			
Employment Expenses		(2,145,190)	(1,837,833)
Supplies		(582,078)	(468,039)
Net cash provided by operating activities	8	72,790	558,607
Cash Flows From Investing Activities			
Payments for purchase of plant and equipment		-	-
Payments for investments		(1,517,825)	-
Net cash used in investing activities		(1,517,825)	-
Net (decrease)/ increase in cash held		(1,445,035)	558,607
Cash at the beginning of the financial year		2,834,256	2,275,649
Cash at the end of the financial year	3	1,389,221	2,834,256

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

The financial statements cover Court Network Inc (the Association) as an individual entity. Court Network is a not-for-profit association incorporated in Victoria under the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic)*. Court Network is registered with the ACNC under the *Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012 (the Act)*.

The principal activities of the Association for the year ended 30 June 2024 was providing personal support, non-legal information and referral to those in contact with the justice system. The Association provides support, information and referral to persons attending court and to advocate for the needs of all court users.

The functional and presentation currency of Court Network Inc is Australian dollars.

The financial statements and Committee's Report have been rounded to the nearest dollar.

New or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations adopted

Unless otherwise stated, the Association has adopted all of the new or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') that are mandatory for the current reporting period.

New Accounting Standards and Interpretations not yet mandatory or early adopted

Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations that have recently been issued or amended but are not yet mandatory, have not been early adopted by the Association for the annual reporting period ended 30 June 2024.

NOTE 1: Basis of Preparation

In the opinion of the Committee of Management, the Association is not a reporting entity since there are unlikely to exist users of the financial statements who are not able to command the preparation of reports tailored so as to satisfy specifically all of their information needs.

These special purpose financial statements have been prepared to meet the reporting requirements of the Act.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements specified by the Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') and the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 *Presentation of Financial Statements*, AASB 107 *Statement of Cash Flows*, AASB 108 *Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors*, AASB 1048 *Interpretation of Standards* and AASB 1054 *Australian Additional Disclosures*, as appropriate for non-for-profit oriented entities.

Critical accounting estimates

The preparation of the financial statements requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the incorporated association's accounting policies. The areas involving a higher degree of judgement or complexity, or areas where assumptions and estimates are significant to the financial statements, are disclosed in the relevant notes to these financials.

Accounting Policies

The material accounting policy information adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are set out within the relevant notes to these financials. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Goods and Services Tax ("GST")

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office. In these circumstances the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of an item of the expense. Receivables and payables in the balance sheet are shown inclusive of GST.

Cash flows are presented in the cash flow statement on a gross basis, except for the GST component of investing and financing activities, which are disclosed as operating cash flows.

Income Tax

Court Network Inc. is not liable for tax as it is recognised as a public benevolent institution by both Federal and State legislation. Donations to Court Network Inc. in excess of \$2 are eligible for a tax deduction.

NOTE 2: Grants From Government and Statutory Bodies

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department	304,101	300,000
Court Services Victoria	1,578,952	2,567,718
Victoria Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	535,458	736,725
Victorian Legal Services Board	150,000	-
Queensland Department of Justice	287,775	223,769
	2,856,286	3,828,212

Revenue is recognised to the extent that it is probable that the economic benefits will flow to the Association and the revenue can be reliably measured. The following specific recognition criteria must also be met before revenue is recognised.

Key Judgement: Revenue Recognition

For many of the grant agreements, the determination of whether the contract includes sufficiently specific performance obligations was a significant judgement involving discussions with a number of parties at Court Network, review of the underlying documents prepared during the grant application phases and consideration of the terms and conditions. Grant income received by Court Network has been accounted for under both AASB 15 and AASB 1058 depending on the terms and conditions and decisions made.

NOTE 3: Cash and Cash Equivalents

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Cash on Hand	1,031	743
Cash at Bank	838,663	2,308,889
Cash on Deposit	549,527	524,624
	1,389,221	2,834,256

NOTE 4: Financial Assets

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Term Deposits	1,517,825	-
	1,517,825	-

NOTE 5: Fixed Assets

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Office Equipment	30,794	31,464
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(30,794)	(31,464)
	-	-

NOTE 6: Income in Advance	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department	899	-
Victoria Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	-	92,450
Victoria Magistrates Court Fund	6,847	6,865
	7,746	99,315

NOTE 7: Employee Benefits	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Annual Leave and Other Entitlements	153,772	131,583
Long Service Leave	45,910	53,277
	199,682	184,860

Short-term employee benefits

Liabilities for wages, salaries and annual leave that are expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting date represent present obligations resulting from employees' services provided to reporting date. They are calculated at undiscounted amounts based on remuneration wage and salary rates that the Association expects to pay as at reporting date including related on-costs, such as workers compensation insurance.

Other long-term employee benefits

The liability for annual leave and long service leave not expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting date are measured at the present value of expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date using the projected unit credit method. Consideration is given to expected future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service. Expected future payments are discounted using market yields at the reporting date on national government bonds with terms to maturity and currency that match, as closely as possible, the estimated future cash outflow.

Superannuation

The amount charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income in respect of superannuation represents the contributions made by the Association to superannuation funds.

Key Judgement: Employee benefits provision

As discussed above, the liability for employee benefits expected to be settled more than 12 months from the reporting date are recognised and measured at the present value of the estimated future cash flows to be made in respect of all employees at the reporting date. In determining the present value of the liability, estimates of attrition rates and pay increases through promotion and inflation have been taken into account.

NOTE 8: Cash Flow Reconciliation

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
<i>Reconciliation of net cash used in operating activities to operating results</i>		
Operating Result	179,406	1,555,808
Depreciation	-	-
Movement in:		
Receivables and Prepayments	(14,071)	467,655
Creditors and Accruals	(15,798)	3,125
Provision for Entitlements	14,822	(59,476)
Other Provisions	-	(20,980)
Income in Advance	(91,569)	(1,387,525)
Cashflows (used in)/from operations	72,790	558,607

NOTE 9: Lease Commitments

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
<i>Low value Lease commitments in relation to the rental of photocopying equipment</i>		
Payable - Minimum Lease Payments (inclusive of GST):		
– not later than 12 months	2,268	2,340
– between 12 months and 5 years	4,158	1,950
	6,426	4,290

The Association is using office space provided by the Court Services Victoria (CSV). Resources received free of charge are recognised as rent expense based on payment in kind determined by CSV under AASB 1058.

NOTE 10: Remuneration of Auditors

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Audit fees	7,600	7,050
	7,600	7,050

The Association's auditor is Crowe Audit Australia.

NOTE 11: Contingencies

The Association had no contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2024 (30 June 2023: nil).

NOTE 12: Events After the Reporting Period

No matter or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2024 that has significantly affected, or may significantly affect the Association's operations, the results of those operations, or the Association's state of affairs in future financial years.

NOTE 13: Related Party Transactions

Key Management Personnel	2024	2023
	\$	\$
<i>The totals of remuneration paid to key management personnel (KMP) during the year are as follows:</i>		
Key management personnel compensation	330,052	286,569
No. of key management personnel	2	2

Transactions with related parties

Transactions between related parties are on normal commercial terms and conditions no more favourable than those available to other parties unless otherwise stated.

Receivable from and payable to related parties

There were no trade receivables from or trade payables to related parties at the current and previous reporting date.

Loans to/from related parties

There were no loans to or from related parties at the current and previous reporting date.

Statement by the Management Committee

The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the committee the financial report:

1. Presents fairly the financial position of Court Network Inc. as at 30 June 2024 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Court Network Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the committee and is signed for and on behalf of the committee by:



Katharine Williams
President



Juan Diego Munoz
Treasurer

Dated: 17 Sep 2024

Independent Auditor's Report



Crowe Audit Australia
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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF COURT NETWORK INC

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Court Network Inc, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and statement by members of the committee.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of the Association is in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1 and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic), the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF COURT NETWORK INC

Responsibilities of the Members for the Financial Report

The committee of the Association are responsible for the preparation of the financial report and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 to the financial report is appropriate to meet the needs of the members and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the committee are responsible for assessing the ability of the Association to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the committee either intend to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, the auditor exercises professional judgement and maintains professional scepticism throughout the audit. The auditor also:

- Identifies and assesses the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, designs and performs audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtains audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for the auditor's opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtains an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Entity's internal control.
- Evaluates the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Concludes on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If the auditor concludes that a material uncertainty exists, the auditor is required to draw attention in the auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify the auditor's opinion. The auditor's conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of the auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Entity to cease to continue as a going concern.

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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF COURT NETWORK INC

- Evaluates the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation. The auditor communicates with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that the auditor identifies during the audit.

The auditor communicates with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that the auditor identifies during the audit.

Other Information

The committee are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Association's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2024, but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

CROWE AUDIT AUSTRALIA

Natasha House
Registered Company Auditor (ASIC RAN 520891)
107 West High Street
COFFS HARBOUR NSW 2450

Dated: 25 September 2024

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Court Network



Thank you to all Court Network volunteers,
staff, supporters and friends for making
2023/24 another successful year!