

# *Access to Legal Aid*

Tabled 20 August 2014

## Background

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3–5

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) is the main deliverer of services.

Statutory authority with legislative objectives, functions and responsibilities:

- providing legal aid cost effectively, economically and efficiently
- managing its resources to make legal aid available at a reasonable cost and on an equitable basis
- improving access to justice
- being innovative in how it provides legal aid.

Mixed model of service provision.

## Background – *continued*

Legal aid is publicly funded legal services.

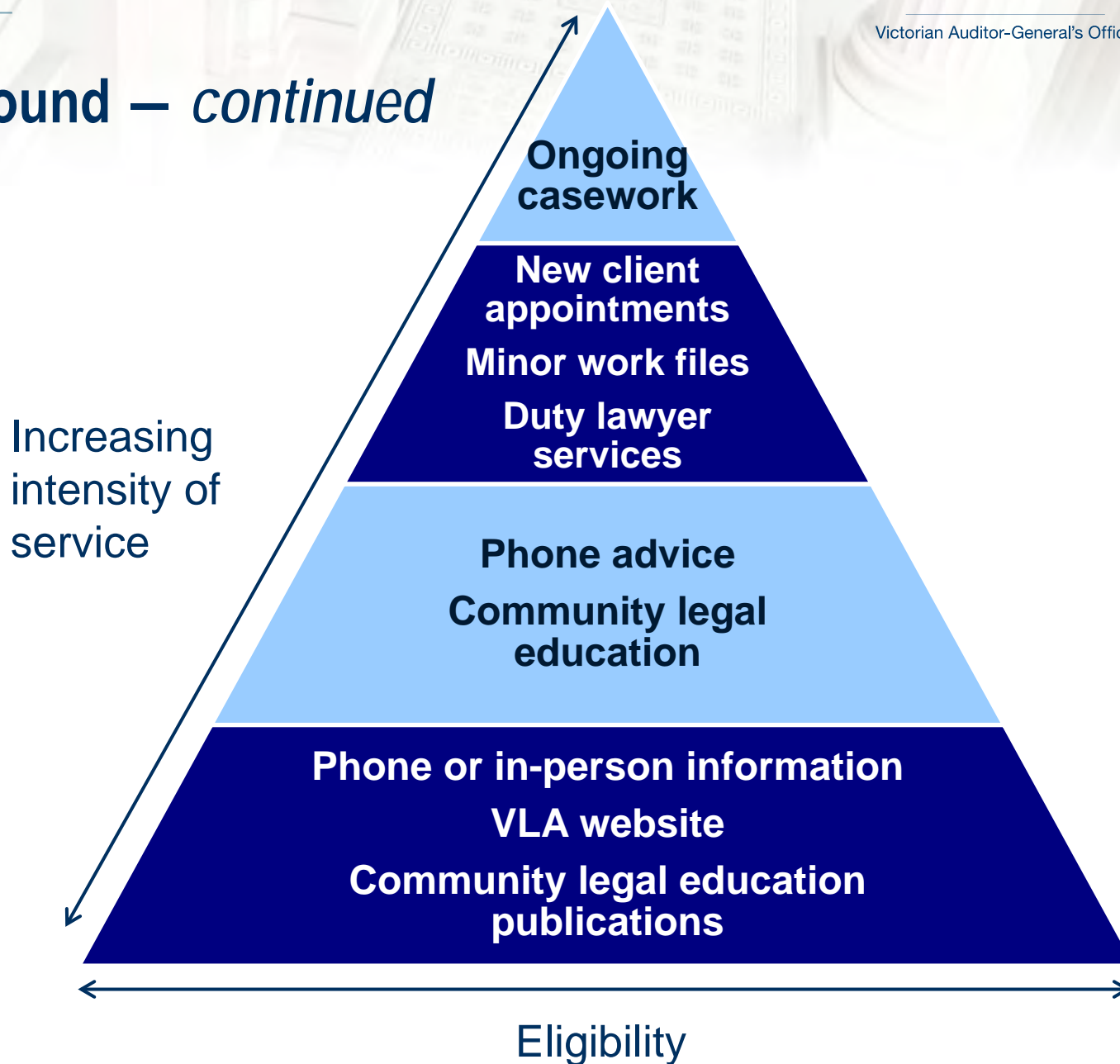
Important part of a democratic society.

Accessibility of legal aid varies.





# Background – *continued*





# Audit objective and scope

## Objective

Assess whether VLA is performing its functions and duties and achieving its objectives.

- Planning the supply of legal services.
- Delivering legal aid services.
- Monitoring performance in legal aid delivery.

## Scope

- ✓ Services that VLA provides.
- ✓ Assurance around private providers.



## Conclusions

A generally positive assurance audit.

VLA is performing its role and delivering legal aid services.

Operating environment of increasing demand and fixed funding.

Some actions, while required, have access to justice implications.

Constraints exist with its performance monitoring framework.



## Key findings

VLA has a sound understanding of demand drivers.

- Environmental scanning and demand modelling.

Financial sustainability is a key risk for VLA .

- Deficits experienced in past years.
- Temporary funding converted to recurrent funding.
- Additional funding of \$3.4 million each year from 2013–14.
- Funding largely based on 2008 demand levels.

## Key findings – *continued*

VLA is prioritising services to those most in need.

- Priority client framework developed.

Its changes to eligibility is consistent with obligations but has implications for access to justice.

- Tightened for most intensive and costly services.







## Key findings – *continued*

VLA is delivering its services across Victoria.

- Decreases in intensive services—e.g. grants of assistance.
- Increases in less intensive services—e.g. website visits.

Access barriers exist in some areas.

- Triage and intake.
- Legal Help telephone service.



## Key findings – *continued*

C O U R T   H O U S E

VLA has a performance framework in place.

- Board receives management reports.
- Client satisfaction surveys.
- Evaluation is sound.

VLA lacks clear information about its performance.

- Statutory objectives have no measures.
- Lack of targets and clear measures.



# Recommendations

		Accept
1.	<p>That VLA review its performance monitoring framework, with a view to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• developing specific performance measures relating to its statutory objectives and strategic plan objectives</li><li>• clearly linking business plan performance measures to its objectives and key directions</li><li>• developing targets to report against and including that data in its annual report.</li></ul>	✓



## Recommendations – *continued*

		Accept
2.	<p>That VLA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assess the awareness of its services among its priority clients group to ensure it is appropriately targeting and responding to this group</li><li>• review and improve the accessibility and timeliness of the Legal Help service.</li></ul>	✓



## Contact details

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