



NJC
NEIGHBOURHOOD
JUSTICE CENTRE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 – 2023



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners of the land that the City of Yarra and the Neighbourhood Justice Centre rests upon. In this document the term 'Aboriginal' refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people either in Victoria or in other parts of Australia unless otherwise stated, for example, using clan name/s or generic names such as Koori (VIC, NSW), Murri (QLD), Palawa (TAS), Nunga (SA) and Noongar (WA). The term 'Koori' used in this document respectfully refers to the local Aboriginal community in Victoria. Within the Koori community, the NJC acknowledges there are also other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons residing, working and gathering in the local area.

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This document should be attributed as the Neighbourhood Justice Centre's Strategic Plan 2019–23

Online copies of this publication can be downloaded from www.neighbourhoodjustice.vic.gov.au

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Inside Front Cover: Artist Kid Acne, Florence Blanchard & Ghostpatrol, corner of Napier Street and Charcoal Lane, Fitzroy

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INTRODUCTION



MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF MAGISTRATE

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) was the first community centre of its kind when it was launched in Australia in 2007.

Inspired by the Midtown Community Court in Manhattan and the Red Hook Community Justice Centre in Brooklyn, it has led the way in delivering innovative justice solutions for residents in the City of Yarra.

Integrating traditional principles of justice with personal support services including mental health clinical support, drug and alcohol treatment, housing support, employment and training, it has delivered tangible benefits to the local community.

This includes contributing to a 31 per cent drop in the crime rate in the City of Yarra, while people who appear before its Magistrates' Court are 25 per cent less likely to reoffend than those appearing before other court venues.

As the Centre looks towards 2023, this new five-year strategic plan provides a roadmap for how it will build on these impressive results and further strengthen its essential ties with the community.

It is a model of which the Magistrates' Court of Victoria (MCV) is rightly proud.

In building a solid foundation for its future, Collingwood's NJC is also laying the groundwork for what I hope will one day be a network of justice centres providing vital support to other Victorian communities.

Chief Magistrate
Peter Lauritsen
Magistrates' Court of Victoria



MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

For the past decade the Neighbourhood Justice Centre has led the way in providing holistic justice solutions for residents in the City of Yarra.

While the local community is at the heart of this unique justice model, the benefits have been felt across the justice sector.

Whether it is pioneering technology to improve customer service or grassroots community safety collaborations, the NJC has been an incubator for new ideas.

Its innovative approaches have positively impacted thousands of lives, and its important work has only just begun. We can further leverage the benefits of the NJC model across the broader Magistrates' Court of Victoria.

MCV faces complex challenges and the NJC provides opportunities to test solutions to these challenges, with its multi-jurisdictional court, integrated services and defined local area.

As the NJC plans for its second decade, a key priority will be working more closely with stakeholders, strengthening ties across MCV and continuing to improve services to the broader community.

The progress NJC will make in the next ten years will flow well beyond the boundaries of the City of Yarra, improving access to justice for thousands of Victorians.

Chief Executive Officer
Andrew Tenni
Magistrates' Court of Victoria



The NJC has delivered a number of innovations that have improved the community's experience of the justice system



MESSAGE FROM THE NJC MAGISTRATE AND THE DIRECTOR, SPECIALIST COURTS AND PROGRAMS

In 2007, the Neighbourhood Justice Centre opened as a three-year experiment to trial local, problem-solving justice practices based on community justice to address the underlying causes of offending and increase community safety.

It quickly became clear that the one-stop-justice-shop worked. The results included reduced crime, significantly lower reoffending rates, higher rates of compliance with court orders, improved public safety, increased community confidence and smarter services.

Moreover, the NJC demonstrated how a multi-jurisdictional court, operating within existing sentencing frameworks, can achieve greater success with clients—particularly high-risk ones—by applying problem-solving approaches.

This 2019–23 Strategic Plan is our roadmap to continue our successes and to expand on the centre's evidence-based justice into the future.

While the NJC's key stakeholders are aware of its strengths, its profile in Victoria doesn't match its achievements. In this strategic plan a public relations and advocacy strategy is a key priority.

Further evaluation efforts will build on the impressive evidence base for the NJC model. These actions will strengthen the NJC's advocacy to courts and government, and build understanding of the positive impact and value of the model.

In the next five years, we will continue to act locally in Yarra. But we will also create a blueprint for how the NJC model can

be adopted in other locations experiencing high levels of crime and socioeconomic disadvantage, with a focus on high-risk clients with complex needs.

The NJC has delivered a number of innovations that have improved the community's experience of the justice system, increased community safety and have been adopted by the MCV and other agencies. We will build on this profile so that more courts, government and community sector agencies recognise us as a helpful resource to solve problems connected to the social determinants of crime and the community's confidence in the justice system.

This is an ambitious strategy, but the NJC's ability to take calculated risks, build the evidence and collaborate provides the justice system and the community with a remarkable partner to achieve significant change.

Magistrate

David Fanning
Neighbourhood Justice Centre

Director, Specialist Courts and Programs

Elissa Scott
Magistrates' Court of Victoria

ABOUT OUR *STRATEGIC PLAN 2019–23*

THIS STRATEGIC PLAN SETS A BOLD STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE NEIGHBOURHOOD JUSTICE CENTRE OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS TO ACHIEVE INNOVATIVE JUSTICE FOR STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES.

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION IS CENTRED AROUND FIVE CORE PILLARS:



**ACCESSIBLE
LOCAL JUSTICE
SOLUTIONS
FOR SAFER
AND STRONGER
COMMUNITIES**

1



**A RECOGNISED
AND VALUED
COMMUNITY
JUSTICE MODEL**

2



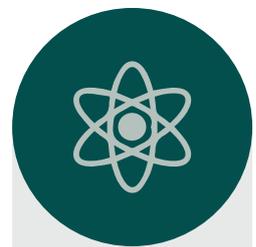
**A CONNECTED AND
TRUSTED PARTNER**

3



**UNLOCKING
JUSTICE
INNOVATION**

4



**A PASSIONATE,
SKILLED AND
COHESIVE
ORGANISATION**

5

Our strategic plan remains grounded in the principles and values of community justice, links to our existing goals, builds on our strong foundations as Australia's first and only community justice centre, and identifies opportunities to work in new and different ways to grow our positive impact on community life in the City of Yarra, and other communities, through contributions to the broader justice system.

Our strategic plan has been informed by extensive consultation with our staff, partners and peers, and the Yarra community. Their valuable insights and perspectives have helped shape our strategic direction and priorities for the next five years.

AN OVERVIEW OF OUR STRATEGIC PLAN 2019–23

OUR VISION

INNOVATIVE JUSTICE FOR STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES

OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS



ACCESSIBLE LOCAL JUSTICE SOLUTIONS FOR SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

1



A RECOGNISED AND VALUED COMMUNITY JUSTICE MODEL

2



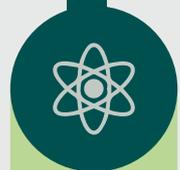
A CONNECTED AND TRUSTED PARTNER

3



UNLOCKING JUSTICE INNOVATION

4



A PASSIONATE, SKILLED AND COHESIVE ORGANISATION

5

OUR GOALS



PREVENT AND REDUCE CRIMINAL AND OTHER HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR IN THE YARRA COMMUNITY



INCREASE CONFIDENCE IN, AND ACCESS TO, THE JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR THE YARRA COMMUNITY



STRENGTHEN THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE MODEL AND FACILITATE THE TRANSFER OF ITS PRACTICES TO OTHER COURTS AND COMMUNITIES

ABOUT THE NJC

THE NJC IS AUSTRALIA'S FIRST COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTRE, A 'ONE-STOP-JUSTICE-SHOP' COMPRISING A COURT, A RANGE OF SUPPORT SERVICES, AND SPECIALIST TEAMS FOCUSED ON CRIME PREVENTION, INNOVATION AND EDUCATION.

Together, we serve the City of Yarra and aim to improve the quality of life for our local community—and beyond—by addressing the underlying reasons for people's offending, strengthening community capacity and resilience, and leading the way in community justice innovation.

We provide the people who come before our court with support to help break the cycle of offending, we assist victims of crime in their recovery, and we develop partnerships within our local community to reduce social disadvantage.

The NJC is a specialist division of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria.

OUR COURT

The NJC Court is multi-jurisdictional, sitting on different days as:

- a magistrates' court (criminal, family violence and personal safety matters)
- a children's court (criminal matters)
- the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)
- the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT).

In support of the justice administered by our court, the NJC has a court registry, lawyers, police prosecutors, a Neighbourhood Justice Officer and Community Correctional Services on site (which supervises people on Community Corrections Orders or on parole).

OUR SUPPORT SERVICES

With 19 agencies working together on site, a broad range of support services are available to clients, whether they have a matter in court or not.

The NJC Client Services Team currently provides:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support services
- Alcohol and other drug services
- Chaplaincy service
- Financial counselling
- General counselling
- Housing support
- Intensive mental health outreach support
- LGBTI family violence support
- Male family violence perpetrator services
- Mediation services
- Mental health clinical services
- Refugee and migrant support
- Specialised family violence services
- Victims' support

OUR SPECIALIST TEAMS

Our community crime prevention team develops projects in partnership with local residents, traders, police, council and state government to address community safety issues and build community capacity in the City of Yarra.

We provide education, practical skills development and assistance to the

community, practitioners and students through workshops, publications, information sessions, mentoring, internships and student-run help services for clients.

The NJC's innovation team designs and tests ideas to improve the user experience of the justice system, to overcome system-wide barriers and to improve access to justice. In this way, the NJC plays an important role in contributing to cultural and procedural change in the courts and the broader justice system.

OUR COMMUNITY JUSTICE MODEL

The NJC is based on the community justice model (also referred to as 'neighbourhood justice'), which considers how justice can operate to improve community life, especially in places with high levels of crime and disadvantage. While honouring and maintaining traditional procedural rights and equality before the law, 'community justice brings important notions of social justice to the criminal justice agenda'.¹

In addition to dealing with criminal events, community justice seeks to strengthen communities in order to prevent such events from occurring in the first place:

Primarily, neighbourhood approaches to justice view crime as stemming from individual and environmental factors.

Secondly, dealing with crime under a community justice model means that the justice arm of the state should help build community resilience, in relation not only to crime, but to other types of problems which make crime possible or more likely. In this latter sense, community justice recognises that minor social disputes of a non-criminal nature, or instances of neighbourhood and social neglect, can be precursors to or markers of crime. Such disputes and instances of neglect should, in close consultation with the community, be identified and addressed in ways which work best for each locale.²

As distinct from problem-oriented courts (such as drug courts), the NJC focuses on more than the problems of discrete individuals. Like other community justice centres, the NJC makes ‘a deliberate effort to tackle some of the social and structural factors associated with cycles of crime and violence within a strictly-defined locale’.³

Community justice is an expanding global justice movement and while the NJC is the first centre of its kind in Australia, other states are currently exploring or committing to the development of similar centres (for example in Queensland and Western Australia). The United States, Singapore, Israel and Canada have established community justice centres.

THE NJC’S MODEL OF COMMUNITY JUSTICE EMBRACES THE FOLLOWING KEY ELEMENTS:

Places not just cases – while the same law applies to everyone, there are significant differences between communities and justice strategies need to be modified for specific neighbourhoods with high levels of crime and disadvantage.

Strong communities provide the foundations for community safety – community justice emphasises the importance of stable families, good neighbours and friends, and effective community and social groups in providing the foundations for safety in a community.

Proactive, not just reactive – community justice attempts to isolate and overcome the underlying factors that lead to community safety issues, with a focus on place.

The court – beyond traditional roles—in the community justice model, the role of the magistrate extends to the application of an ‘ethic of care’⁴ to increase participants’ understanding of processes and outcomes, and to decision-making informed by a comprehensive understanding of the underlying issues affecting court participants, and the relevant behavioural sciences.

New organisational structures, rather than rigid hierarchies – to be responsive to local needs, community justice requires decentralised leadership at the neighbourhood level, and flexible and innovative organisational structures to enable staff to work across agencies on complex safety and justice issues.

Involving citizens, not just agencies – community justice provides opportunities for citizens—not just justice agencies—to influence and be involved in the local administration of justice.

¹T Clear, J Hamilton & E Cadora, *Community Justice* (2nd ed), Routledge, New York, NY, 2011, p.2.

²M Halsey, L Nelms, A Quadara, S Ross & J Stanley, *Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, First Interim Report, 2007*, p.2.

³Ibid. p.3.

⁴MS King, *Solution-focused judging bench book*, Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration, 2009, p.29.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE CENTRE

3,301

MATTERS HEARD IN 2017-2018,
INCLUDING VICTORIAN CIVIL AND
ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL MATTERS

VERY HIGH

LEVELS OF CLIENT SATISFACTION
AT THE NJC, COMPARED TO OTHER
COURTS⁷

61%

LOWER PROPORTION OF CCOS
CANCELLED BECAUSE OF BREACH
COMPARED TO THE STATE AVERAGE¹⁰

25%

LOWER RATE OF REOFFENDING THAN
OTHER MAGISTRATES' COURTS⁵

77

CRIME PREVENTION AND
COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROGRAM
INITIATIVES⁸

300+

PEOPLE ATTENDED COMMUNITY
JUSTICE INFORMATION SESSIONS
IN 2017

907

CLIENTS MANAGED BY CLIENT
SERVICES IN 2017-18

98

COMMUNITY PARTNERS, STAKE-
HOLDERS AND ORGANISATIONS
WORKING WITH NJC⁹

APPROXIMATELY

20

COMMUNITY GROUPS/AGENCIES
USED THE CENTRE ON A REGULAR
BASIS IN 2017

31%

AFTER THE NJC WAS ESTABLISHED,
CRIME RATES IN YARRA DECREASED
BY 31%⁶

IN 2017

THE NJC WAS RECOGNISED
AS AN INTERNATIONAL MENTOR
COMMUNITY COURT

APPROXIMATELY

4,500

VISITORS USED THE NJC MEETING
ROOMS IN 2017

⁵ S Ross, *Evaluating neighbourhood justice: measuring and attributing outcomes for a community justice program*, Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice, No. 499, Canberra, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2015, pp. 4–5.

⁶ Ibid, p3.

⁷ Ross, M Halsey, D Bamford, M Cameron & A King, *Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, City of Yarra: final report*, Department of Justice, Melbourne, December 2009, pp. 114–115.

⁸ 2007-2015

⁹ As at January 2019.

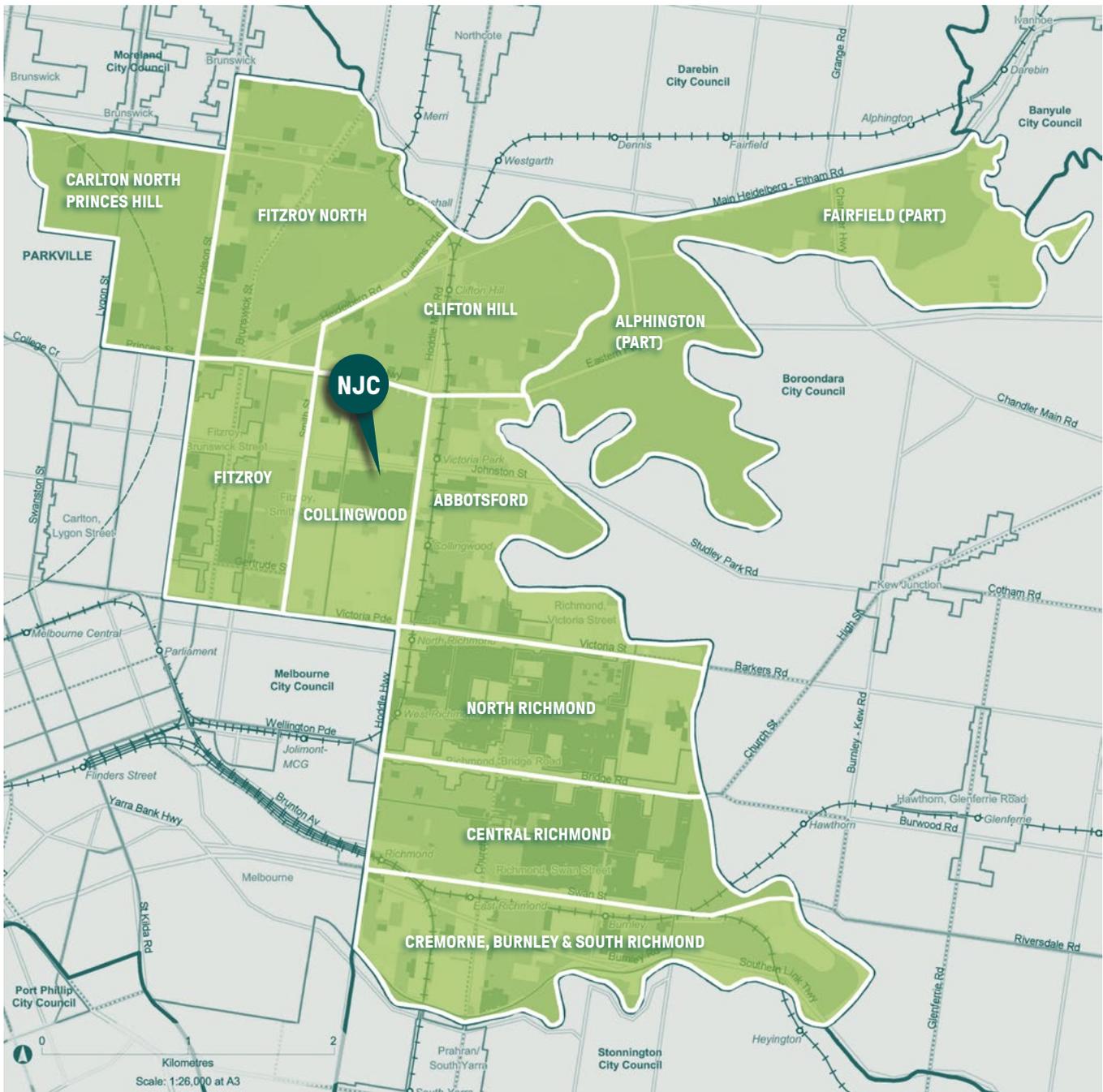
¹⁰ For high-risk offenders 2008-2011, in S Ross, *Evaluating neighbourhood justice: measuring and attributing outcomes for a community justice program*, Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice, No. 499, Canberra, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2015, pp. 4–5.



ABOUT OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

DOING JUSTICE LOCALLY IS CORE TO OUR COMMUNITY JUSTICE MODEL

The NJC is located in Collingwood and serves the City of Yarra (which includes the suburbs listed on the map below).



A SNAPSHOT OF THE CITY OF YARRA¹¹



POLARISATION AND DISADVANTAGE

The Yarra community is characterised by social polarisation. Although it is a relatively affluent area, there is also a high proportion of people living with socio-economic disadvantage. In Yarra:

- 9.5% of households live in social housing, compared to 2.6% of households for the Greater Melbourne region
- the median house price is \$1.1 million which is greater than the state median. However, in 2016, 9.7% of Yarra households experienced housing stress
- approximately 941 people are homeless, which is 3.5 times the Victorian average
- homelessness rate
- there is almost double the number of drug and alcohol clients (111) per 10,000 population, compared to Victoria (58)
- the population has a higher risk of short-term, alcohol-related harm than the Victorian average
- the SEIFA disadvantage score rose to 1035 in 2016, an improvement from 1019 in 2006. Scores for Collingwood (935.5), North Richmond (946.3) and Fitzroy (957.1) in 2016 reflect the continuing relative disadvantage in these suburbs.



CRIME

Yarra's crime rate is one of the highest in Victoria:

- in 2017–18, Yarra had 14,044 recorded offences per 100,000 people, making it the local government area with the third-highest recorded offence rate
- the rate of drug-related crime is more than double the rate for Victoria (1035.5 per 100,000 population in 2015–2016)
- in 2017–18 the main offences were theft, burglary, property damage and deception.



POPULATION

The City of Yarra is a highly diverse community:

- 29% of residents were born overseas and 22% speak a language other than English at home (Vietnamese is the most common language, other than English)
- the median age is 33—lower than the Victorian median age—and 25- to 29-year-olds are the largest age group in Yarra
- the original inhabitants were the Wurundjeri people. Yarra currently has over 300 Aboriginal residents. The area remains culturally significant as a meeting place and has a large number of indigenous visitors every day
- the employment rate is 71%, which is higher than the Victorian average
- 60% of residents hold formal qualifications, which is also higher than the Victorian average
- a growing proportion of residents are renters (50%) compared to 29% in Greater Melbourne
- Yarra has the highest proportion of same-sex couple households in Victoria (4.4%).



BUSINESS AND VISITORS

Yarra has one of the largest economies in metropolitan Melbourne, attracting a large number of visitors day and night.

- There are approximately 13,600 businesses in Yarra
- Yarra's diverse range of businesses contributed \$10,085 million Gross Value Add to Melbourne's economy in 2015, equivalent to 4.3% of its total output
- 81,000 people work in the area, of which close to 70,000 reside outside the municipality.

¹¹ Statistics sourced from: Crime Statistics Agency, *City of Yarra health and wellbeing status report 2016*; Yarra City Council, *Yarra spatial economic and employment strategy report 2018*; and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing, Products and Services, 2016: information paper*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

DRIVERS OF CHANGE

THE VICTORIAN JUSTICE SYSTEM IS UNDERGOING SIGNIFICANT CHANGE.

Increasing demand and complexity, significant system-wide reforms, digital disruption and shifting community needs are all affecting the way that we design and deliver justice.

For the NJC, this means the expectations of our services will continue to evolve. Our role within the local Yarra community and the broader Victorian justice system will change. We will have new opportunities to optimise our clients' experience of the justice system and to improve outcomes at the individual, community and systems level.

Over the next five years we will evolve both the services we offer, and the way they are delivered, to meet future needs and expectations.

In this strategic plan we aim to tackle these challenges and seize opportunities to deliver innovative justice for the stronger and safer communities of the future.

COMMUNITIES IN CONSTANT CHANGE

Our local community is changing. In the next 15 years Yarra's population is expected to grow by 29,000 people. It is likely that Yarra's new residents will have a wide range of cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

The rate of homelessness in Yarra is growing and is almost four times higher than the Victorian rate. Significant rates of housing stress are putting more people at risk of homelessness.

Patterns of local crime have changed. Victoria Police estimate that 75% of crime in Yarra is now committed by offenders who don't reside in the area and are therefore outside the NJC's jurisdiction. This figure has grown from 50% in 2007. In addition, there are increasing community concerns about crime, drug use, disadvantage and inequality, housing affordability and social cohesion.

These changes present challenges and opportunities for the NJC within its current operating model, and we will need to think strategically to address this offending in order to continue to have an impact on reducing Yarra's crime rate.

GROWING DEMANDS ON THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Over the past five years, there have been significant reforms within the justice system in relation to bail, sentencing, youth justice, family violence and countering violent extremism.

Growing demand across the justice system, combined with more police on our streets, will continue to strain corrections, courts, legal and community services.

Courts are dealing with more complex cases, both criminal and civil, due to family violence, trauma, substance use, mental health issues and greater cultural diversity.

In addition, there is an increased emphasis on improving both victims' experience of the justice system and their longer-term outcomes.

More than ever, holistic interventions that prevent crime, break cycles of

offending, and create long-lasting, positive outcomes for victims and offenders will be crucial.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY JUSTICE

Digital disruption and emerging technologies are changing the way people interact with the justice system. Technology is creating opportunities for increased access to justice and improved user experiences of the justice system. Artificial intelligence and new digital platforms also have huge potential to improve efficiencies in the system.

However, in keeping with our model, we mustn't forget the value of face-to-face interactions and the need to provide options for people who might be digitally excluded. In an era of increasing expectations of personalised services, it is important that the NJC continues to provide choices for clients.

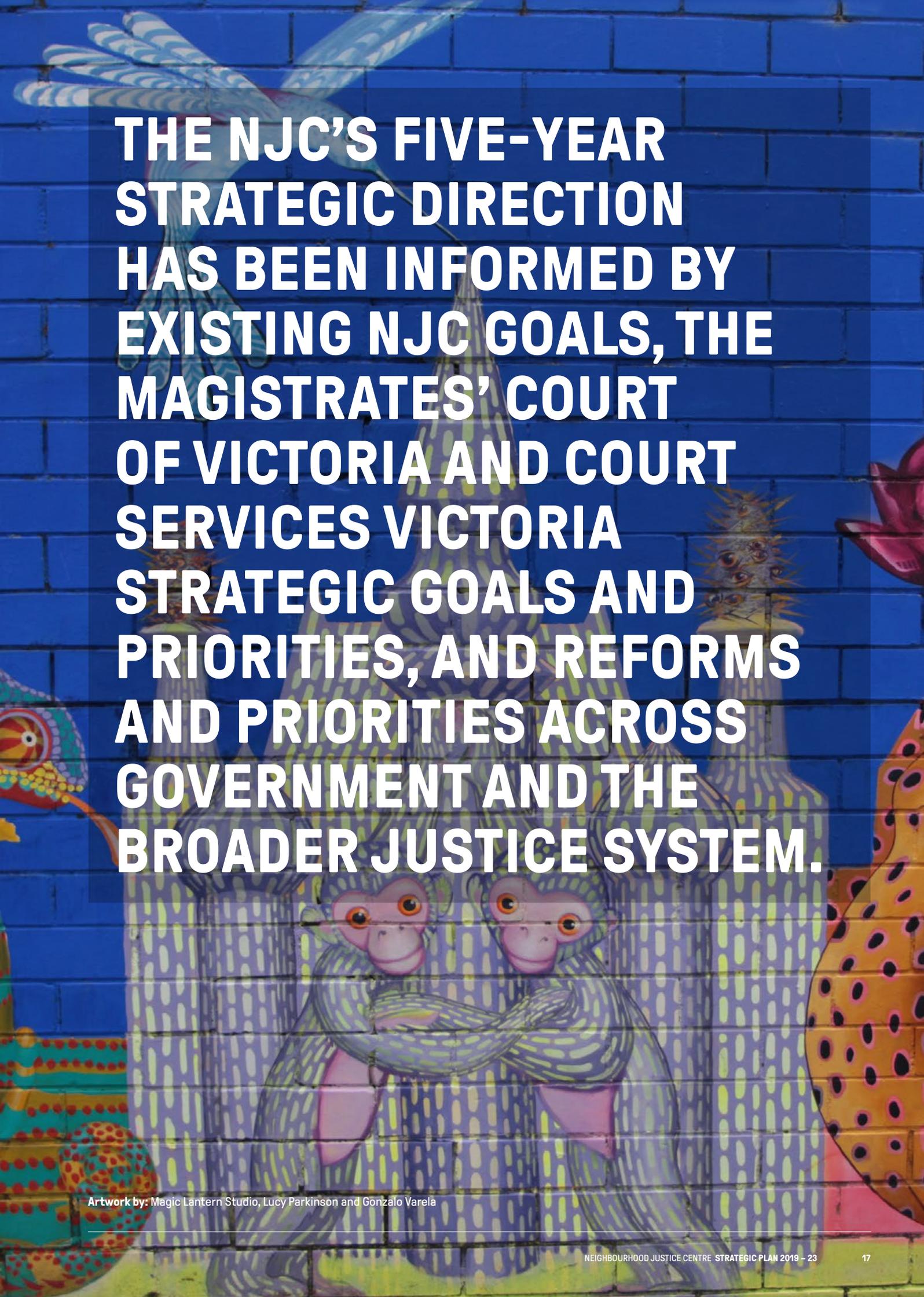
Both here and abroad, there is growing momentum for reimagining courts. This is an opportunity for the NJC to look beyond traditional court infrastructure and service provision to support new ways of doing community justice. This may include using existing community infrastructure and more informal facilities for lower jurisdiction activities and new ways of providing services within defined catchments (for example, Level Five Courts).

With the emergence of social enterprises and increasing corporate social responsibility in the private sector, we may create new partnerships to tackle the underlying causes of offending.



ALIGNING OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION WITH VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT OUTCOMES





THE NJC'S FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC DIRECTION HAS BEEN INFORMED BY EXISTING NJC GOALS, THE MAGISTRATES' COURT OF VICTORIA AND COURT SERVICES VICTORIA STRATEGIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES, AND REFORMS AND PRIORITIES ACROSS GOVERNMENT AND THE BROADER JUSTICE SYSTEM.

Artwork by: Magic Lantern Studio, Lucy Parkinson and Gonzalo Varela



PILLAR 01

ACCESSIBLE LOCAL JUSTICE SOLUTIONS FOR SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

DOING JUSTICE LOCALLY IS CORE TO THE NJC'S COMMUNITY JUSTICE MODEL. THE YARRA COMMUNITY HAS TOLD US THEY VALUE OUR COMMUNITY-FOCUSSED SERVICES, THE ACCESSIBILITY OF OUR COURTROOM AND PROCESSES, AND OUR APPROACH TO INVOLVING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN CRIME PREVENTION.

But there is more that we can do.

Over the next five years we will pursue the expansion of the NJC, in line with Goal 4 of the *Magistrates' Court of Victoria Strategic Plan 2018–22*. We will seek to increase our hearing capacity, including through a second courtroom, which will better support justice in the City of Yarra and further progress recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

We will identify the potential to expand the model to other disadvantaged communities outside the City of Yarra. We will develop a blueprint for the expansion of the NJC model, with a focus on the Department of Justice and Community Safety's Complex Needs Review.

In addition, we will continue to adapt our services and approach to meet changing demographics and community needs and to help our clients tackle a broader range of concerns.

OUR PRIORITIES:

- 1.1 Improve our **understanding of the changing demographics of offending and disadvantage** in Yarra to ensure the NJC continues to meet evolving needs and build community capacity
- 1.2 **Expand our hearing capacity** to better support justice in the City of Yarra and help deliver on Family Violence Royal Commission reforms, including through establishment of a second court room
- 1.3 Explore opportunities to **expand our presence within and outside of Yarra**, including adoption of the model in other disadvantaged communities, with a focus on the Department of Justice and Community Safety's Complex Needs Review

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

- 1.1 We understand the demographic profile of offending and disadvantage in Yarra and have adapted our model to respond effectively to this profile
- 1.2 We have increased our hearings through a second court room, additional proper venue listings, family violence and contested matters
- 1.3 We have responded to unmet needs within Yarra and developed a blueprint for the adoption of the NJC model and contributed to the Complex Needs Review. We have advocated for this model with CSV, the Victorian Government and interested communities



THE ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE TO ACHIEVE THIS OUTCOME:

- 1.1 Conduct research into the demographic profile of offending and disadvantage in Yarra and identify any service and community capacity gaps
- Develop and implement responses to service gaps

Examples: responses for offenders who commit offences in Yarra but live outside the NJC's jurisdiction. Deepen our early intervention and prevention strategies for young people and develop specialised responses to meet their needs in the justice system

Establish new community capacity building initiatives to provide opportunities for disadvantaged community members

Examples: community internships, mentoring, expanded outreach programs

- 1.2 Continue to advocate to government for funding for a second court room. Subject to funding, establish a second court room, which will include a Specialist Family Violence Court with an additional magistrate. The second court room will hear additional family violence matters, including matters from Melbourne and contested matters

Work with courts, police and other stakeholders to increase proper venue listings

- 1.3 Identify, analyse and respond to unmet priority community needs

Examples: complex, unresolved conflicts that can lead to school disengagement and harm community and family relationships. Potential solution: develop a peacemaking pilot in Yarra, in partnership with schools, the community and the court

Other examples: Fines and debt, and problem gambling

Develop a blueprint for the adoption of the NJC model that transforms thinking about how community justice can be adopted in other settings. Advocate for the adoption of this model with CSV, the Victorian Government, the community sector and interested communities. (See also 2.1)



PILLAR 02

A RECOGNISED AND VALUED COMMUNITY JUSTICE MODEL

OVER THE PAST DECADE, THE NJC'S MODEL OF COMMUNITY JUSTICE HAS BEEN EVALUATED AS ACHIEVING POSITIVE COMMUNITY OUTCOMES, INCLUDING SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER RESULTS FOR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ORDER COMPLETION RATES, LOWER RATES OF RECIDIVISM AND A DECREASE IN CRIME RATES FOR THE CITY OF YARRA.

However, our role, approach and outcomes achieved are not widely known or understood across the community, justice system and government more broadly. There is also a deeper and richer story to tell about the NJC's impact on social, economic and health and wellbeing outcomes, rather than focusing purely on criminal justice outcomes.

Over the next five years, we will refresh our definition of the NJC's model of community justice and develop and implement a public relations and advocacy strategy to focus on strengthening our advocacy to courts and government. We will continue to build a comprehensive evidence base that demonstrates the impact of our community justice approach. And we will consolidate our status as an International Mentor Community Court and support others who are interested in establishing their own community justice centres in different communities (across Victoria, Australia and internationally).

OUR PRIORITIES:

2.1 **Strengthen our advocacy** to courts and government and build public understanding of the positive impact and value of the NJC community justice model

2.2 Continue to **build a comprehensive and sophisticated evidence base** for the NJC model, including justice, social, economic and health and wellbeing outcomes

2.3 **Articulate our role as an International Mentor Community Court** and pursue opportunities to learn from and share practice with local, national and international community justice peers

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

2.1 Key decision makers in the MCV, justice and government understand the value of the NJC model and advocate with us for its adoption

2.2 Our evidence base demonstrates the value of the model for achieving justice, social, economic and health and wellbeing outcomes

2.3 Our role in assisting others to adopt the NJC model in Victoria, Australia and internationally is clear and we have provided and participated in opportunities to share community justice practice

THE ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE TO ACHIEVE THIS OUTCOME:

2.1 Develop and implement a public relations and advocacy strategy. This will include refreshing our

definition of the NJC's model of community justice and its value, so it is consistently expressed by staff and critical stakeholders

2.2 Develop and implement an evaluation strategy and strengthen systems to produce deeper evidence of the NJC's justice, social, economic and health and wellbeing outcomes, including victim-user perspectives

2.3 Develop and implement a plan to provide, support and participate in learning opportunities for community justice practitioners, including a public statement of our role and the technical assistance we can provide as an International Mentor Community Court

***Examples:** hold an international community justice summit in Melbourne. Continue to assist others to adopt the NJC's model of community justice. Update and develop educational resources and practice guides to support others in designing and implementing their own community justice centre or practices*





PILLAR 03

A CONNECTED AND TRUSTED PARTNER

THE SUCCESS OF THE NJC APPROACH RELIES UPON STRONG PARTNERSHIPS WITH – AND CONNECTIONS TO – COMMUNITIES, SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

Over the next five years we will build our profile with critical government stakeholders to establish the Centre as a trusted and valued partner.

We will establish new structures to embed the community's experiences in the design of our services. In addition, we will continue to work in partnership with local communities to ensure that the evolution of NJC services and approaches reflects changing community needs and expectations.

Moreover, we will strengthen and expand our partnerships with service providers to diversify the services available to NJC clients and meet priority needs.

OUR PRIORITIES:

- 3.1 Ensure critical government **stakeholders understand our role** and consider testing the delivery of priority reforms with us, where appropriate
- 3.2 Establish structures to **embed the community's experiences into our services and programs** and ensure we create beneficial outcomes across diverse communities in Yarra
- 3.3 **Strengthen our service partnership model** to meet evolving priority needs

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

- 3.1 Government and community sector stakeholders work with us, as appropriate, to help shape and deliver relevant priority reforms
- 3.2 The community has a positive experience of the NJC, our services respond to the needs of diverse communities and we achieve beneficial outcomes
- 3.3 We understand the unmet priority needs of our clients and have established service partnerships to address them

THE ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE TO ACHIEVE THIS OUTCOME:

- 3.1 As per 2.1, develop and implement a public relations and advocacy strategy

Work with government partners in the identification, design and delivery of priority reforms
- 3.2 Establish a formal structure to embed community experiences and feedback into our program and service design

Example: a consumer reference panel or similar

Continue to collect regular user and community feedback on their experiences of the NJC and community issues, particularly from diverse communities

Example: Court User Survey

See also 2.2 for monitoring beneficial outcomes.

- 3.3 Identify priority needs as per 1.1 and 1.3 and develop service partnerships to address these needs

Examples: specialist lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex agencies. Local schools and the Department of Education and Training



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PILLAR 04

UNLOCKING JUSTICE INNOVATION

THE NJC HAS A PROUD HISTORY IN JUSTICE INNOVATION, LEADING THE WAY IN INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY, MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL HEARINGS, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, DIGITAL INNOVATIONS AND THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE APPROACHES.

Since establishment, the NJC has been an innovation centre for the justice system, but this is not widely known across courts and government. Over the next five years we will build the centre's profile as a hub for evidence-based justice and innovation; a place where the Magistrates' Court, other courts, government and community can solve problems connected to the underlying causes of crime and the community's confidence in the justice system.

We will continue to identify opportunities to pilot new practices, technologies and approaches; share lessons and insights; and trial innovations with other courts, justice agencies and communities.

Innovation requires ongoing investment in the capabilities, skills and processes to support it. To this end, we will strengthen our culture of innovation and look for ways to improve the community's experience of the justice system, increase access to justice and address the social determinants of crime.

OUR PRIORITIES:

4.1 Continue to **create innovations that improve the community's experience** of the justice system and increase community safety; solutions that can be rolled out to

the MCV, other areas of the justice system or local communities, as appropriate.

4.2 **Build our profile** as a recognised hub for evidence-based justice and innovation where the MCV, other courts, government and community can solve problems connected to the social determinants of crime and the community's confidence in the justice system

4.3 **Explore the use of emerging technologies and approaches** to increase access to justice, with sector leaders, including MCV

4.4 **Deepen the NJC's innovation culture**, systems and capacity to encourage further innovation across the Centre

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

4.1 Our new innovations have improved community safety and/or the community's experience of the justice system

4.2 Key stakeholders partner with us to create positive change in the justice system. This is reflected in the work we do together (hosting pilots, demonstration projects, and justice innovation events; providing proof of concept; and establishing research partnerships)

4.3 With sector leaders, we are trialling emerging technologies and approaches that show the strongest potential to increase access to justice

4.4 The NJC's culture and systems support and reward innovation and all staff contribute to innovation

THE ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE TO ACHIEVE THIS OUTCOME:

4.1 Work with clients and community to identify unmet needs and understand how to improve their experiences of the justice system (as per 3.2 and 3.3). Identify other emerging issues through environmental scanning, research and our current practice

Work with our clients and community members to develop solutions

Learn from our peers, partners and researchers about emerging practice and innovations to resolve similar issues. Assess new practices and innovations for trialling at the NJC. Develop, trial and evaluate innovations

4.2 As per 2.1, with a specific focus on the NJC as a hub for evidence-based justice and innovation

Invite or respond to approaches from courts, justice agencies and the

community service sector to work with us to trial innovations

Develop, trial and evaluate resulting innovations. Communicate the results of these innovations, and their potential for broader adoption, to relevant stakeholders.

4.3 Identify and create partnerships with sector leaders to explore the potential of emerging technologies and approaches to improve access to justice

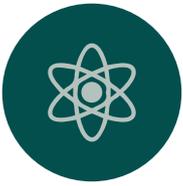
Examples: the application of artificial intelligence, big data, behavioural insights

4.4 Develop and implement a plan to make changes to our systems to support, encourage and reward innovation (See also 5.2 and 5.3)

Examples: increase resourcing to the Program Innovations Team to support innovation. Explore alternative funding models and sources to provide us with the licence for more cutting-edge trials. Include innovation goals within the performance management system and in contract management with agencies. Communicate internal innovation processes. Develop education and knowledge management resources about innovation at the NJC

Encourage staff to build their capacity and pursue opportunities to innovate (See also 5.2)

Examples: professional development, 'Google Days', secondments, exchanges, shadowing or similar to increase skills and networks and enable staff to commit time to innovation projects



PILLAR 05

A PASSIONATE, SKILLED AND COHESIVE ORGANISATION

WE ARE A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM WITH DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS, EXPERIENCES AND EXPERTISE, AND A SHARED PASSION FOR DOING JUSTICE LOCALLY TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SAFETY.

Over the next five years we will continue to attract and retain a diverse, talented and passionate workforce, and invest in the health and wellbeing of our people. We will ensure this is supported by regular training, learning and development opportunities that inspire and resonate with our diverse teams.

We will strengthen our culture of collaboration and innovation across the NJC, the broader MCV network and relevant sectors. We will streamline our internal systems and processes to better support more modern and agile service delivery and management.

We will ensure that we continue to have a sustainable operating and resource model, so that we can respond effectively to the evolving needs and expectations of the City of Yarra and broader justice system.

OUR PRIORITIES:

- 5.1 Invest in the **health and wellbeing of our people** and continue to build diversity in all ways across our workforce
- 5.2 Continue to **attract people with the core skills, attitudes and knowledge** to deliver the NJC's community justice model
- 5.3 Strengthen internal communication and knowledge-sharing systems to support **learning, collaboration and innovation** across the NJC, the broader MCV network and relevant sectors

- 5.4 **Continually review our operating and resource model** to ensure it remains sustainable and financially resilient, and can respond to the evolving needs of Victorian communities and the broader justice system

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

- 5.1 Continued high levels of staff satisfaction (as demonstrated through employee attitude survey results and staff retention) and diversity
- 5.2 Our staff have the skills and motivation needed to deliver our goals
- 5.3 Effective systems are in place to support internal communication and knowledge sharing
- 5.4 We have the resources we need to deliver our goals

THE ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE TO ACHIEVE THIS OUTCOME:

- 5.1 Continue to conduct employee attitude surveys and exit interviews and address any issues raised. Monitor staff retention rates against baselines
- Implement strategies to increase the diversity of our workforce, in line with Court Services Victoria's Diversity Strategy and the demographics of Yarra

Example: unconscious bias training for all staff

- 5.2 Conduct a needs analysis of the skills required to achieve our goals, and recruit people and support training and development opportunities for core skills accordingly

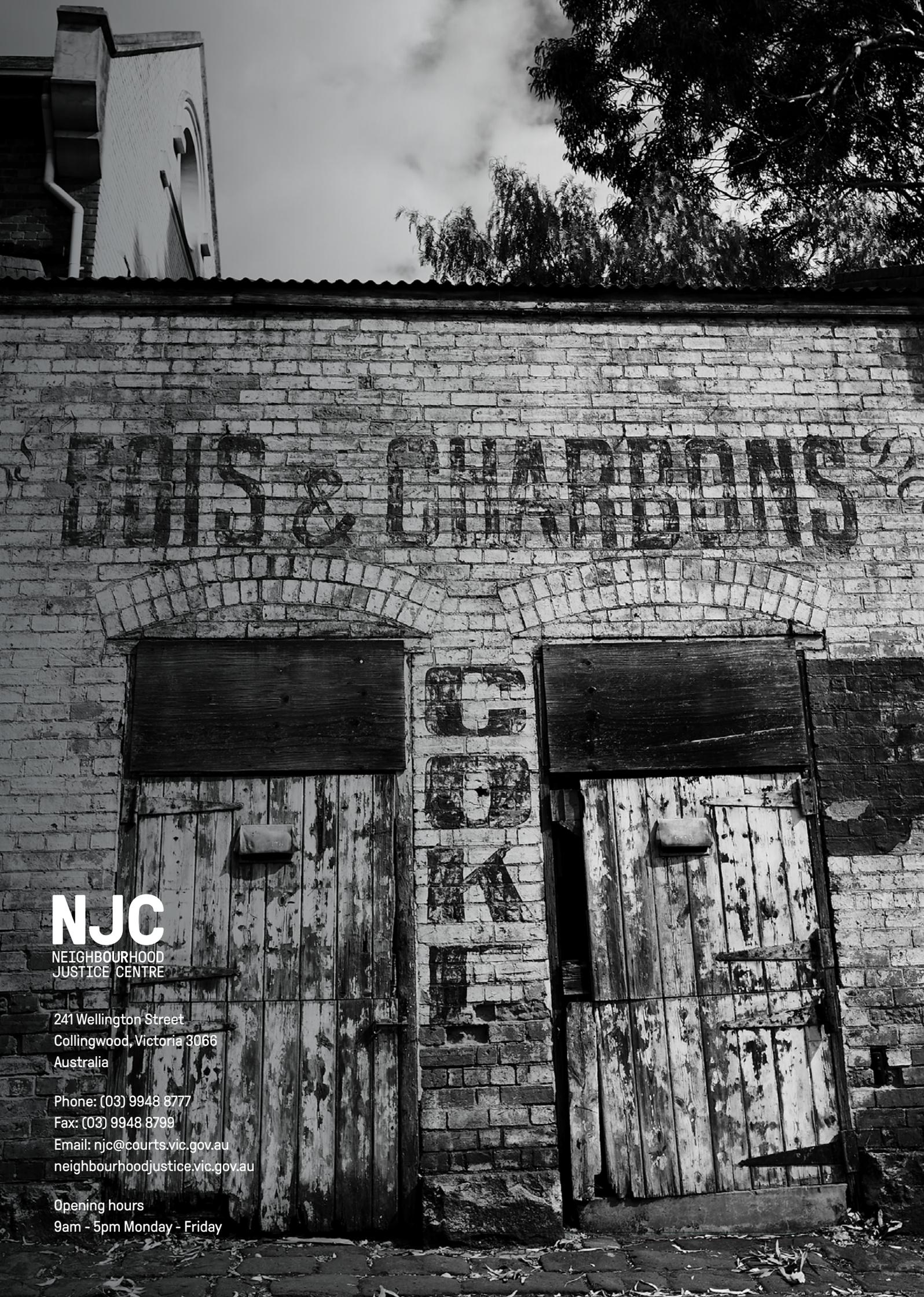
Examples: an improved induction program covering all aspects of the NJC's community justice model. Regular training on key aspects of our practice and cross-cutting issues. Develop a staff skills inventory. Managers to support staff to participate in professional development opportunities

- 5.3 Improve our internal communications and knowledge-management strategies

Examples: teams across the Centre to hold regular information sharing sessions. Development of an NJC intranet. Buddy system

- 5.4 Regular monitoring of our resources and advocating for more sustainable funding, where required, to deliver on our goals including exploring the appetite within the MCV and CSV for funding through alternative sources. (See 4.4)





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