President's message

The past year has seen CISVic further consolidate its position as a leading peak body in the not for profit sector. The work that Kate and the team have undertaken successfully ensures the continued strength of the organisation.

The establishment of the CISVic Consortium and the successful tender result was an extremely important step for the organisation and its leadership role. Many of the small member agencies would not have been successful in the Department of Social Service tender round had this partnership not been formed. I know that it has created a new level of work for the organisation but the short and long term benefits are immeasurable.

The move to new premises has provided an opportunity for all programs to be provided at a central base as well as an opportunity to grow the organisation.

I would like to thank the whole CISVic team for their work in the past year and congratulate them on the successful outcomes. Their efforts in maintaining training programs and providing support for agencies has continued at a high level while many new initiatives have been undertaken.

I also thank members of the Board of Management for their commitment and professionalism throughout the year.

I, on behalf of the Board of management would particularly like to express our thanks to Kate for her professional and positive leadership of CISVic during this period of growth.

Anne Coughlin
President

Key achievements and challenges

Our focus over the last year has been around raising the profile of our members and the work they do while responding to their individual and collective support needs. We continue to advocate for those in our community who are experiencing personal or financial hardship.

Power of the collective

CISVic's Emergency Relief consortium bid to the Department of Social Services was successful, securing funding until June 2017. The agreement commenced 1 March 2015 and makes us the second largest funded agency in Victoria.

The consortium consists of 30 member agencies across 14 regions, delivering just under $2,000,000 annually. The funding has strengthened our relevance and increased our capacity to advocate for those in our community who are experiencing personal or financial hardship.

Harnessing the power of data

Key to effectively managing a consortium of 30 members is the capacity to collect, collate and analyse data. We now have the capacity to do this using Community Data Solution's client registration management database which we provide free of charge to all consortium members.

Professional development

We continue to deliver both accredited and non-accredited training programs. These include:

- Assess and deliver services for clients with complex needs:
  A six-day accredited training program delivered to 142 new community support workers. Nine programs were delivered in metropolitan Melbourne and two in regional Victoria.

- Tenancy Rights and Responsibilities:
  Four sessions were delivered with the Tenants Union of Victoria to 70 participants.

- Utilities Hardship Training:
  Three sessions developed and piloted in partnership with Kildonan UnitingCare and Financial & Consumer Rights Council (FCRC).

- Dealing with Challenging Behaviours:
  A targeted program delivered to 18 participants.

Advocacy body

Advocacy is a key function of any peak body, and CISVic is no different. We have maintained and strengthened relationships with key stakeholders, advocating for members and the communities they work with at the local, state and federal level.

In this reporting period we participated in 10 various reference groups and in August attended the Australian Council of Social Services Advocacy Day in Canberra. Further, we have made four policy submissions and endorsed three submissions by other parties.

Strengthening local networks

CISVic's local networks provide an important mechanism for information sharing and communication between members and the peak body. We have continued to support and grow our regional networks. With the creation of Inner South regional network, we now have six active networks; five in metropolitan Melbourne, and one rural network.

Growth in membership and workforce

The CISVic membership grew by three associate members in this reporting period; from 61 to 64. We now have 38 full members and 26 associate members. Consequently, our collective workforce has also increased from 250 to 380 paid staff, and 2,700 to 3,100 volunteers.

Volunteers remain vitally important to our sector and their participation extends from roles in administration, to community support workers, to managers and coordinators, and to Committees of Management and Boards.
Executive Officer’s message

It gives me great pleasure to present Community Information & Support Victoria’s (CISVic) 44th annual report. I’ve now been with the organisation for seven years, and I’m pleased to say, still experiencing immense satisfaction from the work.

The last year has been a difficult one for the community sector. While the 2015 federal budget was slightly softer than the tough and divisive one of 2014 budget, we’ve still seen significant cuts to key services. The Federal Government’s introduction of an open, competitive tender process for emergency relief, financial counselling and microfinance programs mid 2014 caused much anxiety and stress for our members and the broader sector. While our CISVic consortia tended was successful the cuts and re-distribution of funding has seen agencies lose 20-70% of their funding. CISVic and the consortia members are now significant players, and we see opportunity here to strengthen our voice. Our contract commenced in March this year, and we’ve included data in this report about the first four months of service delivery. This funding has enhanced our capacity to deliver our advocacy and sector support.

We welcomed new staff to our team, Maegan Skehill (Sectors development manager), Cherry Ching (Administrative officer), and Lisa Hansen (Project officer, six month contract). In January we entered into a new auspice relationship working with The Salvation Army Training Plus. We have found that this a good fit in terms of our services and training, and the Salvos’s great resource and support.

We attracted additional funding for two projects; Energy Information Fund (Department of Economics, Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources), a partnership project between CISVic, FCRC and Kildonan to develop and deliver energy hardship training programs for volunteers and financial counsellors; and Fire Services Levy Monitor project (Department of Justice) which is validating and delivering targeted information to our workforce around insurance issues for vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

I believe that during this last 12 months, we’ve been able to really consolidate our organisation and work, and we’re in a sound position to respond to the needs of the members and the community.

The current social, economic and political context will certainly drive our work over the next 12 months. Recent discussions about tax reform or increasing GST is unsettling, as modelling indicates that this will hit those who can least afford it. Government budgets at every level are under pressure, but the remedy should not be found in cutting or withdrawing vital education, health and welfare services, or shifting their costs to the public. The gap between the haves and have nots continues to rise –by over twice the rate of children living with two parents.

We look forward to a new year; with whatever kind of opportunities and challenges it may bring, while firmly focusing on helping local communities help local people.

Kate Wheller
Executive Officer