

Build a strong sector that can lead social change



The move to Ross House by a number of community groups completed a stage in the Ross House project, 1987

VCOSS works to support and strengthen the community services sector by coordinating key sector advocacy activities, advocating for resources to ensure sector sustainability and working to achieve improved training and development opportunities.

VCOSS convened forums and working groups

- VCOSS/Centrelink Dialogue Meeting
- CEO's and Presidents' Forum
- Children and Young People Forum
- Clearinghouse Project Reference Group
- Coalition for People's Transport
- Disability Access to Transport Working Group
- Education and Training Reference Group
- Emergency Relief Victoria Network
- Essential Services Working Group
- Health and Wellbeing Forum
- Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee
- Peaks and Statewide Networks
- Price Index Working Group
- Sector Sustainability Task Group
- VCOSS Manuals Reference Group
- Welfare Reform Working Group



Community sector development

Partnerships and sector sustainability

With the Partnership Agreement between the community sector and Department of Human Services (DHS) in its third year, VCOSS continued to co-chair the Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee (HSPIC) with DHS and hosted two forums in collaboration with the DHS Secretary and senior staff in November 2005 and May 2006.

VCOSS also played a key role in negotiations for adequate indexation of community sector funding agreements. It is testament to the mature nature of the relationship between DHS and the sector that discussions continued at committee level during the VCOSS and combined peaks public campaign for adequate funding.

VCOSS and the combined peaks hosted a major community sector meeting on 18 May 2006 on the inadequacy of the proposed DHS price index and pursued this issue in the media. DHS initially offered 2.41 per cent indexation on recurrent funding agreements for 2006/09. By June 2005, negotiations were continuing toward a more acceptable outcome.

Within the sector itself, VCOSS is working to strengthen cross-sectoral support and continued to host the Peaks and Statewide Networks Forum during 2005/06. These meetings create opportunities for sector representatives to contribute, comment and advocate on important issues affecting cross-portfolio and cross-departmental issues. In addition, the VCOSS Chief Executive Officers' and Presidents' Forum was re-launched in the autumn of 2006 with a view to developing collegial networks and articulating common values shared by the community service sector.

Another sector-wide initiative established in August 2005 was the combined Sector Sustainability Task Group (SSTG). The focus of the SSTG is to build greater sector and government awareness of the needs facing the sector around industry planning, regulatory reform, capital and infrastructure issues, workforce planning and recognition of the roles played by the community sector in voluntarism and community strengthening. Public forums were held in February and April 2006 and a research paper commissioned to assist the sector engage with all the political parties in the lead up to the 2006 State Election. One outcome of this process was the announcement of a whole of government 'Strengthening Community Organisations' project on 1 June 2006.

**Public Meeting
NGO Price Index**

Where: Wesley Church Hall
148 Lonsdale St Melbourne
(between Russell and Exhibition St)

When: Thursday
May 18th — 2pm to 4pm

Who: VCOSS and combined peaks
invite Victorian community sector
stakeholders to a public meeting

DHS and Minister Garbutt have offered 2.5% to the Sector on price indexation for service agreements 2006-09 (offer made on 27/04/06)
The Combined Sector needs 4.15% to meet the ever-increasing costs of planning & delivering quality services.
Come and share your experiences regarding:

- The cost of delivering quality services to individuals, families and communities across Victoria
- The value of services in your local communities
- Attracting and retaining quality staff to the Community Sector
- Remaining viable and sustaining services

Please circulate this information amongst your networks, and RSVP to VCOSS via email: vco@vco.org.au
Check out updates and info kits on the VCOSS website: www.vco.org.au
(Use the ready reckoner to calculate the funding shortfalls to your organisation).
How will these funding shortfalls affect important client services, staff and local communities? Please email your responses to VCOSS and share them with your peak body and declare makers in your local community.
VCOSS looks forward to seeing you on 18 May.
Cath Smith
CEO, VCOSS
A Strong Voice for the Community Sector & a Collective Voice for Change

Occupational Health and Safety

In 2005/06 VCOSS worked to strengthen practical support available to the sector in Workcover insurance. VCOSS coordinated the Community Sector Workcover Initiative as a combined peaks consortium that selected and promoted two preferred providers of Workcover insurance with the support of the Community Sector Investment Fund. In June 2006, Cambridge Integrated Services and Gallagher Bassett were identified as preferred providers.

VCOSS also brokered free Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) consultations through WorkSafe Victoria for 100 small community sector organisations, including some in rural and regional Victoria. Feedback on the consultations was positive and a minimum of 3,000 staff, volunteers and/or clients are expected to benefit from this initiative.

Training and development clearinghouse project

A major sector development achievement was the launch of the Statewide Training and Development Clearinghouse, hosted on the VCOSS website. The site is now up and running, with the assistance of a major grant from the Community Support Fund. VCOSS has re-commenced cross-promoting, brokering and supporting a wide array of training and development activities in partnership with Leadership Victoria, a wide network of community sector trainers, consultants and corporate pro bono providers here in Victoria.

A training needs analysis conducted in consultation with over 200 community sector representatives identified training and support needs common to organisations of all sizes across the sector. Following this, VCOSS delivered a free community sector training program, providing 180 participants - including those in regional Victoria - with suitable, expert training in key areas identified in the training needs analysis, and attracting some \$30,000 in pro bono contributions. Free training was provided (in Melbourne unless otherwise indicated) on the following topics:

- Strategic planning (Warrnambool)
- Community needs analysis (Warrnambool)
- Conducting effective performance appraisals (Melbourne and Bendigo)
- Presentations that make a difference
- Breaking even – Not breaking down
- Powerful communication for leaders
- The power of images
- Getting the most out of your local government
- Working with Indigenous clientele
- 'Excuse me, Sir – you're freaking me out!' – Dealing with difficult behaviours
- Legal obligations for not-for-profit organisations

- Financial statement analysis seminar for community sector organisations (x 3)
- Financial literacy for boards and committees of management

Participant evaluation of the workshops was overwhelmingly positive and at least 2,000 staff, volunteers and/or clients are expected to benefit indirectly from this initiative.

Through the Clearinghouse Project in partnership with Leadership Victoria, VCOSS supported the leadership development of sector personnel by brokering pro bono support to the community sector worth \$90,000 in the areas of leadership, mentoring and governance training for more than 60 chief executive officers and board members. Evaluation of this initiative is ongoing but preliminary feedback is positive.

Emergency relief training and capacity building

In collaboration with The Salvation Army, Community Information Victoria and Victorian Relief, VCOSS delivered five accredited training workshops to emergency relief staff and volunteers between September 2005 and February 2006. With support from the R E Ross Trust, VCOSS surveyed 144 emergency relief providers across Victoria and identified further training and support needs for this sub-sector, including appropriate on-line resources. The majority of respondents were in favour of establishing an independent peak body to advocate for and provide support to the emergency relief sector.



FREE TRAINING



A unique opportunity for VCOSS Members



VCOSS Congress 2005

In 2005, VCOSS hosted Congress in October, rather than at the usual date of early August. While this meant we competed with annual general meeting and conference season, the 2005 Congress was a very solid program with several highly commended speakers and sessions. These included an address from Professor Peter Saunders, Director, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales on *Social justice and equity*, Sir Gus Nossal on *Achieving equity and increasing life chances* to launch Anti-Poverty Week in Victoria, and an exciting presentation from The Torch Project and Beyond Empathy.

At the Congress dinner Ellen Koshland, Founder and President of the Education Foundation, provided the Ronald Henderson Oration. Sharan Burrow, President, Australian Council of Trade Unions was part of the final session that explored advocacy strategies in the changed federal context. The advocacy training sessions run in conjunction with the RMIT Community Advocacy Unit were especially well regarded and it was decided that we will prioritise a 'training and development' stream for future conferences.

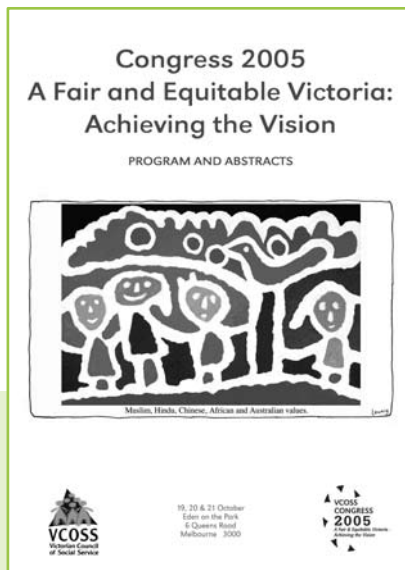


Carolyn Atkins, Sir Gus Nossal, Cath Smith and Bev Klinger at Congress 2005

Support for effective advocacy

VCOSS plays an important role supporting effective community services sector advocacy. In 2005/06 VCOSS:

- Briefed the mental health, drug and alcohol and other organisations on the review of the *Children and Young Persons Act 1985*;
- Briefed the VCOSS Peaks and Statewide Networks Forum on the Victorian Human Rights Project and the Consultation Committee;
- Co-convened an information and training session with Chronic Illness Alliance in Bendigo to build capacity among workers assisting people in hardship with energy and water bills;
- Produced and distributed information papers on pre-payment meters and changes to concessions;
- Convened forums to brief the community sector about the impacts of 'Welfare to Work' and 'Work Choices' legislation on low income and disadvantaged households; and
- Convened a community consultation workshop to facilitate input from community sector organisations into the Melbourne Water Supply-Demand Strategy and Sustainable Water Strategy being developed by WaterSmart and the Department of Sustainability and the Environment respectively.



FIRST STATE CONFERENCE OF SOCIAL WELFARE
MELBOURNE, 1953.

PLANNING SOCIAL WELFARE

PROCEEDINGS

VICTORIAN COUNCIL
OF SOCIAL SERVICE.

Foreword.

The first Victorian Conference of Social Welfare was organised by the Victorian Council of Social Service in the expectation that it would provide a forum for the sharing of knowledge and experience by those particularly interested in various aspects of social service work. The theme of the Conference was "Planning Social Welfare".

The Conference extended over four evenings from 26th to 29th October, 1953, the inaugural address being given by the Honourable Mr. Justice J. Barry, Judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria. At the other sessions addresses were given by Miss Lyra Taylor, Miss Teresa Wardell and Mr. S. Greig Smith. The four papers have now been collected and are presented in permanent form for the benefit of all interested in social welfare.

After the addresses on the last three evenings discussion groups met, and later the leaders summarised these discussions for the full meeting. The subjects discussed and the leaders in these groups were as follows : -

"The Future of Voluntary Organisations"	Rev. Father Eric Perkins.
"The Effect of Increasing Social Services on National Character"	Mrs. S.B. Horne
"Setting Higher Standards in Social Service"	Miss Kathleen Crisp
"Imprisonment or Probation?"	Dr. Norval Morris
"Prevention in the Home"	Miss Joyce Sambell
"The Role of the Institution in Prevention"	Mr. Edgar Derrick

Create a strong public presence for the changes required

INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Memo: we're not all sharing in the common wealth

OVER the next two weeks, the eyes of much of the world will be on Australia and its sporting achievements. But there is another area of endeavour where our country falls way short of comparable Commonwealth nations such as Canada and New Zealand: delivering justice and equity for indigenous people in Australia.

Australia is one of the richest countries in the world, yet indigenous people still on average have lives that are 20 years shorter than those of non-indigenous people.

Indigenous people, living in more than 400 nations on this continent, who have looked after and maintained this land for more than 40,000 years, were once very wealthy. They had a rich culture, comfortable lifestyle, strong connecting beliefs and, most importantly, lots of land on which to live. Indigenous people were dispossessed of their land, and therefore their wealth, by the arrival of non-indigenous people and as a result of colonisation became and remain the single most marginalised and disadvantaged group on this continent.

Unlike New Zealand and Canada, Australia has made few inroads into the appalling state of indigenous health. Unlike both of these countries, Australia has made no treaties with the original occupants who were dispossessed of their land.

Despite the many hurdles placed in their way, indigenous people have succeeded. A number are members of the Australian Commonwealth Games team. Others are artists performing in cultural festivities associated with the Games. We congratulate these indigenous athletes and artists and applaud their achievements. But their success should not be used to gloss over the brutal reality of what most indigenous Australians have to confront on a daily basis — racism, opportunities denied and lives tragically cut short.

At this time of national celebration and international attention, we call on the Australian and Victorian governments to start the process of developing a fair and just settlement of the grievances between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. This should culminate in formal treaties between our peoples.

We also call upon governments, churches, NGOs and those in the corporate world to commit themselves to brokering genuine agreements which respect indigenous self-determination.

Only when our different histories and life circumstances are reconciled can there be genuine unity within the Australian nation.

Jill Webb, chairwoman, ANTaR Victoria; Sharan Burrow, president, Australian Council of Trade Unions; Eleanor Bourke and Diane Sisely, co-chairs, Reconciliation Victoria; Ian Wishart, national executive director, Plan; Cath Smith, CEO, VCOSS; Andrew Rowe, CEO, Victorian Local Governance Association.

Use of the media is VCOSS primary tool to create – or intervene in – public debates for policy change. Media comment both informs and shapes public opinion and influences decision makers. VCOSS also produces publications, reports and organises public events to raise public awareness of issues and directly engage the public in debates.

In 2005/06 VCOSS concentrated media effort on transport, education costs, and access to affordable utilities.

Media releases

2005

- 25 July, 27,900 Victorians could be worse off if Federal welfare law is passed
- 1 August, Multi-Purpose Taxi Cap increase a welcome step
- 6 September, Minister should spend a day in a wheelchair
- 19 August, Call to action to address housing rights violations
- 13 October, Fall in energy disconnections highlights deeper issues
- 21 October, VCOSS State Budget Submission 2006-07 Launch
- 28 October, A State Housing Plan needed for Victoria
- 24 November, VCOSS calls for a 'Fair go' for Rural and Regional Victoria
- 24 November, Sustaining a Fairer Victoria: VCOSS State Budget Submission 2006-07 Rural and Regional Victoria Statement

2006

- 3 February, Coalition calls on State Government to reject tunnel proposal
- 9 February, Cost blow out to get to work in outer suburbs
- 10 February, Public transport some solution to Victoria's job woes

- 4 March, Services and infrastructure the budget priority say community and welfare peaks
- 30 March, Protect battlers in green power plan
- 21 April, Let me on the tram!
- 25 April, Call on parties to deliver a strong and fair community
- 2 May, Melbourne 2030 has solid fundamentals
- 8 May, New Disability Bill but needs and rights still not met
- 10 May, Federal Budget 2006 - VCOSS response
- 16 May, State Government places Victorians at risk with \$17 million cuts to essential community services
- 16 May, Victorian community services are running on empty
- 17 May, Good news for access to services and people with disabilities in the Transport and Liveability Statement
- 30 May, Victorian State Budget: Positive spending and investment but tax policy misdirected
- 31 May, Help with power bills – but for how long?

impacts on families, *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 July

- Fines for late payers', *Herald Sun*, 21 July
- 'Disabled win \$2.3m. Extra cash for taxi subsidy', *Herald Sun*, 25 July
- 'Welfare changes will hinder, not help', Letter to the Editor, *The Age*, 27 July
- 'Bill for single mums surges', *Herald Sun*, 29 July
- '8 per cent rise angers taxi drivers. It's not fare enough', *Herald Sun*, 2 August
- 'Cap for disabled taxi use raised', *The Age*, 2 August
- 'Fare rise angers taxi drivers', www.heraldsun.com.au, 2 August
- 'Impacts on families & children of education costs', *Herald Sun*, 3 August
- 'Taxi program users win increased cap', *Knox Leader*, 9 August
- On the right track?', *The Age*, 22 August
- 'Economy safe from rising oil price, but some will suffer' *AAP Financial News Wire*, 25 August 2005
- 'High fuel prices to cause pain in Australian households', *Asia Pulse*, 26 August
- 'Mr Ordinary hard hit by fuel costs', *The Gold Coast Bulletin*, 27 August
- 'Feeling oil price pains', *The Mercury*, Hobart, 27 August
- 'Fair vision for Victoria', re Congress, *The Age*, 27 August
- Plan for homeless volunteers', re Commonwealth Games, www.thecouriermail.com.au, 28 August
- Plan for homeless Games volunteers', *Herald Sun*, 28 August
- 'Sole parents head to work', *The Age*, 29 August
- 'Bet the house: it's a big deal', re gambling, *The Age*, 1 September
- 'Gas-guzzling generation shifts down', *The Age*, 3 September
- 'Slump in Aussie orders', *Sunday Times*, Perth, 4 September, p 63
- 'Poor to bear fuel-price pain', www.sundaytimes.com.au (WA), 4 September
- 'Poor forced out', *Herald Sun*, 16 September
- 'Poor to bear brunt of climate change, severe weather', *AAP Newswire*, 29 September
- 'Motorists at braking point', *The Age*, 1 October
- 'Parents paying \$56 million a year to public schools', *AAP Newswire*, 10 October
- 'Parents paying \$56m a year to schools', ninemsn.com.au, 10 October
- 'Free education costs us \$56m', *Herald Sun*, 10 October
- 'Customers energised by payout', *Herald Sun*, 13 October
- 'Kinder parents face the squeeze', *The Age*, 17 October
- 'Fine, so pay them in instalments', *Herald Sun*, 18 October

Media hits

July 2005-June 2006

Print

- re Federal Government tax cuts, rising household costs and

12 Herald Sun, Tuesday, April 25, 2006

www.heraldsun.com.au

Call to slash public transport fares Give the poor a break

PUBLIC transport fares in outer suburbs and regional Victoria should be slashed to help link people living in low-income areas with jobs and services.

In a pre-election call to the state's political parties, the Victorian Council of Social Service has called for Zone 3 public transport fares to be scrapped in Melbourne, flat \$10 fares between regional cities, \$20 fares to Melbourne

Peter Mickelburgh
state politics reporter

and fare increases tied to inflation.

More affordable housing and minimum standards for rental properties, such as lockable doors, heating and mandatory energy and water efficiency levels, are also on the VCOSS hit list.

VCOSS chief executive officer Cath Smith told the *Herald Sun* housing, transport and cutting waiting lists for

intervention services for families in crisis, disabled children and the mentally ill were the state's top social priorities.

"We are calling for a state affordable housing plan to create affordable rental housing in job-rich communities and for major transport investment to link job-poor communities with employment opportunities," she said.

Ms Smith said public transport fares had increased almost twice as fast as inflation in the past five years, making

trips to essential services such as doctors, banks, schools and hospitals expensive for many people on low incomes.

The VCOSS report says a person travelling from the outer suburbs to seek work in the city would spend a minimum of \$26.10 a week for a concession fare, which is 15.5 per cent of the unemployment benefit.

In the bush a single return trip from Lakes Entrance to Bairnsdale, the nearest regional city, costs \$18.20 and from Bairnsdale to Melbourne \$86.40.

The report says poor quality housing with no insulation and old or inefficient appliances were most common in the private rental market and often left households who could least afford it with the most expensive energy bills.

Ms Smith said many rental properties were also dilapidated and unsafe, with rising damp, lack of heating, broken windows, doors and fences, holes in walls and floors and inadequate locks common problems.

VCOSS wants minimum housing standards to protect the health, safety and security of tenants and the setting of mandatory energy and water efficiency ratings for all private rental properties by 2008.

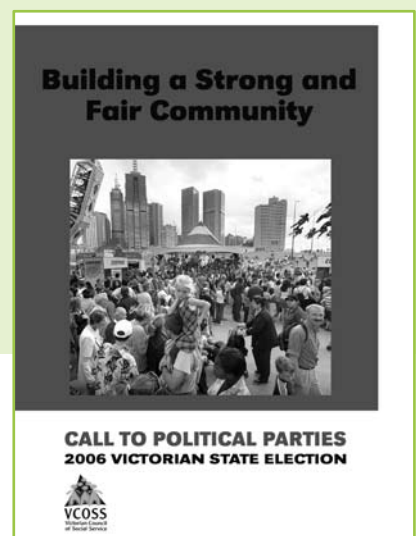
The report calls for action to cut waiting time for intervention services for families from three months to a week and from two years to three months for people with mental illness.

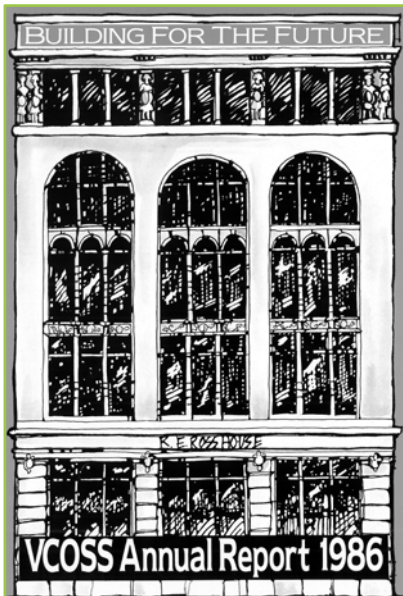
And it wants children with disabilities to get support from infancy, not when they start school.

- 'Poor left behind on housing', *The Age*, 21 October
- 'Huge increase sought for buses and trains', *The Age*, 21 October
- '\$3m culled from taxi fare rorts', *Herald Sun*, 3 November
- 'Trial by public transport: why the system is failing', *The Age*, 5 November
- 'Government bites the bullet on transport blueprint', *The Age*, 7 November
- 'Protesters push for rail overhaul', *MX*, 8 November
- 'Disabled and single mums hit by changes' *Hume/Moreland Leader*, 9 November
- 'Tunnel vision: a victory for the road lobby', *The Age*, 10 November
- 'Homeless to get a bed for Games', *The Age*, 10 November
- Ltr to editor, Schools' policy will deepen the divide, *The Age*, 21 November
- '\$9m ads up to trouble Bracks pre-poll blitz row', *Herald Sun*, 22 November
- 'Price of living on the edge', *Herald Sun*, 15 December
- 'Taxpayers dig deep as government advertising hits \$216,000 a day', *Herald Sun*, 9 January
- 'Plea to Canberra for a transport fix', *The Age*, 13 January
- 'Bracks urged to bury city tunnel idea', *Melbourne Times*, 8 February
- 'Transport woes: Car costs hurt work prospects', *Herald Sun*, 9 February
- 'Umpire calls audit on ads', *Herald Sun*, 10 February
- 'Dependence on cars a costly burden', Letter in Business, *The Age*, 13 February
- 'Overhaul needed to attract people', *Knox Leader*, 14 February
- 'Labor spins out of control', *Herald Sun*, 16 February
- 'Cars costs add up', *Berwick/Pakenham Cardinia Leader*, 22 February
- 'Car costs hit commuters', *Cranbourne Leader*, 22 February
- 'More families miss out on refuge place', *The Age*, 1 Mar
- 'Travel costs too high', *Knox Leader*, 7 March
- 'Memo: we're not all sharing in the common wealth' *The Age*, 17 March
- 'Looking out for the kids at street level', *The Age*, 18 March
- 'Accessible trams' *MX*, 21 March
- 'Disabled stop tram in tracks', *Herald Sun*, 22 March
- 'Running late' *Herald Sun*, 23 March
- 'When party time is over and trams lose their wings' *The Age*, 23 March
- 'Trams run behind on access', *Moreland Leader*, 27 March
- 'Stop row stops tram', *Melbourne/Yarra Leader*, 27 March
- 'Give us power refunds', *Herald Sun*, 29 March
- 'Paper gives stark new take on corporate philanthropy', *The Age*, 6 April
- 'War declared on disadvantaged', *The Age*, 13 April
- 'Women short-changed, same work for less pay.' *Sunday Herald Sun*, 20 April
- 'My childhood home', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 23 April
- 'Call to slash public transport fares. Give the poor a break', *Herald Sun*, 25 April
- 'Women's wages' www.heraldsun.com.au, 30 April
- 'Human Rights Charter' www.heraldsun.com.au, 2 May
- 'Lib planning policy under attack as groups support 2030' *The Age*, 3 May
- 'Human Rights Charter' www.theadvertiser.com.au, 3 May
- 'Planning laws under attack' *Herald Sun*, 4 May
- 'Victoria to adopt human rights charter' *AAP Newswire*, 2 May
- 'Smart move mooted', *Knox Leader*, 2 May
- 'Outer suburb families hit hard', *Lilydale & Yarra Valley Leader*, 8 May
- 'High cost of car culture', *Frankston Standard/Hastings Leader*, 8 May
- 'Peninsula isolation', *Mornington Peninsular Leader*, 9 May
- 'Fuel costs bite in outer areas', *Melton/Moorabool Leader*, 9 May
- 'Travel costs soar in outer urban areas,' *Whittlesea Leader*, 10 May
- 'Shire people at 'disadvantage'', *Diamond Valley Leader*, 10 May
- 'Shoddy transport services taking toll', *Free Press Leader*, 10 May
- 'Outer suburbs pay the price', *Berwick/Pakenham Cardinia Leader*, 10 May
- 'City left out of the loop', *Hume/Moreland Leader*, 10 May
- 'Missing the bus' *The Age*, 16 May
- Profile, *Melbourne Times*, 17 May
- 'Helpers beg for more. Hundreds lose out' *Herald Sun*, 19 May
- 'Charities struggle with state funding squeeze' *The Age*, 19 May
- 'Tax distortions in the gun sights' *The Age*, 25 May
- 'Time to help Labor's loyal and needy' *The Age*, 28 May
- 'Low oil warning: Planning starts now' *The Age*, 30 May
- 'Big land tax cuts in Brumby's budget to cost \$200 million' *The Age*, 30 May
- 'Cash to ease pain' *Herald Sun*, 31 May
- 'A return to Kirner and Cain years', *The Age*, 31 May
- '\$818m pledged to help disadvantaged', *The Age*, 31 May
- 'Uniform handouts', *The Age*, 1 June
- 'Talking point', *The Age*, 3 June
- 'Pokies money our bizarre budget item', *The Age*, 4 June
- 'Disabled cash fears', *Melton/Moorabool Leader*, 20 June

Radio / TV

- *Triple R*, 30 minute interview re Victorian Government's human rights consultation & VCOSS-FCLC Human Rights Community Engagement Project, 13 July
- *3RN Radio News*, re taxi fare rise, 1 August
- *ABC Radio Victoria Radio News*, re taxi fare rise, 1 August
- *774 ABC Melbourne Radio News*, re taxi fare rise, 1 August
- *3RN Radio News*, re taxi fare rise, 1 August
- *Channel 31* re: petrol prices, 8 September
- *ABC Radio*, re climate change, 29 September
- *SBS Radio*, re climate change, 29 September
- *AAP*, re climate change, 29 September
- *ATV 10 News*, re rising cost of healthcare, 30 Sept
- *Perth Mix Radio News*, re climate change, 5 October
- *Magic Radio News*, re education costs, 10 October
- *3MP Radio News*, re education costs, 10 October
- *SEN Radio News*, re education costs, 10 October
- *3AW Radio News*, re education costs, 10 October
- *Gippsland 3GV Radio News*, re education costs, 10 October
- *Perth 6PR*, Tony McManus & Steve Mills, re education costs, 10 October
- *Perth Mix Radio News*, re education costs, 10 October
- Interview with *ABC Ballarat* re: State Budget Submission, disability services, 21 October
- *ABC Statewide* re welfare to work changes, 10 November
- *Vega Sydney FM*, morning show interview with Wendy Harmer re Vic Govt's plan to provide housing for Melbourne homeless during C'wlth Games, 10 November
- *ABC Radio News*, interview re Vic Govt's plan to provide housing for Melbourne homeless during C'wlth Games, 10 November
- *RPH Radio Network* – Talk the talk program, interview re Vic Govt's plan to provide housing for Melbourne homeless during C'wlth Games, 10 November
- Interview *774 ABC*, Jon Faine re family support services, 18 January
- Interview on *Radio 3CR*, re Charter of Human Rights, 24 January
- *Melbourne 3MMM Radio News*, Rising price of fuel cost, VCOSS study, 9 February
- *Melbourne 3AW*, re fuel costs, 9 February
- *Fox FM Breakfast*, re: costs of car dependence, 9 February
- *3CR Breakfast*, re: costs of car dependence, 16 February
- *ABC Gippsland 828 AM*, 7 March
- *3CR Breakfast*, re: accessible trams, 22 March
- *Bendigo KLFM Radio News*, re: 'Welfare to Work', 28 March
- *ABC Central Victoria*, re: utilities, 13 April
- *3MMM Radio News*, petrol prices, 20 April
- *Fox FM*, re: petrol prices, 20 April
- *3AW Radio News*, public transport fares, 25 April
- *Magic 693 Radio News*, public transport fares, 25 April
- *3MP Radio News*, public transport Fares, 25 April
- *Melbourne Fox FM*, Radio News, 5 May
- *774 ABC Melbourne*, Jon Faine, 10 May
- *ABC Gippsland*, Gerard Callinan, 10 May
- *Shepparton WIN TV State News*, 17 May
- *Albury WIN TV State News*, 17 May
- *Ballarat WIN TV State News*, 17 May
- *Mildura WIN TV State News*, 17 May
- *3AW Melbourne*, Derryn Hinch, 31 May
- *3AW Melbourne Radio News*, 31 May
- *Magic 1278 Radio News*, 31 May
- *3MP Melbourne*, Radio News, 31 May
- *SEN 1116 Radio News*, 31 May
- *774 ABC Melbourne Radio News*, 6 June
- *621 Melbourne Radio National*, Radio News, 6 June
- *ABC Radio News*, 6 June





Publications and reports

August 2005

- *There is no dignity living suspended like this...The Victorian Housing Rights Tribunal volume*
- *A Fairer Victoria: Strategies for action report*, Six strategic areas for collaboration by the Victorian Government and Victorian community sector
- *VCOSS Congress 2005 provisional program*
- *Course in Emergency relief work training manual*

September 2005

- *Count the cuts: The impact of indexation and under-funding in the community sector*

October 2005

- *VCOSS Congress 2005 program and abstracts*
- *VCOSS Congress 2005 congress papers (online)*
- *Sustaining a fairer Victoria: VCOSS state budget submission 2006-07*

December 2005

- *Sustaining a fairer Victoria: VCOSS state budget submission 2006-07 rural and regional statement*
- *Sustaining a fairer Victoria: VCOSS state budget submission 2006-07 Melbourne urban fringe statement*

February 2006

- *Making human rights real: Human rights community engagement project*
- *Talking to each other: An analysis of networking in the Victorian emergency relief sector*
- *Transport and liveability: The path to a sustainable Victoria* (jointly authored by key organisations in the Coalition for People's Transport)

April 2006

- *Building a strong and fair community: Call to political parties, 2006 Victorian state election*

June 2006

- *VCOSS Congress 2006 preliminary program*



Noticeboard

11 issues

Just Policy

Editions 37, 38, 39, 40

Committed social policy researchers from four universities and the community sector continued to volunteer their time to source articles, manage academic refereeing processes and plan our quarterly journal, designed to strengthen the evidence base of government and community sector practitioners, policy workers and researchers.

Reader surveys have continued to demonstrate the value placed on this membership service, free to VCOSS members. After a focus on strategic planning and production process improvements during 2005, Benno Engels from RMIT Centre for Applied Social Research took on regular chairing of the committee, with committed support from Barry Hahn, City of Port Phillip; Mandy Leveratt, URCOT; Sam Biondo, Fitzroy Legal Service; Rob Watts, RMIT University; Carla Lipzig-Mumme,

Monash University; Ruth Webber, Australian Catholic University; Amanda Watkinson, RMIT University; Kay Cook, Deakin University; Lea Campbell, Australian Catholic University and Heather Fraser, RMIT University.

A special edition based on a conference on precarious employment was generously sponsored by the Monash Research Centre on Work and Society in the Global Era.

VCOSS-convened conferences, forums and events

July 2005

- Three train-the-educator sessions: Human rights community education

August 2005

- *Close to home: The Victorian housing rights tribunal report* launch by Jelena Popovic, Deputy Chief Magistrate of Victoria and facilitator of the Victorian Housing Rights Tribunal
- VCOSS, the Federation of Community Legal Centres and LaTrobe University Law School joint forum exploring key cross-sector concerns with the legislative review of the *Children and Young Persons Act 1985*

August – September 2005

- 15 human rights consultations as part of the VCOSS – Federation of Community Legal Centres Human Rights Community Engagement Project

October 2005

- VCOSS Congress 2005 – *A fair and equitable Victoria: Achieving the vision*

November 2005

- Secretaries Forum - convened by VCOSS and the Department of Human Services

December 2005

- Industrial relations reform: Implications for the community sector public forum
- Non-government organisations Indigenous rights forum to build a

coalition of organisations committed to Indigenous rights – jointly convened by VCOSS and Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation

February 2006

- What does a comprehensive social policy vision look like for a state government? – VCOSS and Sector Sustainability Task Group

March 2006

- Implementing *A Fairer Victoria: Achieving the vision* forum
- ‘Let me on the tram’ community protest to highlight the inaccessibility of trams to people with disabilities (with Disability Resources Centre)

April 2006

- Compacts, costs and the future of the community sector... – VCOSS and Sector Sustainability Task Group

May 2006

- NGO Price Index Public Meeting
- Who’s carrying the can - Two joint VCOSS and Youth Affairs Council of Victoria forums to highlight the impact of youth service gaps and identify solutions
- ‘Welfare to Work public forum’

June 2006

- Community consultation on the potential social impacts of the new Sustainable Water Strategy

VCOSS Training and Development Clearinghouse

The development of a Training and Development website began in June 2006.

The website will list the following:

- Individual trainers and training organisations who offer discounted rates to vcoSS members;
- Pro bono organisations who offer assistance to community organisations free of charge;
- Workshops, seminars and events relevant to the sector; and
- Training resources for the sector.



Rivkah Nissim at the *Close to home: The Victorian housing rights tribunal report* launch



Jelena Popovic also at the *Victorian housing rights tribunal report* launch

Sustain just and equitable outcomes through collaboration



Hon. John Thwaites, MP at the *A Fairer Victoria* forum, 3 March 2006

VCOSS works using a collaborative approach that involves building strategic alliances and coalitions. Our approach is focused on strengthening a collective voice for change, both within and beyond the community sector, and on developing strategic partnerships for policy change with government.

A Fairer Victoria

The VCOSS *A Fairer Victoria* Community Sector Engagement Project aims to build strategic partnerships for policy change between the community sector and government. Over 90 government and community sector representatives, including the Minister for Victorian Communities, the Hon. John Thwaites, MP attended a forum hosted by VCOSS on 3 March 2006 to discuss implementation of the *A Fairer Victoria* framework. A report was provided to the Deputy Premier outlining both key steps required to progress implementation and where there are policy and program gaps remaining.

Agora

VCOSS participates in the Common Themes Group of this unique community sector-government-business partnership aiming to develop innovative responses to assist children and young people. The Agora was initiated by Melbourne City Mission with supporting partners including the Helen McPherson Smith Trust, Ernst and Young and the Department for Victorian Communities



Programme, VCOSS Annual Luncheon 18 September, 1975

Children, young people and families

Collaboration was critical to VCOSS work on children, young people and families in 2005/06. VCOSS worked closely with community sector agencies, including: The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

VCOSS also hosted several cross-sector forums for discussion of the Government's consultation documents for the legislative review: *Protecting children: Ten priorities for children's wellbeing and safety in Victoria*, the exposure draft of the legislation and the white paper, *Protecting children: The next steps*.

In August 2005 VCOSS, the Federation of Community Legal Centres and LaTrobe University Law School hosted a joint forum exploring key cross-sector concerns with the legislative review.

This series of forums and events enabled community sector agencies to develop a shared analysis of the issues presented by the legislative reform, creating a solid foundation for effective collaborative advocacy.

Collaboration to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous children, young people and families was also a key priority in 2005/06. VCOSS participated in the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency's Aboriginal Family Centre Feasibility Study Advisory Group to contribute to efforts to create an Aboriginal Family Centre. By June 2006, the family centre proposal was finalised and was moving towards a fundraising phase.

Combined Charities Christmas shop

Run for the 40th year in 2005, the VCOSS auspiced card shop in the St Paul's Anglican Church basement is an annual three month trading operation, providing an opportunity for almost 50 not-for-profit organisations to sell Christmas cards to raise funds and community awareness of their organisation.

In 2005 the card shop raised over \$220, 000 for participating charities.

Community union roundtable

VCOSS linkages with the combined peak bodies, the trade union movement, the Council of Churches and other state-wide 'third sector' organisations enable the development of broader positions and influence strategies to address disad-

vantage. In 2005/06 VCOSS hosted the Community Union Roundtable, a bi-monthly dialogue to share information across community sector peak bodies, trade unions, academic networks and church organisations. This regular meeting enabled more effective information sharing and public education – with the major unions coming on board to educate their members about the Federal Government welfare changes in the context of major public campaigns around industrial relations between November 2005 and June 2006.

Education and training

In 2005/06 VCOSS continued to collaborate with emergency relief and community sector agencies concerned at the impact of public education fees and charges on low income families.

Emergency relief

In 2005/06 VCOSS continued its investment in strengthening the collaboration of Victorian emergency relief providers through hosting the secretariat of the Emergency Relief Victoria (ERV) Network and participating in the Network Executive. Around 150 representatives of emergency relief provider agencies are members of this strong and vibrant network, exchanging ideas, providing mutual support and coordinating sector development and advocacy initiatives via an email network and bi-monthly face to face meetings.

ERV members have also collaborated on the development of a two day emergency relief conference involving 250 participants, and on furthering the development of a peak body for Victorian emergency relief providers.



Health and wellbeing

VCOSS worked closely with a range of community and health sector organisations in both the Victorian Medicare Action Group and the Victorian Oral Health Alliance. Collaboration through each of these groups was central to highlighting the impacts of a lack of access to health services on disadvantaged and low income Victorians. The Victorian Oral Health Alliance is increasingly focusing on increasing public awareness of and Government action around the lack of public dental services in Victoria.

Housing

VCOSS advocacy on accessible housing in 2005/06 involved close collaboration with individuals and organisations active on disability and ageing issues.

Collaboration was also central to advocacy on affordability. In 2005/06 VCOSS participated in the process of forming an alliance of community sector agencies concerned at the growing crisis in affordable housing – and the lack of priority given to policy solutions by state and federal governments. The Affordable Housing Alliance is working to develop a joint media campaign to increase the profile of the housing affordability crisis.

VCOSS continues to provide secretariat support to the Housing Justice Roundtable.

Human rights

VCOSS worked closely with the Federation of Community Legal Centres and other organisations concerned about human rights to advance our human rights advocacy objectives in 2005/06. In June 2006 VCOSS formed the Community Sector Human Rights Education and Training Working Group.

Justice

VCOSS top collaboration priority in 2005/06 was developing common positions on law and order issues to enable effective interventions into the law and order debate leading up to the 2006 state election. VCOSS also continues to collaborate with the Federation of Community Legal Centres and with concerned individuals on advocacy relating to the imprisonment of women and is an active member of the Victorian Criminal Justice Coalition.

Melbourne Cares

VCOSS participated in several forums to develop the model of operation for the new 'Melbourne Cares' initiated by the Committee for Melbourne, aiming to create useful pro bono opportunities for participating companies to assist the community sector. It was agreed that VCOSS will host a bi-annual community advisory forum to enable advice and dialogue from community sector representatives to this significant corporate social responsibility project.

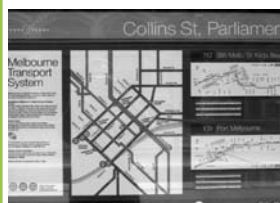
Transport

Collaboration was critical to VCOSS work on transport issues in 2005/06. VCOSS continued to jointly convene the Coalition for People's Transport with Environment Victoria to provide a forum for collaboration and discussion with community sector organisations, environment groups, public transport users, local government, academics, and public and community transport providers on public transport policy.

VCOSS also convened the disability transport working group of individuals with disabilities and organisations committed to better accessibility outcomes. This group worked together to advocate for improved accessibility of public transport and taxi services.

A big win for disability accessible public transport

KATE COLVIN



This requires the Government to have achieved access to 25 per cent of Melbourne's 1,790 tram stops by 2007, and only 3.5 per cent (60) stops are accessible now.

The chart below shows the number of tram stops needed to meet the DDA obligations (light tall columns) and the number of tram stops the Government has committed to building (black shorter columns).

VCOSS and members of the Coalition for People's Transport Disability Access working group have been active on this issue, coordinating a tram protest in partnership with Disability Resources Centre in March 2006.

Following a celebration of the success so far, we will continue to campaign for the DDA standard to be met.

Disability access to public transport was a big winner in the State Government's transport statement. Meeting our transport challenges: connecting Victorian communities, with \$250 million committed over 10 years.

The money will be used to upgrade 115 train stations, build 350 platform tram stops and upgrade 16,500 bus stops with paving and tactile ground surface indicators.

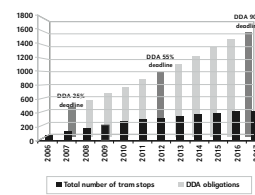
At a briefing on 5 May, director of public transport Jim Betts, committed to 60 per cent of the tram stops (210 stops) being built in the next four years.

Mr Betts indicated this would be achieved by focusing on high use locations and on streets where platforms can be most easily built.

The Burwood Highway between Blackburn Road and Deakin University and Plenty Road between Dunn Road and LaTrobe University are likely to be early cabs off the rank.

While very welcome, these transport improvements will not mean the State Government meets its obligation under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 for access to trams.

Accessible tram stops



Margaret Stevens, Martin Leckey and Frank Hall Benthick (left) Martin Leckey (top) protesting lack of access to trams

4 NOTICEBOARD JUNE 2006

University of Melbourne—Centre for Public Policy non-profit sector research

VCOSS participated in an academic forum in May 2006 that aimed to build a stronger research base on issues facing the non-profit sector.

Utilities

In 2005/06 VCOSS established the VicUtilities Network to assist information exchange among Victorian community organisations working on utilities issues.

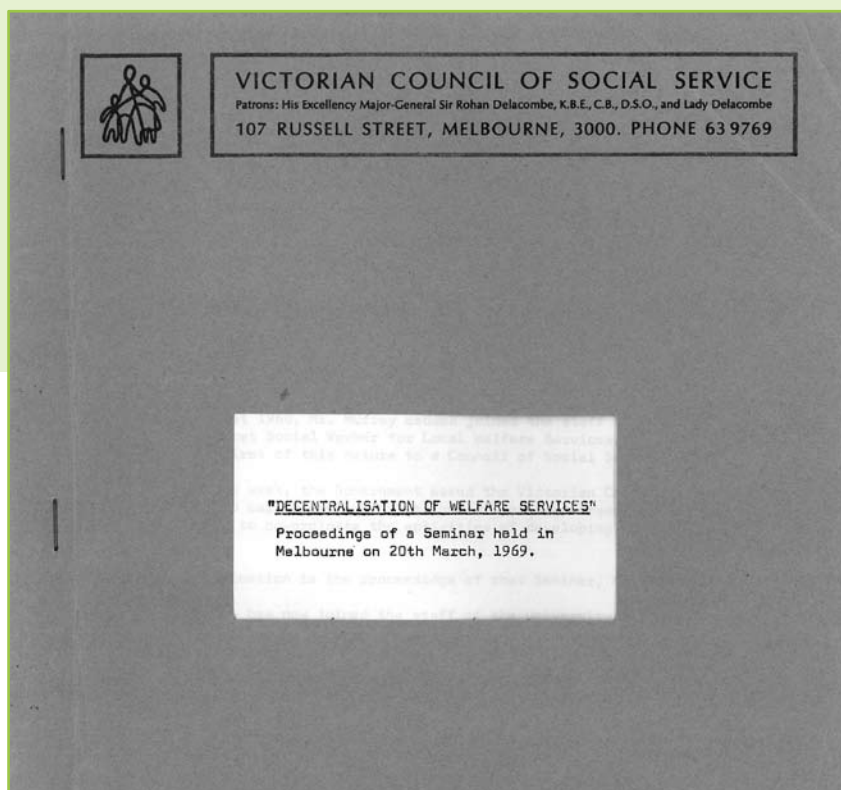
VCOSS continues to convene the Essential Services Working Group (formerly the Energy Campaign Steering Committee) to provide a forum for discussion of - and collaboration on - utilities-related issues. The Essential Services Working Group is an increasingly effective two-way capacity building and information exchange between VCOSS and several member organisations and has significantly strengthened community advocacy on utilities issues in recent years.

We have also begun to develop collaborative working relationships with environmental groups around energy efficiency issues.

Welfare reform

In 2005/06 VCOSS continued its ongoing facilitation of two key forums focusing on information-sharing and advocacy on social security policies and processes. In collaboration with Centrelink, VCOSS convened quarterly Centrelink/VCOSS Dialogue Meetings in Melbourne, Mildura, Epping and Morwell. These meetings provide forums for representatives of both local community sector agencies and Centrelink to share information, build networks and raise issues around Centrelink policy and procedures.

VCOSS also convened regular meetings of the Welfare Reform Working Group, facilitating both the sharing of information on welfare policy and advocacy between members, and the development of collaborative initiatives such as the Welfare to Work public forum in May 2006 to resource the broader community sector with such information.



Who's who

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- Our pro bono trainers: Ross Fairhurst and Andrew Rowe, Victorian Local Governance Association; Marcus Hoyne, Oxfam Skillshare; Dot Kennedy, Carers Victoria; Ron Kluvers, Victoria University; Bruno Lewis-Col, Ponto Combo; David McGillivray, Successful Business Strategies; Erina Reddan, Red River Strategic Communication; Lisa Thorpe and Chris Twining, Without Prejudice; Manny Vassal, Business Strategy Bureau and Zoe Warwick, WACOSS.

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For distinguished and outstanding service to the Victorian Council of Social Service. Honorary Life Membership has been conferred upon the following:

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