

2. Build a strong sector that can lead social change



VCOSS actively participated in Emergency Relief Victoria's 2006 conference



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

- CEO and Presidents' Forum
- VCOSS - Centrelink Dialogue Meetings
- Children and Young People Forum Group
- Coalition for People's Transport
- Community Strengthening Forum Group
- Education and Training Reference Group
- Emergency Relief Network
- Essential Services Working Group
- FaCS - Human Services Round Table
- Human Service Partnership Project and Implementation Committee (HSPIC), (co chaired with the Department of Human Services)
- *Just Policy* Editorial Board
- Peaks and Statewide Networks Forum
- Primary and Community Health Forum Group
- Sector Sustainability Task Group (now called Community Sector Futures Task Group)
- Sector Training and Support Working Group
- Welfare Reform Working Group

Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU)



The Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU) was set up in February 2007 to provide resources to strengthen the collective impact of disability advocacy in Victoria. The Victorian State Disability Plan committed to establishing DARU, and VCOSS hosts the initiative.

In May 2007 over 100 disability advocates attended strategic planning sessions held to ensure that people with disability are actively and meaningfully involved at all levels of the DARU, and have the capacity to inform and influence its governance, decision making, and activities. This consultation resulted in a number of key action areas being identified to support advocacy efforts including: the development of a Code of Practice to improve advocacy practice; offering a range of professional training opportunities and forums for disability advocates; initiating working partnerships with the tertiary sector to develop an accredited course; developing a website; and establishing a resource and equipment library.

DARU is a state-wide service run by and for people with a disability. VCOSS and the Victorian Disability Advocacy Network (VDAN) oversee DARU through a project governance group that meets monthly. DARU currently employs two staff members.

Doing IT Better: information and communications technology (ICT) capacity-building project

During 2006–07 VCOSS worked jointly with Monash University's Centre for Community Networking Research (CCNR) to develop a three-year project to build capacity in community sector organisations with regard to information and communication technologies (ICT). The *Doing IT Better* project uses action research to work with a number of different types of community sector organisations to identify and assess both technological and communications obstacles or needs.

The project intends:

- Developing a knowledge base of affordable and appropriate ICT solutions for commonly-encountered issues
- Building some ICT expertise in the sector
- Developing a web-based resource to help organisations find the most appropriate software, hardware or service providers for their needs
- Developing an ICT Strategy Plan for the sector to facilitate long-term planning and appropriate resourcing of sector IT needs by funding bodies.

Funding was secured for the project during the first half of 2007.



Human Service Partnering (HSPIC) and peaks

Strong partnerships are a vital ingredient for a strong sector. VCOSS has continued to work closely with the Department of Human Services (DHS) in implementation of the Partnership Agreement between DHS and the health, housing and community sectors. This has included co-chairing the Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee (HSPIC).

HSPIC has overseen the 10th and 11th Secretary's Forums covering the topics of *Partnering to Evaluate, Share, Learn and Improve* and *It's about Partnering*. These forums are an important opportunity to bring together leaders from the sector and DHS to share insights and new developments in working together.

HSPIC also draws on information and expertise from the sector by consulting with the Statewide Peaks and Networks Forum. This enabled broad input into negotiations and public advocacy for price indexation. The Price Index Agreement, reached in October 2006 included 2.9% indexation with an additional 0.2% for capacity building, provision for exceptional events funding and a commitment to base price reviews. Negotiations are still underway to develop a price review framework.



Community Sector Sustainability

Future visioning and planning for development have been a feature of work. The Sector Sustainability Task Group led a process where state election candidates were asked to address meetings, and a scorecard was published on party policy relating to sector sustainability. In early 2007 VCOSS organised a series of workshops conducted by the Strategic Foresight Program at Swinburne University of Technology. The aims were to:

- create shared understanding of the sector's situation;
- create shared vision of a preferred future for the sector;
- propose shared actions for navigating between the present situation and future vision;
- and to create a culture of shared agency and contribute to the development of a shared sense of responsibility for shaping better futures for the sector.

Information from this process will inform directions of both HSPIC and the Statewide Peaks and Networks Forum as well as the work of the Community Sector Futures Task Group, the successor to the Sector Sustainability Task Group. The Community Sector Futures Task Group is convened by Paul Linossier, CEO of MacKillop Family Services.





Showcasing the Community Sector

The Showcasing the Community Sector Project supports efficiency and sustainability in community service organisations. The project is funded for three years by the Victorian Government through the Community Sector Investment Fund. Showcasing the Community Sector comprises two key components: knowledge development and sector marketing.

The knowledge development project will provide organisations across the sector with a better understanding of effective organisational practice; share learnings and promote opportunities to work efficiently and in a sustainable manner. Activities will include metropolitan and regional business forums, an annual achievement award, and increasing access to organisation development resources. The sector marketing project involves developing and implementing a marketing campaign to promote employment in the community services industry.

Consultation has begun with a variety of stakeholders including the project reference group, a diverse range of member organisations, union representatives, training bodies and community sector peaks across Australia

to gain a better understanding of employer recruitment and retention concerns, and current and planned projects aimed at addressing community service industry workforce challenges.

Training and Development Clearinghouse

The VCOSS Training and Development Clearinghouse is in its second year. The website www.vcooss.org.au/clearinghouse has been upgraded to make it easier for community sector organisations to access information on quality training providers, and for training providers to register their details with us. The site provides information on free and low-cost training and events, and information on how to access skilled volunteers through pro bono brokers such as Leadership Victoria (see Chapter 4 on collaboration), Oxfam Skills Share, and the Public Interest Law Clearing House.

In May 2007, VCOSS succeeded in securing two years additional funding for the Clearinghouse from the Victorian Government through the provision of a Victorian Community Support Grant from the Community Support Fund. This has enabled VCOSS to engage staff to provide support and referrals over the phone or face-to-face, in addition to maintaining the website and distributing information through *PIECES*, a free e-newsletter containing information to help build stronger community organisations.

3. Create a strong public presence for the changes required



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

Media Releases



2006

- 24.07.06 Liberal Party gambling announcement a positive step
- 02.08.06 VCOSS 60th birthday celebrated under cloud of funding cuts
- 02.08.06 Petrol pump pain lessened by regional train gain
- 28.08.06 State Treasury's public housing dollars clawback
- 05.09.06 Major political parties debate community sector policies
- 19.09.06 VCOSS report confirms Victoria the lowest crime and imprisonment State
- 20.09.06 New train services Echuca – Bendigo a plus
- 25.09.06 Benalla candidates on the spot on affordable housing
- 26.09.06 State housing strategy welcomed – time for a national plan
- 02.10.06 Nepean candidates on the spot on public transport
- 04.10.06 Cuts to stamp duty won't help first home buyers

- 09.10.06 Youth service gaps leaving young people without vital supports
- 10.10.06 South-West Coast candidates on the spot on housing
- 23.10.06 Its time for a decision on accessible housing
- 26.10.06 Good news to public transport users if fares cut
- 27.10.06 Public housing ramp up a solution to shocking standards for homeless referrals
- 01.11.06 South Morang extension good news for Melbourne's north
- 02.11.06 VCOSS state election website launched
- 10.11.06 Train extensions a plus but don't forget the bus
- 10.11.06 Time for a barrier free state for people with disabilities
- 20.11.06 Labor ahead on addressing disadvantage
- 21.11.06 Liberals good on gambling, Greens good on ideas, but Labor are the services leader
- 21.11.06 Mandatory minimum sentences unjust
- 19.12.06 Energy price caps essential to keep prices affordable

- 07.06.07 Changes to assisted reproduction and adoption long overdue
- 12.06.07 State disability budget shortfall of 1.2% per capita
- 20.06.07 Protect households from water price shock
- 26.06.07 Petrol price mayhem: Conference to consider impacts and plan solutions
- 27.06.07 Environment, social and transport groups call for a peak oil management plan
- 28.06.07 New VCOSS website launched today

2007

- 06.02.07 Rent rises rob renters the price of an island holiday
- 12.02.07 VCOSS state wide rent hike league table released today
- 15.03.07 Without public transport, road pricing unfair
- 16.03.07 Surplus an opportunity to right Victoria's housing wrong
- 16.03.07 Model utilities framework a big step forward
- 27.04.07 State budget must deliver on drought and disadvantage
- 01.05.07 Housing the winner in the state budget
- 21.05.07 Public tenants hit with \$21.78 a week rent rise
- 29.05.07 Public transport the key to avoiding divided city



Media Hits



- 'Our state divided on wealth', *Herald-Sun*, 29 June 2007
- 'Transport poverty emerges amid rising fuel costs: research', *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Transcripts*, 27 June 2007
- 'Day centre falls on hard times', *Knox Leader*, 26 June 2007,
- 'It's our hurricane Katrina', *The Age*, 26 June 2007
- 'Panic, fear at rescue plan, say leaders', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 June 2007,
- 'Water relief in pipeline for Bracks' new battlers', *Sunday Age*, 24 June 2007,
- 'Ambushed, say angry landowners', *The Age*, 21 June 2007,
- 'Desalination plant ad campaign vital, says Bracks', *ABC News*, 20 June 2007,
- 'Renters struggling', *Moorabbin Glen Eira Leader-Moorabbin Kingston Leader*, 30 May 2007,
- 'Fuel price soars', *Herald-Sun*, 25 May 2007
- 'Would it work (here?)', *The Age*, 25 May 2007
- 'Rent rise hits battlers', *Herald-Sun*, 21 May 2007
- '\$126m lost, no comment', *Waverley Leader*, 8 May 2007
- 'Rents rise in post-budget grab', *The Australian*, 3 May 2007
- 'Debt up as bush left out', *Herald-Sun*, 2 May 2007
- 'Budget focus on capital works', *The Advertiser*, 2 May 2007,
- 'Business backs Treasurer's cuts', *The Australian*, 2 May 2007
- 'Welfare groups give tick to Vic budget', *Australian Associated Press General News*, 1 May 2007
- 'Budget should boost public housing, drought aid: VCOSS', *Australian Associated Press General News*, 30 April 2007
- 'Call for investor tax cuts to ease housing shortage', *Australian Associated Press General News*, 14 April 2007
- 'Our nappy valley', *Herald-Sun*, 14 April 2007
- 'Rental vacancies hit 25-year low', *The Age*, 14 April 2007
- 'Rental costs spill to public health under 'find a roof' strain', *Maroondah Leader*, 10 April 2007
- 'Welfare groups take aim at soaring housing costs', *The Age*, 27 March 2007
- 'Groups want more power for people', *The Age*, 16 March 2007
- 'City frugal while regions keep the taps flowing', *The Age*, 27 February 2007
- 'Stiff hikes hit student tenants', *Waverley Leader*, 20 February 2007
- 'Rental roulette', *Brimbank Leader*, 20 February 2007

- 'Grim future predicted for Sydney renters', *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Transcripts*, 19 February 2007
- 'Australia middling good for children', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February 2007
- 'States experiment with new housing finance model', *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Transcripts*, 14 February 2007
- 'Radical plan to help out first home buyers', *The Age*, 14 February 2007
- 'Renters feel the pinch in shire market', *Sunbury-Macedon Ranges Leader*, 13 February 2007
- 'Flat out in rent market', *Herald-Sun*, 12 February 2007
- 'Rent rise outcry', *Herald-Sun*, 7 February 2007
- 'High rents push inner-city living out of bounds', *The Age*, 7 February 2007
- 'Wake-up call' on child welfare', *The Age*, 22 January 2007
- 'Struggling home owners are courting disaster', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 24 December 2006
- 'Home waitlist crisis', *Free Press Leader*, 29 November 2006
- 'Repairs delay homes for needy', *Maroondah Leader*, 28 November 2006
- 'Instant verdict', *Sunday Age*, 26 November 2006
- 'At the crossroads', *The Age*, 24 November 2006
- 'Libs pledge minimum terms for murder, rape', *Herald-Sun*, 22 November 2006
- 'Labor kicks a few goals in the last quarter', *The Age*, 21 November 2006
- 'Praise for Libs' vow', *Whittlesea Leader*, 15 November 2006
- 'Hooray from locals for rail pledge', *Whittlesea Leader*, 8 November 2006
- 'Labor dragging heels on building access', *Moonee Valley Leader*, 6 November 2006,
- 'Discrimination bid on historic trams', *The Age*, 6 November 2006,
- 'Unlock the city, say developers', *The Age*, 4 November 2006
- 'Social housing at Docklands: a good idea that should spread', *The Age*, 1 November 2006
- 'On the rise, and rise', *Maroondah Leader*, 31 October 2006
- 'Show us the money: home buyers to save \$2600 on stamp duty cuts', *Herald-Sun*, 30 October 2006
- 'Talking point – Has the time of the payphone passed?', *The Age*, 28 October 2006
- 'Property developers gifted a pot of gold', *The Age*, 27 October 2006
- 'Give youth a better deal say councils', *Whittlesea Leader*, 18 October 2006
- 'Health and transport top wish list', *Lilydale and Yarra Valley Leader*, 16 October 2006
- 'Hunt for youth hope', *Hume-Moreland Leader*, 11 October 2006
- 'VCAT and Melbourne 2030 will not be hosed down', *The Age*, 11 October 2006
- 'Youth future on line', *Melton-Moorabool Leader*, 10 October 2006
- 'Healthy debate to gauge candidates' stand on vital issues', *Lilydale and Yarra Valley Leader*, 9 October 2006
- 'A Premier in campaign mode earns some praise from the left', *The Age*, 5 October 2006
- 'Charities, accountants want easier reporting standards', *The Age*, 18 September 2006
- '\$220m housing farce', *Herald-Sun*, 15 September 2006
- 'While the rich get richer, the poor get poorer', *The Age*, 2 September 2006
- 'Families pay \$143m for state school education', *The Age*, 14 August 2006
- 'Lobbyists welcome new Bendigo train lines', *Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) News*, 3 August 2006
- 'Fast trains hit the rails a year late', *The Age*, 3 August 2006
- 'Disabled plea for better access', *Herald-Sun*, 29 July 2006
- 'Lib gaming policy 'has no winners'', *The Age*, 25 July 2006
- 'State Liberals look at parent contracts', *The Age*, 11 July 2006

Publications and Reports

September 2006

Crime and Imprisonment Data Report, VCOSS

Who's carrying the can? A report into youth services gaps in Victoria, jointly authored by J Rose, YACVic and C Atkins, VCOSS

Transport and Liveability: The Path to a Sustainable Victoria, The Coalition for People's Transport

October 2006



Ministerial Advisory Committee on Vulnerable Children, Young People and Families - Final Report of the Working Group on Indigenous Issues, C Atkins, VCOSS

December 2006

Maintain the momentum on social policy investment: VCOSS State Budget Submission 2007-2008, VCOSS

May 2007

State Budget 2007-08 Analysis, VCOSS

June 2007



Advocacy Capacity Building Project, jointly authored by VCOSS, Federation of Community Legal Centres and Public Interest Law Clearing House, funded by Reichstein Foundation.

Career Your Lifestyle Exhibition Posters

A series of eight posters was produced for the *Career Your Lifestyle* Exhibition targeting secondary school students in the inner Melbourne area.

VCOSS Congress 2007 Program, VCOSS

Noticeboard

Noticeboard is the monthly newsletter of VCOSS that goes out to all members.

11 issues

Just Policy

Editions 41, 42, 43, 44

First published in 1994 *Just Policy* is an Australian journal of social policy published quarterly by the Victorian Council of Social Service. It contains contemporary research, analysis and commentary, and addresses social policy issues and the delivery of public and community services.

Members of the *Just Policy* Editorial Board are drawn from practitioners in the field and academics in social policy and related areas. *Just Policy* publishes a variety of material and members of the Board encourage submissions from theorists, practitioners, public servants and those connected with, and affected by social policy.

In early 2007, VCOSS produced a special, dedicated human rights edition, Edition 43 of *Just Policy* to contribute to the debate around using human rights frameworks for social policy development and implementation.



VCOSS Convened Conferences Forums and Events

July 2006

- A Fairer Victoria roundtable for Aboriginal leaders

August 2006

- Annual Congress and VCOSS 60th birthday celebrations
- Emergency Relief Victoria Network hosted Statewide Emergency Relief Conference

September 2006

- Welfare reform and utilities roundtable (Melbourne) – a half-day forum organised by VCOSS and Good Shepherd to discuss the impacts of welfare changes on bill payment for affected households with energy and water retailers
- VCOSS Sector Sustainability Task Group (SSTG) State Election Forum – Benalla
- VCOSS Implementing A Fairer Victoria seminar, Strengthening ways forward, Melbourne
- Launch of *Who's carrying the can: A report into youth services gaps in Victoria*, co hosted with the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne

October 2006

- VCOSS SSTG State Election Forums – Evelyn (Lilydale), Nepean (Rosebud), South-West Coast (Warrnambool)

December 2006

- VCOSS Implementing A Fairer Victoria seminar, Connecting people and place: Translating whole of government at the local level, Melbourne
- Foresight Readiness Workshop: Facilitated by Strategic Foresight Program at Swinburne University

February 2007

- Victorian Community Sector Sustainability Project, Two workshops: Facilitated by Strategic Foresight Program at Swinburne University

April 2007

- Victorian Community Sector Sustainability Project, third workshop: facilitated by Strategic Foresight Program at Swinburne University

May 2007

- 'Staying In' forum on job retention and workforce participation by people with disabilities in conjunction with MS Society and Chronic Illness Alliance

June 2007

- Peak Oil, Petrol Prices and Climate Change conference, Melbourne. Convened in conjunction with the Coalition for People's Transport.
- Member policy consultations on disability, and housing and homelessness



John Thwaites opening VCOSS Congress 2006



4. Sustain just and equitable outcomes through collaboration



Joan Kimer speaking at *A Fairer Victoria* seminar in 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

A key focus of the VCOSS *A Fairer Victoria* Community Sector Engagement Project was to build strategic partnerships for policy change both across the sector and between the sector and government. Over 440 community sector and state and local government representatives participated in the four seminars and contributed to the work of the seven project priority areas. A key success of the *A Fairer Victoria* Sector Engagement Project was that it contributed to improved cross-sector and inter-departmental relationships, and facilitated the community sector's input to identifying implementation successes, roadblocks and learnings to date.

Australian Institute of Management (AIM)

AIM is Australia's largest provider of professional management training, offering over 70 different practical short courses from general workplace skills to management leadership techniques. VCOSS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with AIM in November 2006 to enable VCOSS members with an annual income of \$100,000 or less the chance to access spare places on AIM's training courses free of charge in 2007.

As of 30 June 2007, VCOSS had brokered over \$21,000 worth of professional development training to staff and volunteers of member organisations, who provided positive feedback on the courses:

[The AIM] training course...was one of the most fulfilling and professionally rewarding experience I have had in quite some time.

The AIM course was professional and relevant...well worth the trip to St Kilda and the two days out of the office.

For larger VCOSS members, AIM offers a 10% discount on all training courses, and a rebate of member fees against course costs.



Children, young people and families

VCOSS and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) worked in partnership with the Interface Councils around the need to develop an integrated youth service system in Victoria. The Interface Councils are the group of local governments on the metropolitan urban-rural fringe, and are: Cardinia Shire Council, City of Casey, Hume City Council, Melton Shire Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, City of Whittlesea, Wyndham City Council and Shire of Yarra Ranges. This joint work contributed to the Office for Children and Office for Youth in commissioning KPMG to develop a youth service system model for Victoria.

Disability



VCOSS has worked closely with disability advocates on a number of collaborative initiatives in 2006-07. In 2006 we began our involvement with the Public Transport Access Committee of the Department of Infrastructure, where we contributed to improving the accessibility of transport in Victoria and enhancing the effectiveness and accountability of the Committee. VCOSS and the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU) became members of the newly-formed Aids and Equipment Action Alliance in 2007, an initiative to build strategic advocacy by the disability sector to improve the operation and resourcing of the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program. We also began to focus on developing policy options to improve job retention and workforce participation by people with disabilities, particularly chronic and mental illnesses. In conjunction with the MS Society and the Chronic Illness Alliance we hosted 'Staying In', a forum on job retention and workforce participation, which was attended by representatives of disability, mental health, employment and chronic illness organisations and the Victorian Government and which informed this policy development. We will maintain this focus in the coming year.

Emergency relief

After over 25 years of coordinating a Victorian emergency relief network, VCOSS handed over the Emergency Relief Victoria (ERV) Network secretariat to Victoria Relief and FoodBank in 2007. However VCOSS continues to be an active participant in the Network, as well as on the ERV Executive and the Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) Emergency Relief State Consultative Committee. As part of the ERV Executive, we assisted in the organisation of the successful ERV Conference in August 2006, which brought together around 200 representatives of emergency relief agencies around the state. We also continued to contribute to the development of a Victorian emergency relief peak body by hosting the Peak Development Project Worker in the second half of 2006.

Health and wellbeing

Collaboration was critical to VCOSS advocacy on health and wellbeing in 2006–07.

VCOSS was an active member of the Victorian Oral Health Alliance and participated in the ACOSS-led National Oral Health Advocacy Day in Canberra on 20 March 2006.

VCOSS worked in partnership with the Victorian Healthcare Alliance on a project looking at the future growth and definition of the primary and community health sector. The project began with a forum in October 2006 which was well attended with 35 representatives from both metropolitan and regional and rural community health services. One of the key outcomes from the forum was the establishment of a Working Group to advance some of the priority issues identified at the forum. This Working Group has continued to meet throughout 2007 and has identified that the main outcome of the work will be a joint position statement and an action plan for advocacy activities.

VCOSS was a founding member of Victorian Health Inequalities Network that received 18-months funding from VicHealth to facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue to identify policy actions to address health inequalities. Monash University was the co-convenor of the Network with VCOSS, and the management group members included representatives from the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Wesley Mission, The University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and VicHealth.

Human Rights

VCOSS was invited to become a partner in a collaborative research project on the implementation of the Victorian Charter with RMIT. This is a continuation of a collaborative project on the development of a human rights audit and survey tool with Victoria and Melbourne Universities.

VCOSS has been an active contributor to the development of Shadow Reports led by the National Association of Community Legal Centres to better harmonise Victorian human rights law and practice with international standards.

VCOSS continues to work closely with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Justice on implementation of the Charter, and to act in an advisory capacity to other NGOs, academic, legal and government bodies on the impact of the Charter on vulnerable Victorians.



Justice

In the lead-up to the 2006 State Election, VCOSS was an active contributor to the 'Smart Justice' campaign coordinated by the Federation of Community Legal Centres. The intention of the coalition was to counter divisive law and order campaigns and policies during election campaigning which have proven popular with the press and the public in previous elections. Coalition members met with candidates from all parties, issued media releases and took part in public debate on law and order issues during the State Election campaign. VCOSS released the *Crime and Imprisonment Data Report* providing an analysis of the changing trends of incarceration and reported crime in Victoria.



VCOSS is an active partner in a broad coalition of community sector agencies concerned with family violence, led by Domestic Violence Victoria. The coalition continues to work towards whole of government legislative and non-legislative reforms to improve responses to family violence. VCOSS also continues to participate in the Criminal Justice Coalition, which has had a particular focus on sentencing reform in the last 12 months.

Leadership Victoria

VCOSS' partnership with Leadership Victoria is in its second year. Leadership Victoria attributes an increase in the participation of community organisations in a range of its programs as due in large part to this partnership.



In the past 12 months VCOSS members participated in two CEO leadership conversations: in October 2006 on the topic of 'Building leadership capacity and culture in your organisation'; and in May 2007 on 'Making the most of professional development opportunities'.

VCOSS members participated in a two-day Leadership Workshop for Non-profit CEOs in March 2007, including VCOSS President David Pugh, who said, '[I was] exposed to some terrific frameworks and chance to reflect on the big issues. It was a very good mix of ideas and resources'.

A second Board Orientation Series was delivered in 2006 to meet demand from VCOSS members.

- Leadership Victoria graduates were linked with nine VCOSS member/referred CEOs as mentors, and
- Expert advice/assistance to organisations/boards was provided to ten VCOSS member/referred community organisations.

Transport

Collaboration was critical to VCOSS work on transport issues in 2006–07. 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 launched Transport Action Victoria: a web based news, information and policy network which aims to support community action on transport issues and to facilitate diverse community input into transport policy.

Utilities

The great results achieved on energy policy over the last twelve months would not have been possible without productive collaboration between a number of organisations with expertise in both the structure and functioning of the energy industry and the real impact of energy issues on disadvantaged households. VCOSS works closely with the Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre (CUAC) and St Vincent de Paul Society on a day to day basis, but a number of other organisations – including the Tenants Union of Victoria, the Consumer Action Law Centre, Kildonan Child and Family Services, Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services and the Chronic Illness Alliance – are also key participants in advocacy and research. Most of these organisations are members of the VCOSS-convened Essential Services Working Group, which is a vehicle for communication and exchange as well as a source of guidance for our energy and water policy work.

VCOSS works with ACOSS and other state COSS’s on energy and water policy issues in addition to our participation in the National Consumers Roundtable on Energy; the primary consumer representative group engaged in the development of the National Energy Market regulatory framework.

Victorian Community – Union Roundtable

Regular meetings continue to be hosted by VCOSS for representatives of different sector peak bodies: Trades Hall Council, Victorian Council of Churches, and VCOSS with Community Child Care Vic and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

Environment Victoria, Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria and Victorian Local Governance Association were invited to join during the year.

The group signed an informal memorandum of understanding.

Welfare

VCOSS has continued its ongoing collaboration with the Community Sector Relationships Team at Centrelink Area South East in conducting regular VCOSS–Centrelink Dialogue Meetings. The meetings, facilitated by VCOSS, are an invaluable forum for representatives of community organisations to raise policy and practice issues with representatives of Centrelink and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), in order to enhance both the individual and systemic advocacy capacity of organisations. The meetings are held bi-monthly and rotate between the CBD, outer metropolitan and rural and regional areas. In 2006–07 they took place in Morwell, Melbourne, Rosebud, Melton and Seymour. The Seymour meeting was an extended forum showcasing initiatives to assist communities affected by the drought, and included speakers from the Victorian Department of Human Services and Victoria Relief and FoodBank.

The first half of 2007 saw VCOSS hand over facilitation of the Work and Welfare Roundtable (formerly the Welfare Reform Working Group) to the Welfare Rights Unit, a development that will enable the Roundtable to have a greater focus on issues of welfare rights. VCOSS will continue to participate in this important forum to facilitate information-sharing and support advocacy in the community sector on social security and related issues of equality and quality of life.

VCOSS 60th birthday celebrations

In 2006 VCOSS celebrated its 60th birthday with a series of events and the making of a documentary *Sixty Years of VCOSS*.



*Photographs clockwise from top left: Cath Smith, VCOSS CEO, featuring in the *Sixty Years of VCOSS* documentary; Sue Jackson, Hayden Raysmith, Rob Hudson, Connie Benn; *The Golden Tappers*; John Wiseman, Director of VicHealth and former President of the VCOSS Board (91-92) being filmed for the *VCOSS Documentary at Federation Square*; *Early Entries VCOSS Social Justice Art Prize*; David Scott and Colin Benjamin*

Who's who

Patron

Professor David de Kretser
Governor of Victoria

Board

President:
David Pugh

Vice President:
Marilyn Webster

Treasurer
Eric Passaris

Melissa Afentoulis

David Brant (from December 2006)

Barry Pullen

Micaela Cronin

Merrilee Cox (from February 2006)

Georgie Ferrari (from November
2006)

Linda Hancock

Tony Lang

Deb Tsorbaris

Sam Biondo (to October 2006)

Paul Linossier (to October 2006)

Pauline Spencer (to October 2006)

Auditors

McLean Delmo Hall Chadwick

Bankers

Bendigo Bank

National Australia Bank

Uniting Church in Australia Cash

Management Fund Ltd

The VCOSS team

Chief Executive Officer:
Cath Smith

Deputy Director:
Carolyn Atkins

Executive Assistant:
Kate Johnson (to December 2007)
Claire Steinke (from January 2007)

Administration Assistant:
Frances Stiglec

POLICY TEAM

Policy and Public Affairs Manager:
Kate Colvin

Policy Analysts:

Rivkah Nissim

Dean Lombard

Stephanie Cauchi

Communications Project:
Rachel Maher (December 2006 to
June 2007)

Health Inequalities Project Policy
Officer: Grace Blau (from January
2007)

Accessible Transport Watch Project
Officer: Glenn Cardwell
(December 2007 to May 2007)
Maree Kelly (from June 2007)
Margaret Stevens (from June 2007)

Transport and Disadvantage Policy
Officer: Jess Fritze

Utilities Project Worker:
Jackie Anders (to January 2007)

SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Sector Development Manager:
Angela Savage

Advocacy Mapping Project Officer:
Kate Johnson (January 2007 to
March 2007)

Clearinghouse Coordinator/s:
Glenda George (to August 2006)
Karen Mackay (to August 2006)
Kate Johnson (from May 2007)

Clearinghouse Administrator:
Francis Stiglec (to November 2006)

Disability Advocacy Resource Unit
(DARU) Resource Co-ordinator
Sharon Granek (from January 2007)

DARU Project Administration
Officer: Leah Hobson (from May
2007)

Human Services Partnership Policy
Officer: Scott Hall (to January 2007)

Sector Development Project Officer
- Showcasing the Sector:
Nicole Wiseman (from April 2007)

VCOSS Combined Charities Card
Shop Coordinator: Jean Sloman

VCOSS Combined Charities Card
Shop Administration: Carmel Hall,
Diane Daley

ADMINISTRATION

Business and Development Director:
Anthony Hogg (to December 2006)
Mary Latham (from January 2007)

Administration Coordinator:
Sharon Brown

Administration Assistant:
Jessica Brown

Congress Coordinator: Priscilla Blake

Congress Administration Assistant:
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- Department of Human Services
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department for Victorian Communities
- Department of Infrastructure
- Department of Justice

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Australian Services Union, Private Sector Branch	Children First Foundation Fundraising Auxiliary	Disability Justice Advocacy
Autism Victoria	Church of All Nations Community Support Agency	Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre
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Bendigo Institute of TAFE	Clota Cottage Neighbourhood House	Eastern Volunteer Resource Centre
Bendigo UnitingCare Outreach	Collaborations	Emma House Domestic Violence Services
BENETAS	Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of Victoria Inc	Energy Action Group
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BIALA Box Hill Inc	Community Housing Federation of Victoria	EW Tipping Foundation
Blind Citizens Australia	Community Information Diamond Valley	Extended Families Australia Inc
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BrainLink	Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre	Fawkner Community House
Broadmeadows Uniting Care	Cooroonya House Inc	Financial & Consumer Rights Council
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Brunswick Neighbourhood House	Cottage by the Sea-Queenscliff	Footscray Community Legal Centre
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Headway Victoria	Loddon Mallee Accommodation Network	Parents Without Partners
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Health Issues Centre	Mallee Accommodation and Support Program	People Living With HIV/AIDS Victoria Inc
Hepatitis C Council of Victoria	Mallee Sports Assembly	Peter MacCallum Patient Amenities Group
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Interchange North West Inc	Mission Australia	Riding for the Disabled Association of Victoria Inc
Interchange Western Region Inc	Monash Volunteer Resource Centre	Ross House Association
Ithaca CERC	Moreland City Council	Royal Childrens Hospital
Jesuit Social Services	Mornington Peninsula Ratepayers and Residents Association	Royal District Nursing Service
Job Watch Inc	Motor Neurone Disease Assoc	Royal Flying Doctor Service
Kew Cottages Parents Association Inc	National Association for Loss & Grief Victoria	Royal Melbourne Hospital
Kew Neighbourhood House	Network of Inner Eastern Community Houses	Royal Vic Eye & Ear Hospital Public Relations Department
	No To Violence	Rural Housing Network Ltd.
	North East Housing Service	Sacred Heart Mission
	North East Neighbourhood House Network	Save the Children Victoria

Scope (Vic) Ltd
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 Self Help Addiction Resource
 SIDS and Kids Victoria
 Social Justice Bendigo
 Social Work Services
 South Barwon Community Centre
 South Port Uniting Church
 and UnitingCare
 Southern Peninsula Community
 Support and Information Centre
 SPAN Community House
 Spina Bifida Foundation of Victoria
 Spring Creek Community House
 Springvale Community Aid
 and Advice Bureau
 St Kilda Rooming House Issues
 St Mary's House of Welcome Ltd
 St Vincent de Paul
 St Vincent's Hospital
 Melbourne – Green Shop
 STAR Victoria
 Supported Housing Limited
 Tenants Union of Victoria
 The ALSO Foundation
 The Asthma Foundation of Victoria
 The Centre Connecting Community
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 The Community Coach
 The Myer Foundation
 The Neighbour's Place Inc
 The Olive Tree Community House
 The Salvation Army
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 Thornbury Women's
 Neighbourhood House
 Travellers' Aid Society of Victoria
 Trentham Neighbourhood Centre
 United Way

UnitingCare – Sunshine Mission
 UnitingCare Community Options
 UnitingCare Connections
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 UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania
 UnitingCare Werribee
 Support and Housing
 Upper Murray Centre
 Against Sexual Assault
 URCOT
 VACRO
 VANISH
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 VicHealth Centre for the
 Promotion of Mental Health
 and Community Wellbeing
 VICRAID Inc
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 Services of Victoria Inc
 Victorian Alcohol and
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 Victorian Arabic Social Service
 Victorian Coalition of ABI
 Service Providers – VCASP
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 Network (VDAN)
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 Villamanta Legal Service
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 Warragul Community House
 Warrandyte Housing and
 Support Services
 Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op
 Welfare Rights Unit
 Wellsprings for Women Inc
 Wesley Mission Melbourne

Whittlesea Community
 Connections
 WIRE – Women's Information
 WISHIN
 Wombat Housing and
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 Women's Domestic Violence
 Crisis Service of Victoria Inc
 Women's Health
 Goulburn North East
 Women's Health In the North
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 Women's Health West
 Women's Housing Ltd
 Womens Liberation Halfway House
 Women's Resource and
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 Woorarra Inc
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 YMCA Victoria
 Yooralla Society of Victoria
 Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
 Youth Emergency Accommodation
 Program – Preston Inc
 Youthlaw
 YWCA Victoria

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