

# Anika Legal

Annual Report  
FY 2019-2020

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# CEO Foreword

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COVID-19 and the bushfires brought a new brand of hardship and housing insecurity. Countless Australians were laid off, locked down and plunged into a world where things that were normally a given were ripped away. This was the first year of Anika's operation.

Anika's [pilot](#) demonstrated that this idea had the potential to work on the bold scale we initially envisaged. Between ravaging bushfires and the start of a global pandemic we established Anika Legal as an independent legal practice and began the next chapter of working towards our vision of a world where everyone can access justice.

A turbulent year forced us to get comfortable with uncertainty in our very first days as a standalone community legal service. We found our feet amidst bushfire displaced communities, a 600% spike in demand for our services, an 80% plummet in philanthropy, and a raft of lockdown measures which shook up the way the sector could provide legal assistance.

The social impact Anika achieved this year has been possible through the dedication and compassion of our team and supporters: a community of students, professionals, donors, universities and partners united by our mission.

The thousands of vulnerable tenants - lives uprooted by the pandemic - motivated us to launch our COVID-19 Rent Reduction Service and become the organisation so many people needed. The urgency of the unmet need pushed us to volunteer literally thousands of hours to rapidly build our capability to provide fast, effective legal services so that we could help as many people as we could. It's a dedicated bunch willing to spend their first sunny weekends out of a six-month lockdown sitting on Zoom calls talking about access to justice.

This annual report tells the first chapter of the story of the Anika Legal team and our supporters who improved the lives of hundreds of Australians in year one of operation. Thank you to our partners - your contribution has helped create a team that is ready to continue growing our impact with optimism and courage, however the world continues to change.



**Noel Lim**

Chief Executive Officer  
Anika Legal



# Problem

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600,000 Australians when faced with a legal problem, cannot access the legal help they need because of unaffordable costs of legal services, being unable to access the service they need, or not knowing where to go for help in the place.

The right to adequate housing is one of the most basic human rights enshrined in our justice system. Stable, fit for purpose and affordable housing is critical to an individual's mental and physical health, and can be required to uphold several other human rights, including the rights to work, social security, vote, privacy or education.

Across Australia over half of those in private rented accommodation are living in properties which need repair. Nearly **3 out of 5** private tenants worry that asking for repairs will mean an increase in rent, and **2 out of 5** worry that it might lead to eviction. This is exacerbated by short term leases and the high costs of regularly moving in addition to the affordability crisis of private housing.

Those who are unable to afford risking a precarious housing situation are often less able to afford legal representation, compounding the problem. Vulnerable groups are more likely to experience more frequent, greater, and more complex legal needs than the general population. For these vulnerable groups, the inability to resolve seemingly small legal problems can escalate quickly and often compounds with other issues, feeding into chronic cycles of disadvantage.

This problem exists despite thousands of people wanting to help. Every year, thousands of Australian law students want to get practical experience in the legal industry but can't because of a lack of practical legal training opportunities.

**Anika Legal envisions a world where everyone can access justice.**

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<sup>1</sup> Population-based estimate using ABS forecast of persons of 15+ years of age as of Jun 2020 and using survey results by Coumarelos, et al. (2012) "Legal Australia-Wide Survey: Legal Need in Australia", Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> Coumarelos, et al. (2012) "Legal Australia-Wide Survey: Legal Need in Australia", Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, [Link](#)

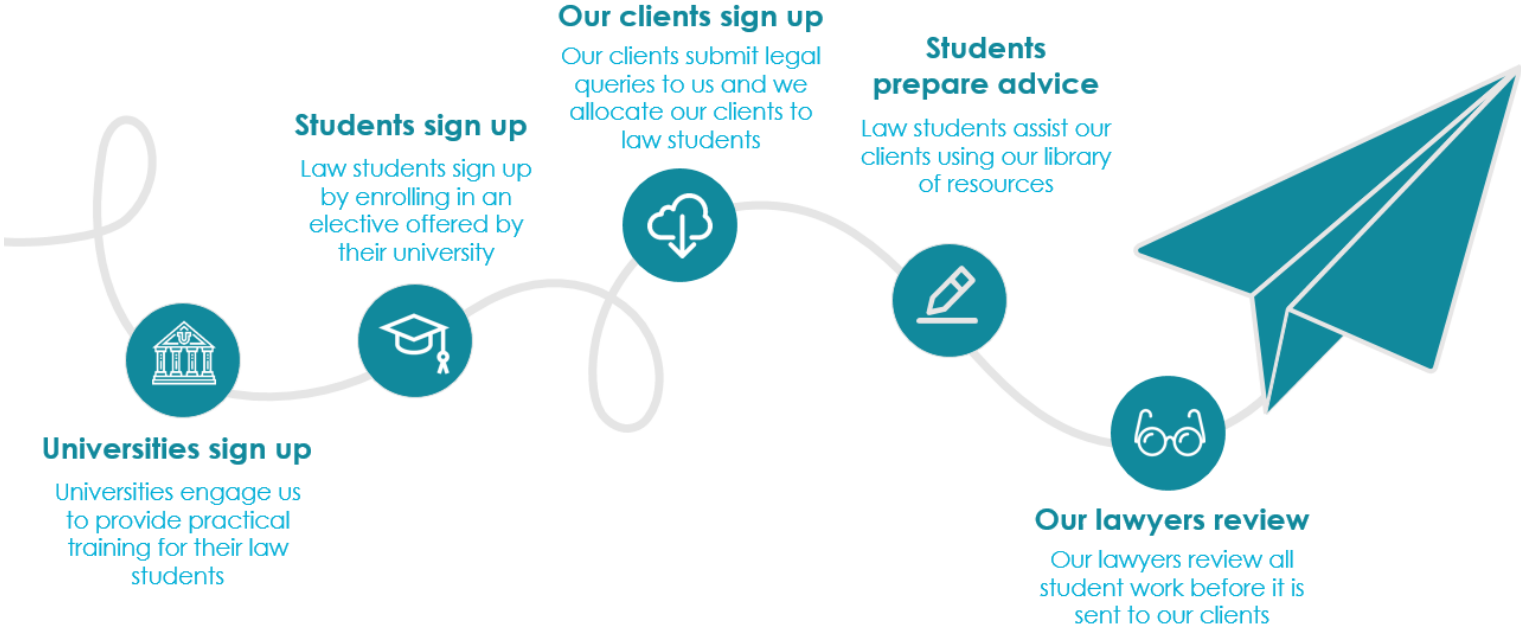
<sup>3</sup> Law Council of Australia (2018) "The Justice Project - Introduction and Overview" [Link](#)

# Solution

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## Our mission is to provide free, effective legal assistance to those who can't access it through practical legal training and trusted partnerships.

Anika Legal keeps vulnerable Victorian tenants in safe and affordable homes. We do this by connecting people who need legal help with law students who want to help, supervised by our experienced lawyers. By partnering with universities to train their students to take real-life cases we ensure high quality legal services are accessible to all, whilst nurturing the next generation of socially conscious lawyers.



# FY20 Impact Summary

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## Our Impact

**105** clients provided with legal assistance

**9.5/10** client satisfaction score

**88%** of repairs performed in completed cases

**26 - 35%** median rent reduction secured due to COVID-19 hardship

**15** student paralegals trained

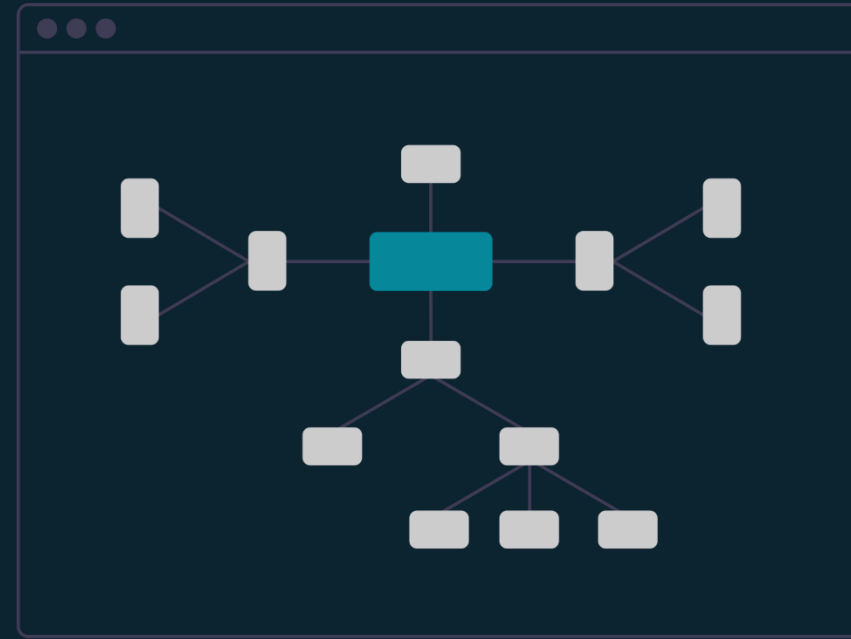
## Erica's story

The retail business Erica worked for was one of many that was forced into immediate shutdown due to COVID-19. With no notice, she was simply told not to come into work again. That's when Erica stumbled across Anika Legal and decided to reach out for assistance through the COVID-19 Rent Reduction Service.

*“Without Anika’s assistance, I wouldn’t have felt comfortable negotiating with the agent. I was kind of terrified, to be completely honest, as they had been really difficult in the past.”*

Erica was able to secure a 50 percent rent reduction for the next 3 months, allowing her to remain in her home without the fear of a mountain of unaffordable debt piling up.

[Full story here.](#)



# Our Theory of Change

# Theory of Change

We are committed to measuring, monitoring and evaluating our impact. Understanding what works well and what needs to be improved allows us and our stakeholders to maximise our impact through evidence-based decisions. [Full Impact Framework here.](#)

At the heart of Anika’s approach to measuring impact is a Theory of Change, a framework that breaks down the inputs and activities required to produce the outputs and a chain of outcomes that lead to a longer-term change. By following this Theory of Change, we can see how our actions move the needle on access to justice.





# What it takes



# What it takes

### Our people

**3** employees

**40+** volunteers contributing over **7000** hours to building the organisation

**15** student paralegals volunteering over **816** hours to keep our clients in safe and affordable homes

### Finances

**\$117,260.44**

(See Appendix 1)



### Our community partnerships

Anika’s community partners are a key part of our mission. We work closely with partner community organisation to provide an effective, coordinated response to legal need in Victoria. This involves increasing our reach through referral pathways and improving our services through feedback and support.

We have been working hard to build relationships with key legal assistance providers including Tenants Victoria, Victoria Legal Aid and Justice Connect, as well as non-legal community organisations such as Launch Housing, Women’s Housing Ltd and St Vincent de Paul. These established organisations have been vital to our development, providing invaluable insight into community legal need and the complex supports which many disadvantaged tenants require, whilst providing a reliable sounding board for Anika’s growth and direction.



# What it takes

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## Our funders

Seed funding in our first year of operation was always going to be challenging. We are deeply indebted to our first funders who provided Anika Legal with \$117,260.44 in FY20 and are responsible for turning this idea into a reality. Without our funders, none of our impact, past and potential, would be possible.

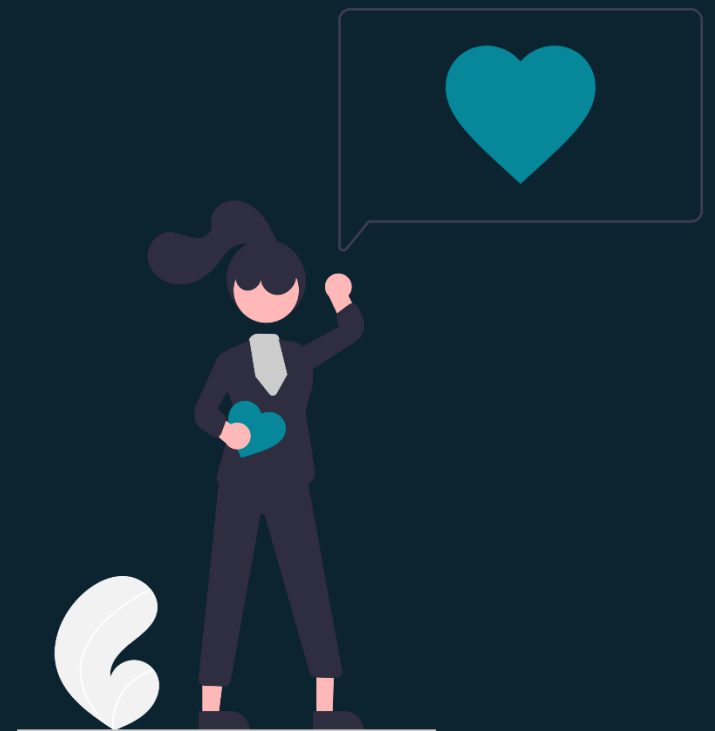


## Our university partnerships

By the end of FY20 we had planned our first university pilot with Deakin University, The University of Melbourne, Swinburne University, and Australian Catholic University. This was a milestone in the journey towards achieving our mission: providing legal assistance through practical legal training. The team excitedly awaits FY21 which will tell us a lot about our service model and the university business model that underlies it.



# What we do



# What we do

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In our first year of operations, Anika Legal specialised in two areas:

## Rental Repairs Service

Anika Legal's Repairs Service helps tenants secure repairs to their accommodation. Part of a safe and secure home is one that is in good repairs. To this end, the law requires landlords carry out necessary repairs to their rented properties. However with almost 3 in 5 tenants requiring repairs in their home, there are too many landlords and agents that do not follow the regulations.

With Anika Legal's help, clients can ensure they have a complete understanding of their legal position and can enforce their right to a safe home in good repair. By understanding each client's unique position, Anika provides free tailored legal advice from a lawyer. Anika then can negotiate with the landlord on the clients behalf and, if necessary, help clients prepare their case for the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).



## COVID-19 Rent Reduction Support

Anika's COVID-19 Rent Reduction service helps clients negotiate a temporary rent reduction with their landlord. COVID-19 caused significant economic disruption and rising unemployment. Whilst the Victorian Government has temporarily banned evictions for unpaid rent, tenants are still required to pay rent and will acquire debts for any amount unpaid.

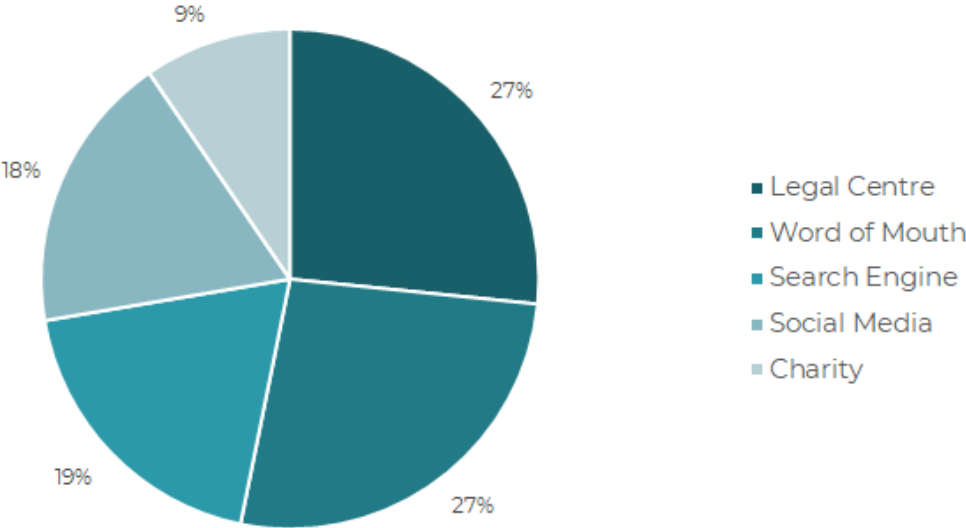
With Anika's help, clients can negotiate with their landlords to temporarily reduce their rent. Our support ranges from helping tenants understand their legal position in an unprecedented and tumultuous time to directly requesting landlords provide their tenants with a rent reduction and helping them prepare for the negotiation.

# What we do

## How our clients found us

Clients were referred to or found Anika through a variety of channels, with Legal Centre and word of mouth being the most common ones (see Chart 1).

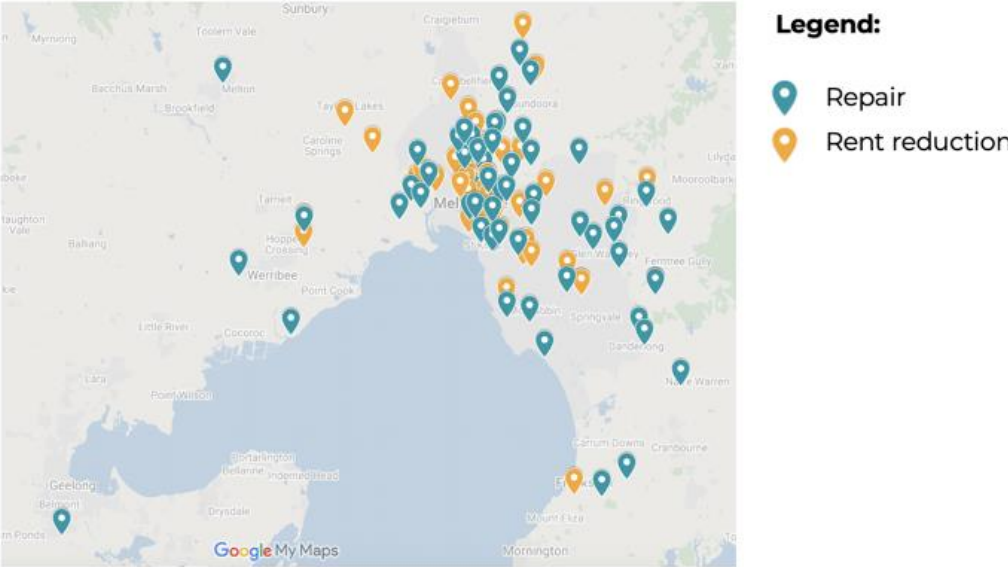
Fig. 1 Client referral sources



## Client location

The majority of Anika’s clients are renters in metropolitan Melbourne, with a few in regional Victoria (see Figure 2). In FY20, there was a high concentration of clients based in Melbourne's inner northern and eastern suburbs.

Fig. 2 Client location



# What we do

## Client age

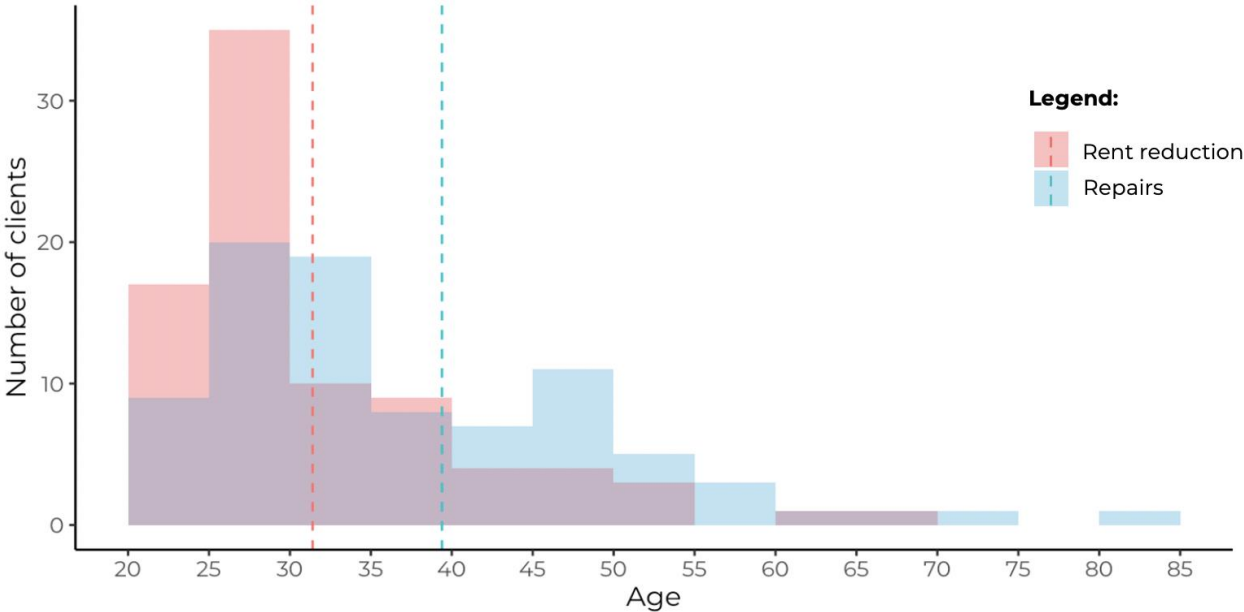
Anika serves a broad spectrum of age groups with the youngest client being 20 years of age and the oldest 84 years of age. Anika’s rent reduction clients tend to be younger with an average age of 32, compared to the average age of 39 for out clients seeking legal assistance with repairs.

Average client age broadly aligns with an average age of renters in Victoria being 34 years of age (see Figure 3).

## Client gender

Overall, the gender split of Anika clients in FY20 was even, with exactly 50% female clients. However, there were gender split differences at a service-level. Clients requiring legal assistance with repairs were mostly women (67%), while clients requiring legal assistance with rent reductions were mostly men (60%).

Fig. 3 Client age by service type, FY20



<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this reflects an approximation, based on a statistical prediction model, rather than client self-identification and therefore the actual gender split may vary slightly.

# What we do

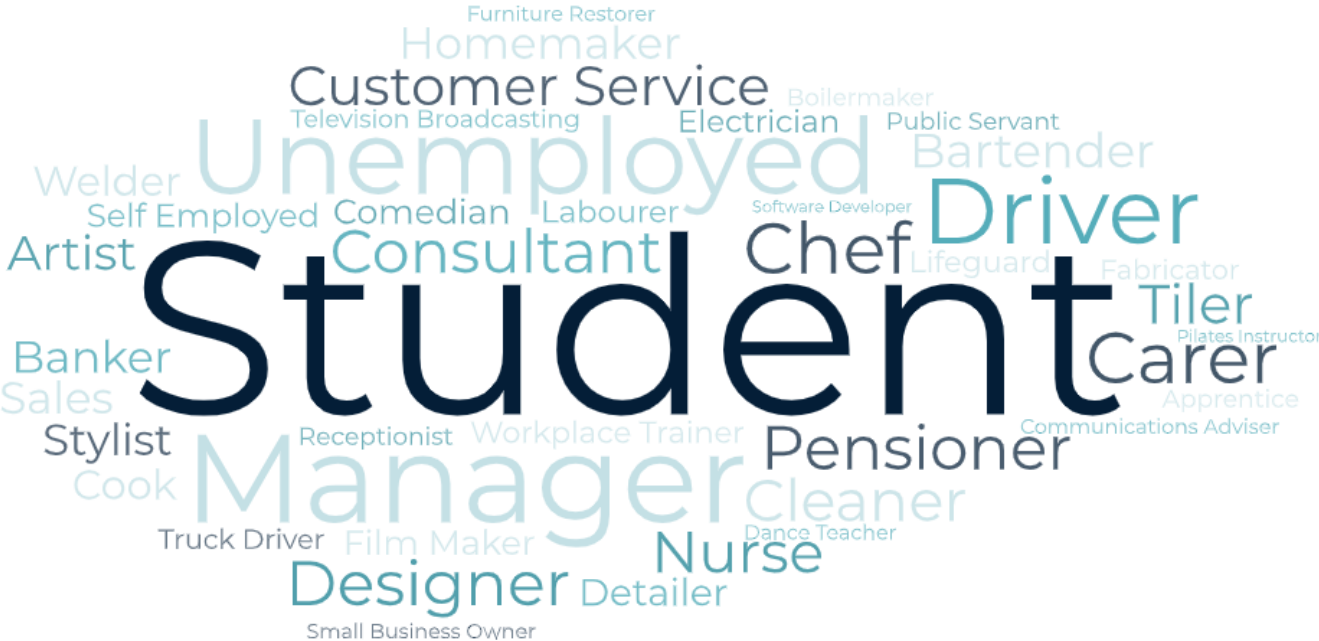
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## Client occupation

Anika’s clients came from a wide variety occupational backgrounds (see Figure 4), with many not in employment when reaching out to our team. In FY20, Anika helped a significant number of students (international and domestic).

Students have been particularly vulnerable during the pandemic, due to their casual nature of employment in industries impacted by restrictions and crowded living arrangements.

Fig. 4 Client occupations, FY20





# What we do

## Priority cohorts

Anika targets its efforts to priority cohorts - clients who face the biggest barriers to accessing justice. A number of characteristics can be used to understand what proportion of Anika’s clients are likely to face social or economic barriers to justice (see Table 1). In FY20, one in three clients reported at least one of the selected characteristics.

**Tab.1 Client reported characteristics, FY20**

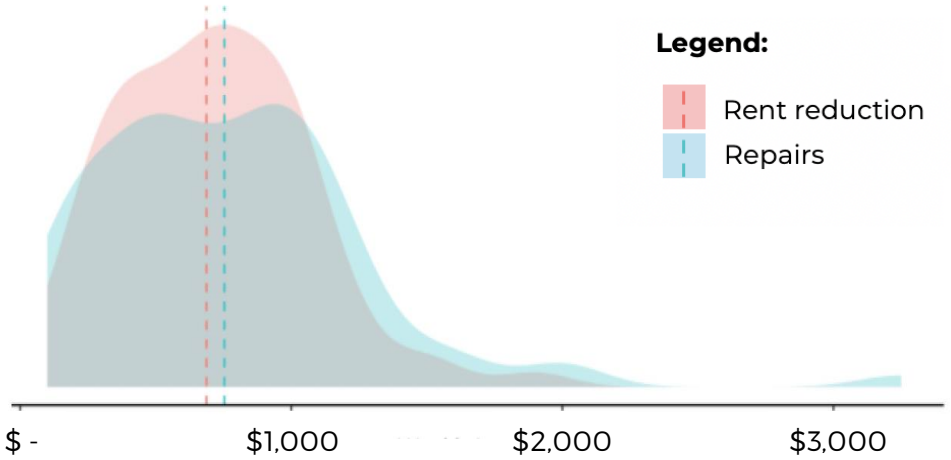
Characteristic	% of clients served
Refugee or migrant	10%
Single parent	6%
Reported mental disability	8%
Reported physical disability	8%
Health care card holder	10%
Lives in public housing	4%
Reports at least one of the above	34%

**Note: Note: The above numbers rely on self-reported data and are not verified by Anika.**

## Client income

Anika’s clients generally had an average weekly income of between \$600 - \$700, significantly below an average for Victorian renters of \$1,086.<sup>1</sup> The median personal income in Victoria is \$644,<sup>2</sup> showing that a high proportion of Anika clients suffer from some degree of economic disadvantage (see Figure 5).

**Fig. 5 Client reported characteristics, FY20**



<sup>1</sup> Rent.com (2018) 'Meet the average Australian renter: How does your state/territory compare?' <https://www.rent.com.au/blog/are-you-australias-average-renter>  
<sup>2</sup> ABS (2016) Census – Victoria QuickStats

# What we provide and achieve



# What we provide and achieve

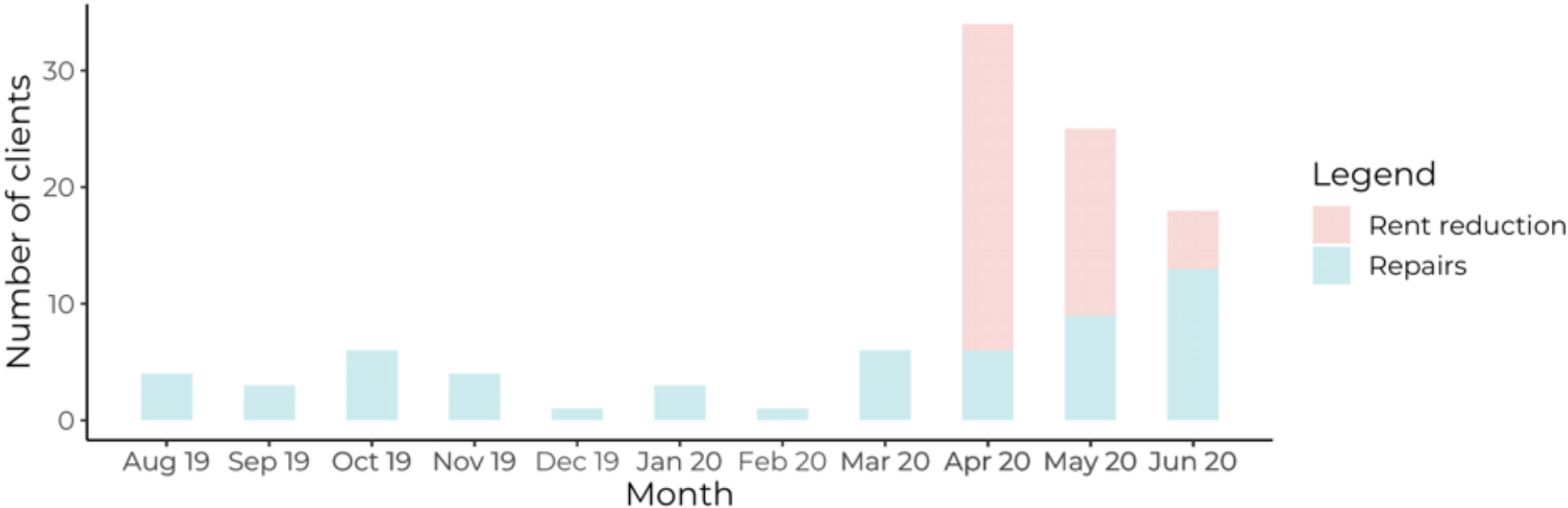
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In FY20, our team provided legal assistance in 105 cases (see Figure 6).

The last quarter of FY20 saw a significant growth in the demand for Anika’s services driven by the hardship caused by COVID-19 and its effects. In response, Anika launched its COVID-19 Rent Reduction service in April 2020.

At the same time, demand for legal assistance for residential repairs has steadily increased since the completing our pilot program and setting up as an independent legal service.

**Fig. 6 Client cases handled over time, FY20**



# What we provide and achieve

## Rental Repairs Support

In FY20, 78 clients contacted Anika Legal to assist them to get their home repaired. Of these clients, 44% required urgent repairs and 49% required non-urgent repairs.

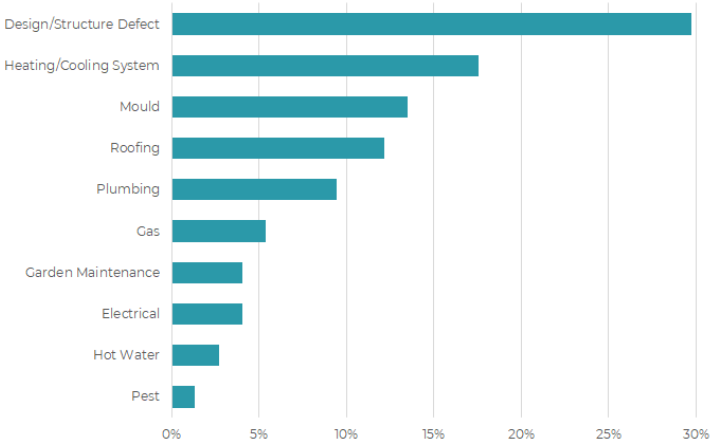
Anika Legal assisted its clients with a diverse range of defects, most commonly with design or structural issues such as broken windows and cracked walls (see Figure 7).

On average, repairs clients were living with their issue for approximately 3 months before involving Anika, though over 20% of clients reported having lived with their issue for over 1 year.

Repairs were performed in 88% of cases which were seen through to the end, i.e. the matter remained in scope of our services and the client chose to continue to the end of the service.

Of the clients requiring repairs, 44% required advice only, 47% required Anika Legal to negotiate with the landlord, and 9% of cases went to the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Fig. 7 Distribution of cases by repair defect category, FY20



## Louise’s story

Louise, pregnant and weeks away from the birth of her second child was at her wits end. For 9 months, she and her partner had pleaded with landlords and agents to get simple repairs performed in her new rental property.

“After months of trying to get any action from the landlord, I broke down, burst into tears... I felt like I was on the edge of having a heart attack. At times, I wanted to give up, it was all just getting too hard” Louise explains.

Anika negotiated with Louise's landlord and helped Louise prepare for her hearing at VCAT where Louise’s landlord agreed to a binding consent order for all 12 repairs. The repairs were completed the week before the birth of her second child.

[Full story here.](#)

# What we provide and achieve

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## COVID-19 Rent Reduction Support

Of the 58 clients who received legal assistance with negotiating rental reduction as a result of COVID-19:

24% - received a rental reduction

4% - did not manage to negotiate a reduction

71% - did not provide data.



## Hieu's Story

Stood down by both employers, Hieu was having to dig into his savings constantly, causing a huge mental and financial strain. Seeking support from his real estate agent over his rent, Hieu quickly realised that he may not get the reduction he was after.

After getting in touch with Anika online, Hieu was quickly paired up with one of our volunteer paralegals who helped draft a letter to Hieu's agent. This resulted in a next-day agreement to a 30% rent reduction that does not need to be repaid.

[Full story here.](#)

# Longer term change



# Longer Term Change

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Anika Legal's pilot program was a success, and the tremendous help of our supporters, particularly the Sunshine Foundation, ensured our success could continue beyond the pilot. The effects of COVID-19 and the Rent Reduction service we launched in response amplified our impact, and we continue to see promising results from both Repairs and Rent Reduction services.

In FY21 Anika Legal will take the exciting next steps on our university business model – launching university pilots with 4 universities, whilst continuing to focus on tenancy. The Victorian Government banned residential evictions during COVID-19. This ban is set to lift in March 2021 and we will respond by launching Anika Legal's Evictions Prevention Service to continue helping our clients stay in safe, affordable homes during a pandemic that doesn't look to be going away anytime soon.

The launching of the Eviction Support Service will be the next testingground for Anika Legal's unique service model. Looking forward, we will seek to test this model in other areas of law and jurisdictions so that its efficiency, accessibility and responsiveness can be further validated, and parts of it can be replicated by other organisations so that we can collectively move forward, towards a world where everyone can access justice.

# Appendices



# Appendix 1 - Finances

## Profit and Loss Statement

Anika Legal Ltd

Anika Legal Ltd	2020	2019
<b>Trading Income</b>		
Donations and Fundraiser Revenue	11,710	-
Government Funding Grants	145,376	54,490
Interest Income	675	57
Private Funding Grants	81,702	8,505
<b>Total Trading Income</b>	<b>239,464</b>	<b>63,052</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>239,464</b>	<b>63,052</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>		
Advertising	3,462	23
Business Registration Fees	-	458
Client Test Expenses	-	420
Contractor and Consultant Expenses	9,251	-
Crime check	494	24
Entertainment	401	-
Insurance	1,474	-
Meeting Expenses	999	490
Office Expenses	93	201
Printing & Stationery	390	198
Subscriptions	2,735	-
Superannuation	11,763	555
Telephone & Internet	158	-
Travel - National	16	-
Uniform Expenses	135	-
Wages and Salaries	85,890	5,769
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>117,260</b>	<b>8,138</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>122,203</b>	<b>54,914</b>

# Appendix 2 – Future vision for impact measurement at Anika

## Future vision for impact measurement at Anika

FY20 has been an incredibly important year for Anika. We've faced rapid growth in demand for our services, expansion in our volunteer base, and the beginnings of new partnerships.

With this growth, Anika is committed to enacting more robust, rigorous and consistent methods of impact measurement in the FY21 and beyond, building on lessons learned in FY20.

Planned changes to impact measurement	
FY21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction of a pre-post client survey measuring client outcomes</li><li>• Greater detail and observations with respect to client-outcomes - e.g., whether individuals truly become more aware and informed of their rights as a result of our services</li><li>• A stronger understanding of highest-needs clients as well as which cohorts should be prioritised</li><li>• Greater detail on partnership data - that is, measuring the influence Anika's model has upon similar legal assistance organisations operating in Victoria or Australia</li></ul>
FY22+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Larger sample sizes allowing for a more in-depth analysis of client cohorts and their outcomes</li><li>• Social return on investment analysis - understanding the value for money</li><li>• Qualitative analysis of client case studies</li></ul>