



# Impact Report

Our vision is a world where  
everyone can access justice.

We empower renters to live in  
safe homes with dignity.



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## Renters in Australia are in crisis

**Imagine living in a home that made you sick, having to choose between paying rent or eating, or living in constant fear of becoming homeless. That is the reality for most of the 7 million renters in Australia who are denied a safe, secure, affordable home that supports their quality of life.**

These are people like our client Elina, stuck in a home so cold she could see the fog from her baby's breath. For months on end, she emailed, texted and called her agent asking for repairs to the floorboards and walls. She was forced to run the heater all night to keep her baby warm, even though she couldn't afford it. These problems can start a cycle of disadvantage which leads to financial hardship, homelessness and worse. The housing crisis means many renters are struggling to find homes and pay rent, let alone advocate for their rights. Renters need legal support to prevent housing insecurity before it happens, but only one tenth of the community's legal needs are met. There are simply not enough resources to go around.

## Our unique solution

Anika Legal is a not-for-profit legal service that provides free legal support to renters. Through innovation, casework and systemic advocacy, we support our clients and fight for a fair housing system so that every renter can thrive in a safe, secure, affordable home that supports their quality of life.

**We have developed an innovative model to meaningfully address the housing crisis and bridge the justice gap.**

Through educational technology which enables law students to assist our lawyers, we have doubled the number of renters one full-time lawyer can help, making our free legal services more accessible to the renters struggling to maintain safe housing.

Through commercial partnerships with universities, we create a social enterprise model which sustainably funds the provision of our existing legal services.

And by focusing our casework on the most prevalent housing problems and collecting detailed data, we contribute to sector efforts to advocate for a fairer justice system, and create better services and tools for renters.





**Casework evidence fuels advocacy for systemic change:**

Our ability to take on more cases aligned with our advocacy goals, empowers renters to live in safe homes and builds the evidence base for critical reforms to the housing system. This in turn improves our ability to raise funding.

**Additional funding enables investment in innovation & technology:**

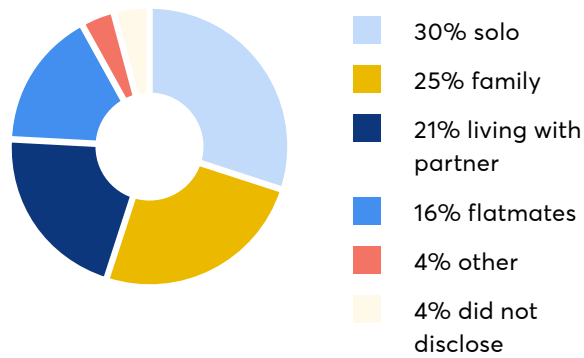
As Anika attracts more funding, it enables us to invest in our innovation & technology platform, which enables us to leverage untapped resources (students & lawyers) to contribute thousands of hours to housing justice. It also enables us to expand our service offerings and deliver them more efficiently.

**Expanding our service offerings enables us to grow our student & lawyer programs:**

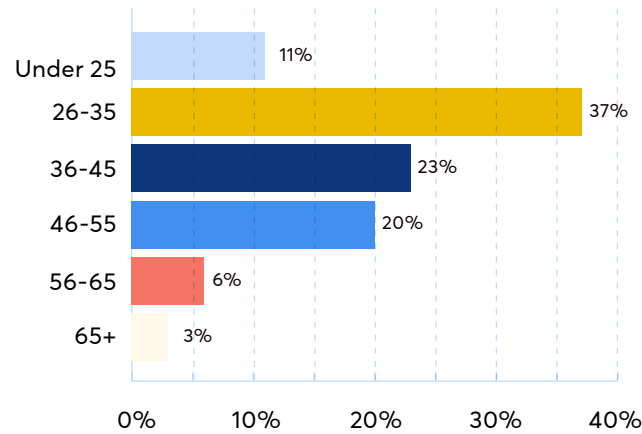
Expanding our service offerings enables us to create opportunities for more students & lawyers to contribute to access to justice. This leads to a more socially responsible legal profession.

## Our clients

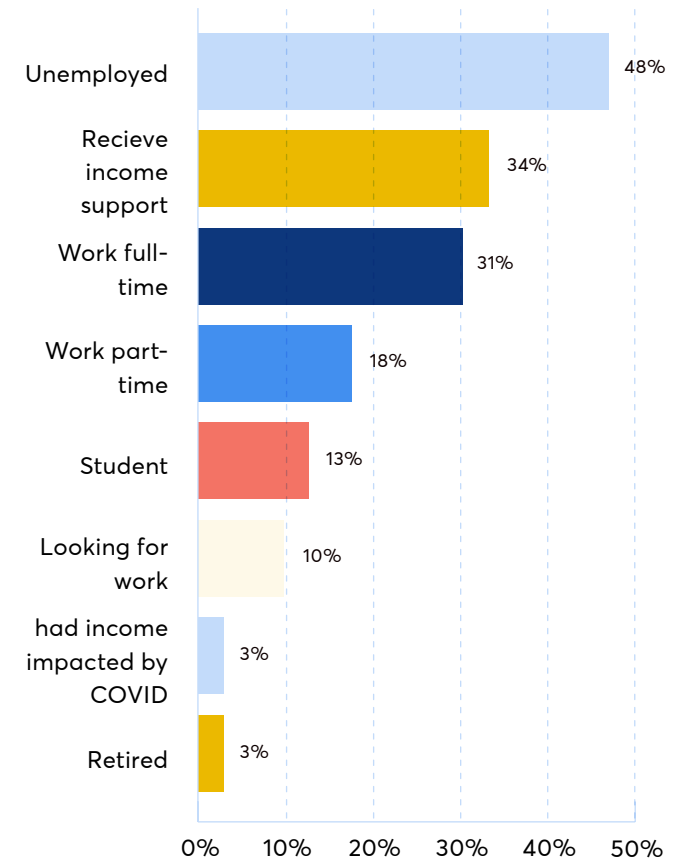
### Living situation



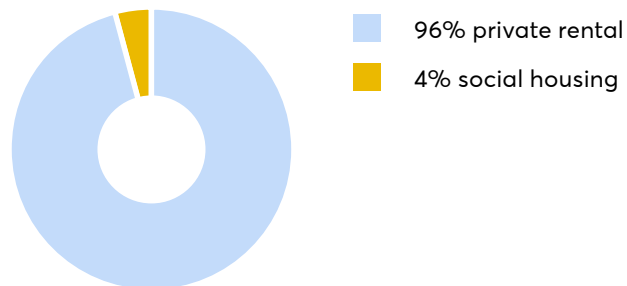
### Age



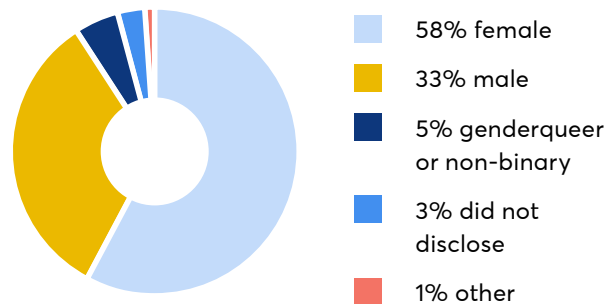
### Employment/income



### Tenure type

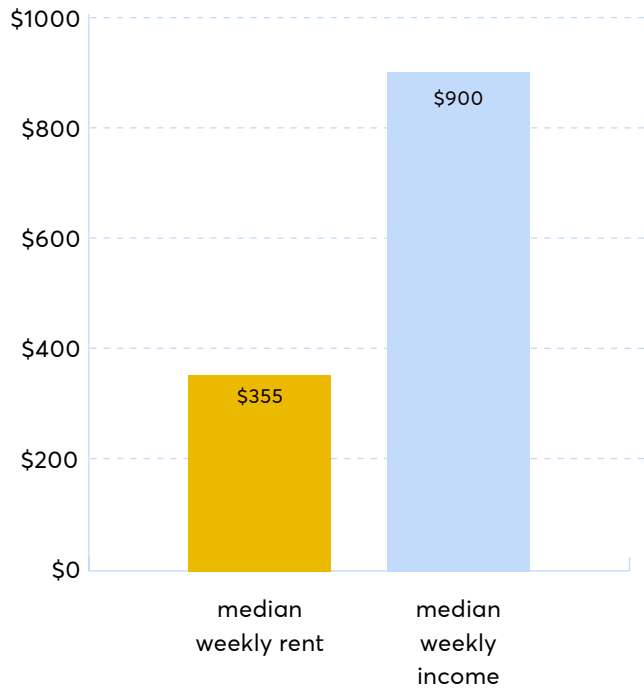


### Gender

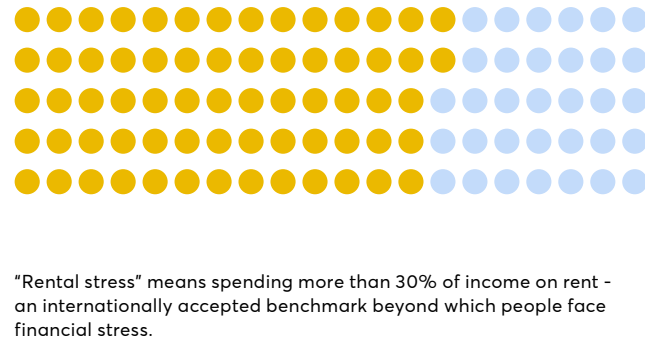


Options do not add up to 100% because clients can select multiple options.

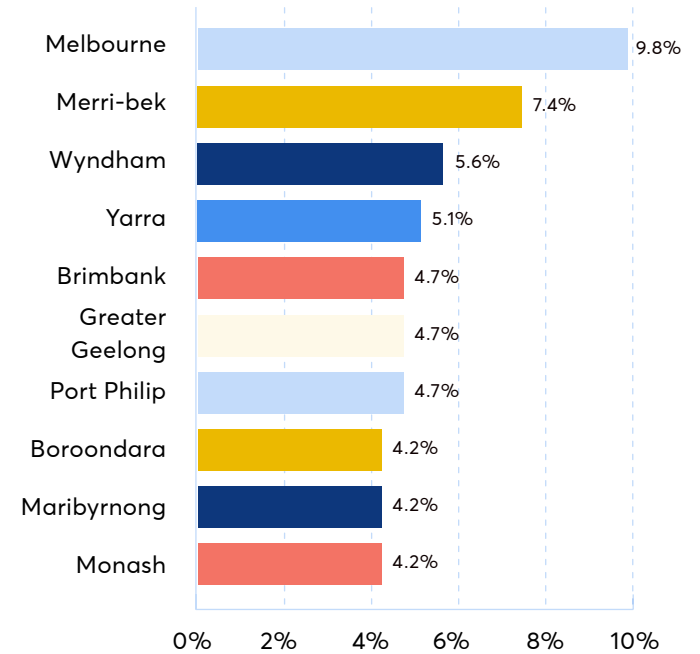
Income vs rent.



67% live in rental stress



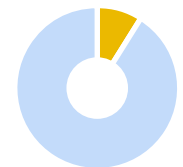
Location



32% primary language other than English



13% live with mental illness



9% live with physical disability

## Our Impact to Date

### Legal Services

800+

renters provided with free legal support

5

free legal services launched

184

supported with bonds claims

454

supported with repairs

### Systemic Advocacy

5

Publications released

- Bonds Report (due April 2024)
- Access to Justice & Technology Network submission to the NLAP Review (October 2023)
- Submission to the Federal Rental Inquiry (August 2023)
- Anika Legal submission to the Victorian Rental Inquiry (July 2023)
- Repairing Rental Homes (2022)

### Socially Responsible Legal Profession

150

students provided internships

23

lawyers provided pro-bono opportunities

88%

of student interns now more committed to access to justice

### Client Feedback

85%

all-time client satisfaction score

70%

reported their understanding of their rights improved

85%

felt confident to handle similar rental issues in future

78%

reported improved physical and mental health

### Rental Resources

43

rental rights resources developed

22

resources translated into languages other than English

85,000+

views of our online rental rights resources

### Top resources (page views)

22,000

How to transfer your lease

15,000

Your rental rights during the pandemic

12,900

Your tenancy repair rights



## Rental Repairs

Living in a safe home in good repair is the foundation for good physical and mental health - and every Australian's right. Yet over half of renters in Australia live in a home in need of repairs, and 7 in 10 fear asking for a repair will lead to retaliation from their landlord.

Our Rental Repairs service helps renters in Victoria who need repairs and have not yet applied to VCAT. We support renters to:

- Understand their rights
- Negotiate with their agent
- Apply to VCAT and/or CAV
- For the minority of cases which go to VCAT, prepare to self-represent at their hearing

# 454

454 renters supported to obtain repairs

## Eviction Support

Everyone should have the opportunity to stay in their home. Yet a [recent survey](#) found 82% of renters in Australia are in housing stress (spending more than 30% of their income on housing) - an internationally accepted benchmark beyond which people face financial stress and difficult choices. Three quarters feel anxious about their financial security.

Our Eviction Support service helps renters in Victoria who have received a notice to vacate due to rental arrears. We support renters to:

- Understand their legal options
- Negotiate a payment plan with their landlord
- Prepare to self-represent at their hearing
- Stay in their homes or delay eviction so they can organise their next accommodation

# 48

48 renters assisted through eviction

## Strategic Priority 1

Expand our casework services and community partnerships

“They saved me from being homeless... they reassured me throughout the process and were very thorough.”

“Once Anika sent the formal letter and got involved, the agent was ready to listen. After having the repairs completed... my family and I can live comfortably.”

“[Anika] reassured me that my concerns were valid, that I wasn’t being unreasonable.”

## Strategic Priority 1

Expand our casework services and community partnerships

### Bond Recovery

1 in 3 renters lose all or part of their bond at the end of their tenancy. We are seeing many rental providers make unmeritorious claims, including one who claimed \$300 with a photo of a hair on the floor as evidence. Renters are being forced to choose between paying unfair claims, or waiting up to a year for a hearing, unable to access their entire bond.

Our Bond Recovery service helps renters in Victoria to dispute their landlord’s VCAT bond claim. We support renters to:

- Understand whether they should dispute the claim
- Negotiate the claim with their landlord
- Prepare to self-represent at their hearing

# 184

184 renters supported to recover unfairly withheld bond money

### Bond claim reason

	Percentage	Average \$ recovered
Damages	52.8%	\$2,608
Other reasons	16.5%	\$2,004
Money owed	16.3%	\$2,287
Cleaning	11.8%	\$826
Locks	2.6%	\$1,414

## Strategic Priority 1

Expand our casework services and community partnerships

### Eric

#### Empowering renters to stay in safe homes

Everyone should have the opportunity to get back on their feet.

When COVID-19 forced Eric to leave his job, he fell behind on rent and was handed an eviction notice. The situation weighed heavily on him, knowing he had nowhere to go if he lost his home.

**"It was extremely stressful... I knew it would be next to impossible to get somewhere else because the demand is out of this planet."**

Driven to try everything he could, he contacted his former union, which referred him to Anika Legal. The Anika team stepped in, carefully guiding him through his rights under the Residential Tenancies Act and preparing him for his upcoming VCAT hearing.

By the date of hearing, Eric secured full-time employment, accessed a financial hardship payment and paid his overdue rent. He was able to articulate his rights effectively, and the VCAT member determined he could stay in his home.

**"Dan [Anika Seconded Lawyer] helped me with some terminology and lingo to put pressure back on them, to stop them for long enough so I could figure things out... and he helped me save the house."**

Eric's experience with Anika has completely changed his relationship with his agent. He has a much better understanding of his rights, and now documents all interactions in writing, keeps a list of everything that needs work and follows up on every request. His agent has started to proactively maintain the house and organise repairs quickly.

**"Anika's help has changed the situation between me, the agent and the owner. I used to be scared of hanging pictures up or anything, but I've hung pictures now and they're okay with that."**



## Strategic Priority 1

Expand our casework services and community partnerships

### Sarah

#### Thousands recovered in bond money

No renter should be forced into giving up their bond money unfairly.

Sarah was shocked when she received a VCAT application claiming over \$3,000 for alleged damages and cleaning costs from her former rental home. As a mother of two young children with limited disposable income, she had no idea how she would afford such a hefty bill.

To make matters worse, Sarah felt many of the charges were unfair, as she had already paid for professional cleaning from the real estate agent's recommended cleaner.

**"I was very disappointed that they didn't even give us a chance to go back and fix anything."**

After waiting a year for legal aid due to high demand, Sarah found Anika Legal. From the start, she found them responsive, knowledgeable and easy to deal with.

**"They never gave me false hope, but they gave me confidence."**

The Anika team reviewed Sarah's case and advised her she had a reasonable argument to dispute the charges. They helped her negotiate with the agent, then when the agent refused her offer, they provided her with guidance for the VCAT hearing.

On the day of the hearing, Sarah found herself in the virtual waiting room with the landlord's new agent. She decided to share her story. To her surprise, the new agent apologised on behalf of the previous agent and agreed to refund Sarah's entire bond.

With Anika's assistance, Sarah was able to recover her rental bond, overcome the stress and financial burden that had been weighing on her, and find justice.

**"Anika gave me the confidence to not just throw in the towel and give up the bond. I had the confidence to keep going."**



## Strategic Priority 1

Expand our casework services and community partnerships

### Wendy

#### Safe housing for health

Everyone deserves a safe home.

But Wendy was afraid her house would cause serious health issues. She is immunocompromised, and was stuck in a rental with extensive water damage and mould due to a leak in the laundry.

It was her first rental, so she felt unsure about her rights and the process of seeking repairs. She tried to do the right thing, informing her agent about the damage and diligently asking for repairs, but months passed with little progress.

Feeling frustrated and overwhelmed, she learned about Anika Legal and decided to reach out. The Anika team reviewed Wendy's case, provided her with legal advice and sent a formal letter to her landlord. Although she continued to face delays, Wendy was more confident with Anika on her side.

Nine months after the initial leak, the repairs were completed, restoring Wendy's sense of security and wellbeing in her home.

She experienced a direct improvement in her mental health, and felt more confident in her understanding of her rights and ability to be assertive and advocate for herself in the future.



## Strategic Priority 2

Become a sector leader in data-driven advocacy for renters

In past years we took our first steps into advocacy, including publishing a report examining barriers to self-enforcement for renters seeking repairs. In FY 22/23 we laid the groundwork, establishing a considered and collaborative advocacy strategy.

We started by forming our inaugural advocacy committee, who consulted with stakeholders across the community legal and housing sectors to develop our advocacy position and theory of change.

We also made two submissions to federal and Victorian parliaments covering the barriers renters face in maintaining safe, secure, affordable housing, and our recommendations for systemic reform needed for a fairer housing system. Our team also featured in several news stories discussing renters' rights including in The Age, ABC News and VICE.

### Our advocacy committee

- Denis Nelthorpe
- Brendan Lacota
- Noel Lim
- Zoe Chan
- Kate Parkinson
- Fenella Selvaratnam



### Strategic Priority 3

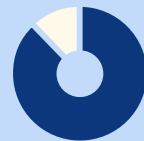
Champion a more socially responsible legal profession



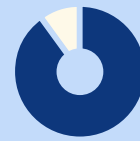
By embracing innovation and technology, we leverage untapped resources in the fight for justice. Through our first-of-its-kind education and legal technology, we have doubled the number of renters one full-time lawyer can assist, made it easy for renters to access support, and ensured every case we take seamlessly builds the evidence base for systemic reform.

Our technology-enabled service delivery model, in concert with our partnerships with universities and law firms, enables law students and lawyers to contribute thousands of hours per year to housing justice. These university partnerships also create a social enterprise business model which funds the supervision of law students.

**150** students provided with practical legal education through our internship programs



88% reported they were more likely to contribute to access to justice through their career



90% felt more prepared to enter the workforce



94% felt they better understood the difficulties people face accessing justice



91% student satisfaction score



## Glenice

I was so excited to start at Anika. It was a chance to apply my knowledge from law school and finally experience what it's like to work as a lawyer.

**I never thought it would be possible to get practical legal experience because I work full-time, have two kids and live in a different state, but Anika's flexible online internship made it possible.**

One of the highlights was conducting real legal research. I loved diving into cases, analysing the facts, then applying the law to achieve favourable outcomes for clients. The Anika team was very supportive throughout the process, always ready to answer my questions and run through analyses with me. I also found it incredibly rewarding making a difference in renters' lives, listening to their experiences, teaching them about their rights and most of all reassuring them that they have a voice. Anika helped me believe in myself and my ability to work in this field. All the theory I had learned at law school and practical skills I had developed at work came together, and helped me realise my potential as a lawyer.



## Jenny

Anika was an exceptional first legal work experience. I loved having the opportunity to put my theoretical knowledge from law school into practice and actually help real clients with real legal challenges.

Throughout the internship, I developed a range of practical legal skills, especially professional verbal and written communication with clients. The Anika team's support was invaluable. They were always there to provide guidance on how to engage with clients and draft legal documents.

**My newfound skills have not only improved my capabilities as a law student, but have also made me feel more confident to support those seeking our assistance. It solidified my passion for the legal field and determination to pursue a legal career.**

**88% of Anika Legal's law student interns reported that they were now more likely to contribute to access to justice through their career**



## Sharon

Anika's system was easy to use, helped us stay organised and productive with our casework, and was properly regulated which added an extra layer of security. I found myself actively enjoying my interactions with clients, having the opportunity to genuinely help vulnerable renters, and make positive contributions toward seeking social justice.

I developed connections and friendships, had the privilege of meeting and working with lots of amazing people, and was able to gain very valuable experience that assisted me with securing employment in the legal field.

After my internship, I was excited to commence 2024 as a volunteer lawyer at Anika. It has been fun managing my own cases and mentoring the new recruits, feeling a sense of nostalgia as I do, appreciating how far I've come from an intern to lawyer and recognising Anika played a fundamental role in my professional and interpersonal growth and development.

**No matter where my legal journey takes me in the coming years, I will always look fondly towards the memories I created at Anika Legal and hold them very dearly, including the incredible people I had the pleasure of working alongside.**

## Strategic Priority 3

Champion a more socially responsible legal profession



## Strategic Priority 3

Champion a more socially responsible legal profession

### Anika's flexible secondments champion a more socially responsible legal profession, taking us closer to a world where everyone can access justice.

Thousands of lawyers want to contribute to access to justice but don't have the opportunity to do so. By creating these opportunities, exposing them to the barriers to justice, and showing them how they can assist others to overcome the barriers, we create vital cultural and structural change in the legal profession.

Our innovative secondments programs enable secondee lawyers to assist us remotely and flexibly, without the requirement to request long periods of leave from their firm or devoting a significant amount of billable hours in order to meaningfully contribute.

Our training modules have been built on the success of our student model, ensuring that secondee lawyers require no prior experience in tenancy law or using digital systems.

This model removes the barriers that are usually posed by location and time constraints, and enables more lawyers to devote pro bono time to access to justice initiatives. By exposing law students and lawyers to the barriers to justice, Anika's flexible secondments champion a more socially responsible legal profession, taking us closer to a world where everyone can access justice.



**“Anika’s flexible secondment has given me an opportunity to undertake fulfilling pro bono work as part of my regular work schedule. It’s incredibly rewarding spending a bit of time each week using my professional skills to assist people who otherwise wouldn’t get access to the legal services they need.”**

Jessica Jacaj  
Senior Associate, Norton Rose Fulbright

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