



VACRO Annual Report 2008

## Our Mission

“VACRO provides support and information for individuals charged with a criminal offence, offenders, prisoners and their families, as well as leadership, education, training and research on the Justice System for the community.”



# Contents

<b>2</b>	Our Mission
<b>3</b>	Contents
<b>4</b>	Our History
<b>5</b>	Message from the President
<b>6</b>	Message from the Chairman
<b>7</b>	Message from the CEO
<b>8 – 9</b>	Community Report
<b>10 – 11</b>	Justice System Services Report
<b>12 – 13</b>	Family and Children's Services Report
<b>14</b>	Treasurer's Report
<b>15</b>	Thank you to our Supporters
<b>16 – 17</b>	Financials
<b>18</b>	VACRO Organisational Chart
<b>19</b>	VACRO Strategic Plan

## Our History

Established in 1872 as the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, VACRO is a non-denominational, community based agency that provides information, resources, counselling and support for individuals in contact with the Justice System. Our main focus is on reducing recidivism, through work with individuals at the time of arrest, through court, in the prison system and out into the community.

Our work with families and children is also a strong focus – families of offenders are the hidden, secondary victims of crime. VACRO is committed to providing support and assistance to these marginalized and stigmatized families.

VACRO has a strong history of working with government and other community organizations to develop innovative services, research and resources to meet the needs of clients.



**'D' Division, Pentridge Prison late 1950's**



## Message from the President



I am very pleased to present the 2007/2008 annual report for VACRO. In the last 12 months, we have undergone a growth spurt that has been the result of our strategic planning (2005) and which has ensured a sound research and development framework for the organisation as well as a clear focus on early intervention.

We continue to be the only organisation in Victoria whose sole focus is on the justice system – this has held us in good stead for our work with individuals accused of a criminal offence, defendants going through court, prisoners, offenders and those individuals in the transition from custody to the community. Our work with families and children of individuals through all of these stages continues to show great outcomes – the earlier information and support can be provided, the earlier the ‘healing’ process can begin.

Our two key principles (outlined below) provide a conceptual framework to strengthen VACRO’s work in research and strategic development to best meet the needs of those in contact with the criminal justice system:

- Restorative practices (practices which build on principles of restorative justice with its focus on individuals and communities; aims to address the damage that is caused to relationships as a result of crime); and
- Throughcare (a continuum of care and case management for individuals from the point of arrest, through court, prison and back into the community).

I want to thank the VACRO staff and our Council for the excellent work that they produce year after year and the dedication that they show to the individuals that we work with – it is truly inspiring. In particular, I would like to thank Roger Dench – his leadership as Chairman of the Council has enabled us to have a strong strategic focus. I am pleased to be able to work closely with him again for another term.

**The Hon. Mr. Justice David Harper**  
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Harper', written over a light-colored background.

# Message from the Chairman



This year has been a remarkable year for VACRO; one that has shown a growth in all of the areas outlined in our strategic priorities.

1. Research and Development
2. Targeted profile boost
3. Targeted Services
4. Forming Targeted Alliances
5. Targeted Broader Funding

The variety and extent of our support services have been expanded, in particular in the areas of early intervention at both the time of arrest and via the Courts. This broadening of VACRO's coverage has been matched by a widened field of funding sources, stimulated by much of the excellent R&D work carried out by Andrea and her team. These research programs have been stimulated by the outstanding support of the ANZ Trustees and the RE Ross Trust and we are grateful for their stimulating impact on VACRO. Andrea's recent study tour in North America reinforced the value of this research and confirmed many of the priorities set over the last several years. Andrea's research also enables us to see how some of the dots can be joined in gaining even greater impact when providing services and support.

We have now completed the first cycle of our strategic plan and will start the process of refining our direction later this year. These discussions will help define our priorities and work for the coming five years. I look forward to sharing these plans with you next year as we aim to open this new strategic priorities 'blueprint' up for discussion and feedback.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to my fellow Council Members (mentioned below); in particular Justice Harper who continues to provide insight and wise support to both the rest of Council and to me; Matt O'Keefe who has reinvigorated our financial management with his enthusiasm and energy in his role as Treasurer; and Secretary Allan Elliott, whose support and pragmatic counsel underpins all of our work.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Andrea Lott for her leadership and outstanding work over this challenging year, ably supported by VACRO's great staff, volunteers and students. How lucky we are to have such a team!

**Roger Dench**  
Chairman

**President**

The Hon. Mr Justice David Harper

**Chairman**

Roger Dench

**Treasurer**

Matt O'Keefe

**Secretary**

Allan Elliott

**Council Members**

Dr Jane Hendtlass

Ann Cunningham

David Youssef

Alan Clayton

Janelle Morgan

Assoc Professor Chris Trotter



## Message from the CEO



It is with pride that I look back on the last 12 months and reflect on our achievements in such a short space of time. Our strategic direction and service delivery has been clear and strong and has resulted in a marked growth in the range of programs that we offer. We continue to be at the forefront of policy discussions adding our expertise, experience and evidence based approach to a wide range of forums.

Our focus on our three key areas of work is explained in the following pages and shows some of the range, innovation and diversity that VACRO bring to the Justice System.

1. Community;
2. Justice System Services; and
3. Family and Children's Services

A feature of VACRO work this year has been around partnerships – we have expanded the range of partnerships, working closely with other organisations that have specialist knowledge and expertise that has been invaluable to the Justice System.

Some of our major achievements this year have been:

- Our research and development work; with the generous funding from the ANZ Trustees;
- The start up of the *Link Out* program for men in transition from custody to community (in partnership with ACSO, the Salvation Army and Jesuit Social Services – the Brosnan Centre);
- Funding via the RE Ross Trust for a three year project to provide Mentoring and support for children of offenders (in partnership with SHINE for Kids);

- Our partnership with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the Melbourne Assessment Prison for the *Music for Thought* project;
- Our continuing partnership with the Public Interest Law Clearing House and Corrs, Chambers, Westgarth Law firm who provide the pro bono law clinics to offenders and their families (for civil and administrative law matters);
- Our partnership with the Red Cross to provide a Volunteer based 'Visitors Centre' program at Port Phillip Prison and now an expansion into Fulham Prison;
- The development of the *Konnect* program that will work with Koori men and women exiting the prison system (starting in July 2008).

The *Konnect* program is a program that VACRO is proud to be a part of – it is a partnership with both our *Link Out* partners and the Department of Justice. This program aims to work closely with Indigenous communities to build capacity around the transitional system as well as our own capacity and ability to work in the Justice System as a 'Non Koori' organisation. The outcome will be a better system for all individuals coming out of prison; essential given the over representation of Indigenous prisoners.

My sincere thanks to the VACRO staff, Volunteers, students and our Council for all of their continued support and encouragement and to our donors, members, partners and supporters. It is a pleasure to work with such a fantastic team. I am looking forward to the next 12 months – it is already shaping up to be a very good year!

**Andrea Lott**  
CEO

# Community Report

In addition to our direct services for clients, VACRO contributes to research and policy frameworks to ensure that our work is well informed, constructive and sustainable. This work also involves engagement with communities, provision of information and resources, dialogue with policy makers and the seeding and development of innovative services.

## Information, Education and Resources:

- **'Prison: What Now?'** is an information resource for families, currently being redeveloped as a series of brochures (printed and for download). Specific brochures are directed to children and translations will be available in Vietnamese, Chinese and Arabic. We have re named this resource 'Caught Out: What Now?' as the information relates to what to do from the time of arrest, through court proceedings, prison and back to the community.
- **'Getting Out'** was last updated in 2006. VACRO is in discussion with the Department of Justice (Corrections Victoria) about an update of this valuable resource that will be modelled on our 'Caught Out: What Now?' (see above) and will incorporate information for Indigenous offenders and their families. This is expected to be available for dissemination in early 2009.
- **FORK** (Families of Offenders Resource Kit) provides a practical tool for those who come into contact

with families and children of offenders at a local level. This resource for workers is available to download at [www.vacro.org.au/fork](http://www.vacro.org.au/fork)

- **Law Week** panel at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre provided a platform for people who often go unnoticed in the criminal justice process to discuss their experiences of the court system. Participants included offenders, family members, court based support workers and community based support workers.



*Charlotte Stockwell, CEO of the Magistrates' Court leads participants of the Law Week Panel*

- **Conferences:** VACRO's work in research and development provides an opportunity to reflect on research evidence and best practice service provision. In this way, VACRO contributes to dialogue at a national level, through conferences and specialist presentations:
  - *ACT Community Inclusion Board, Inclusive Practices Forum, Canberra, April 2008, "Working with Families and Children of Offenders";*
  - *Aust Family and Community Strengths Conference, Newcastle, April 2008, "Silent Sentences";*
  - *Reintegration Puzzle, Adelaide, June 2008, "Working with families of Offenders";*
  - *Restorative Justice, Human Rights and Prison Reform, Perth, September 2008, "Supporting families of offenders" and "Constructive Corrections".*



# Community Report

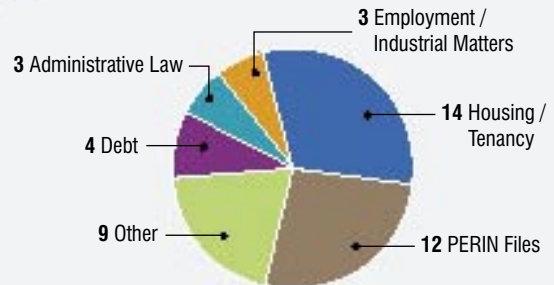
## Projects:

- A **National Network**, with support from VACRO, will provide a forum for dialogue to highlight issues affecting families and children of offenders at a national level.
- **Court Based Family Support Project** will consult with stakeholders to develop a design for an information, support and referral service for families of defendants in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court.
- **Transitional Needs Research** project is investigating the degree of reintegration and quality of life for people beyond the post-release support period.
- **The Problem Gambling and Transitional Services Linkage Project** will build sustainable bridges between a range of existing post release support systems and gambling agencies. The project will ensure a more effective response to the transitional needs of offenders affected by problem gambling.
- **DIY Healthy Living** program will encourage clients to make healthier lifestyle choices, supporting access to recreational activities and education regarding better eating choices. DIY is for people exiting prison and for families of offenders. This project will start in late 2008.
- **ANZ Trustees Impact Project** allows VACRO to focus on research, education and policy development, permitting us to lead and adapt in response to client and community need. A generous philanthropic grant is allowing VACRO to develop a robust knowledge base in three areas: Community, Family and Children's Services and Justice System Services.

## PILCH: Homeless Person's Legal Clinic

This clinic operates once a week out of the VACRO Head office. In the 2007/08 financial year, there were 169 files opened for individuals – 71 of these are still open files, whilst 98 of the files have been closed.

### Top 6 matters of Open Files



## Case studies from clinic:

- **Bill:** Bill had a long history of drug abuse and had physical and mental disabilities, had suffered abuse and was homeless. Bill incurred 17 infringements totalling almost \$4,000, but HPLC lawyers successfully applied to the Infringements Court for revocation of all of Bill's infringements.
- **Rebecca:** Rebecca was being unfairly evicted from her flat for non-payment of rent. HPLC lawyers successfully contested the landlord's application for possession and payment of rental arrears of \$1200. We led evidence that the true state of affairs was that Rebecca was actually \$800 in credit in their rental account.

# Justice System Services Report

The Justice Systems Services Team continue to assist men and women exiting prison through their transition back to community. Our programs offer a range of supports from pre release; and post release information, counselling though to practical assistance including transport and childcare, accommodation and court advocacy.

## Special Projects

### MSO Project – ‘Music for Thought’

This project provided 6 musical workshops: 4 were held at the Melbourne Assessment Prison (MAP) for male prisoners and 2 were held at VACRO for children and families of offenders. A music director facilitated the sessions that included instrumentals by the men and their families, backed up by 3 MSO musicians (Violinist, cellist, percussionist) and a sound recordist. The final musical outcome (a series of ‘sound bites’) is currently being edited into a CD for distribution. These workshops allowed the men at MAP and the families to be involved in something that was fun, interesting and rewarding that culminated in a tangible result (the CD) that can be shared and enjoyed long after the event.

## General Services

- **Prisoner Banking Service** provides a range of financial and banking related services to prisoners.
- **Prisoner Property Service** offers storage of prisoners’ personal effects during their incarceration.

**6,755 Banking requests &  
123 boxes of property in storage**



*‘Music for Thought’ family session at VACRO*

## Men’s Specific Services

- **Link Out** is a voluntary pre and post release support program offered to sentenced prisoners with high needs who are at high risk of re-offending, drug relapse or post release mortality. This program is delivered as part of a consortium of agencies (ACSO, Jesuit Social Services [The Brosnan Centre], the Salvation Army and VACRO).

This program started in late 2007 and is the amalgamation of the pre existing transitional programs (Bridging the Gap, CHPI and CSEPP).

**225 Men received intensive  
case management support**



# Justice System Services Report

## Women's Specific Services

- The **Women's Mentoring Program** matches women who are soon to be released from prison or are completing a community based order with a volunteer mentor from the community, who provides practical and emotional support during the transition back into the community.

*36 mentors and 27 participants*

- **Women's Integrated Support System (WISP)** – delivered in partnership with Melbourne Citymission and Jesuit Social Services (The Brosnan Centre) – is a voluntary service which offers intensive post-release support and advocacy for women exiting prison.

*138 Women received intensive case management support*

As a part of the **Better Pathways Initiative**, the Women's Integrated Support Program (WISP) was recently acknowledged in the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards 2008; WISP was 1 of 14 State and Territory projects to receive a financial award (\$5,000) and a certificate of merit. This award acknowledges the important work that Melbourne Citymission, VACRO and the Brosnan Centre have been doing to reduce women's involvement in the justice system and provide women with much needed support when exiting prison and completing orders in the community.

- The **OPUS Program** at Tarrengower Prison – delivered in partnership with Caraniche Psychological Services – offers a range of personal development and therapeutic programs designed to enhance women's wellbeing, address drug and other issues, and prepare for release.

*77 initial assessments, 37 orientation sessions, 38 hrs peer education, 92 creativity and wellness sessions, 24 hr drug programs, 39 sessions of psychological programs, 595 hrs of individual counselling, 170 hrs case conferencing, 229 referrals, 36 parenting program sessions, 41 preparation and release sessions, housing delivered 22 hrs per month offsite, 326 post release support hrs (referral, counselling) and 78 exit plans.*

- **Childcare and Transport Subsidies Program (CCaTS)** – assists women offenders who are on supervised community-based orders to successfully complete these orders through the provision of practical support, including financial assistance to manage childcare responsibilities and access transport.

*471 Child Care subsidies provided & 2,337 Transport subsidies provided*

## Indigenous Specific Services

- **Konnect** is a transitional program that will work with LinkOut and WISP (see above) to provide intensive support options for Koori men and women exiting prison. **Konnect** will also offer education and consultation to case managers working with Koori clients. **This program is due to start operation in July 2008.**

# Family & Children's Services Report

The Family and Children's Services Team continue to assist individuals through the journey of arrest, court and incarceration. Our programs offer a range of supports from information and counselling through to practical assistance including transport and accommodation.

## Information, Education and Resources

**Information sessions** for families and the community are held regularly to provide information on a range of relevant, significant and educational topics to assist people in their understandings of the criminal justice system. In this financial year topics covered were:

- **Prisoner voting** (guest speakers from the Human Rights Law Resource Centre) Information about current laws on prisoner voting rights.
- **PILCH services** (Public Interest Law Clearing House) Information about the range of pro bono services available via the clinic.
- **Family Relationship Centre** – Information about this service and how families can best access them.
- **Human Rights Charter** (guest speakers from the VEOHRC) Information about the implications of the Human Rights Charter for prisons and prisoners.
- **Adult Parole Board (APB)** – Information about the role of the APB.

## Programs and Projects

- **Counselling and Support Service** for families of offenders, those charged with an offence, going through the court process, within the prison system or about to return to the community. This area has also responded to a large number of direct referrals from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) during this year.
- **Counselling and Support for Children of Prisoners (COSP)** will provide one-to-one or family counselling for children and young people affected by family contact with the criminal justice system. COSP will also provide access to trained volunteer mentors for children. This program will be starting in late 2008.
- A **Family Liaison Worker** at the Melbourne Assessment Prison and the Neighbourhood Justice Centre providing support to offenders and families at these locations.
- **Aboriginal Family Travel Program**, providing assistance for Aboriginal families to visit their imprisoned family members. (A great example of this program is that one family travelled 3 times to visit their family member – a total of 2,454 kms. This would not have been possible financially if not for the assistance of this program).
- **Support Group** based in the CBD for families of offenders.
- **Port Phillip Prison Visitor Resource Centre** managed in partnership with Red Cross Australia. Based on the success of this program to date (an evaluation is currently being finalised), Red Cross and VACRO will begin operating a similar service at Fulham Correctional Centre in late 2008.
- **Rail Travel Assistance** program for people visiting prisons in country Victoria.

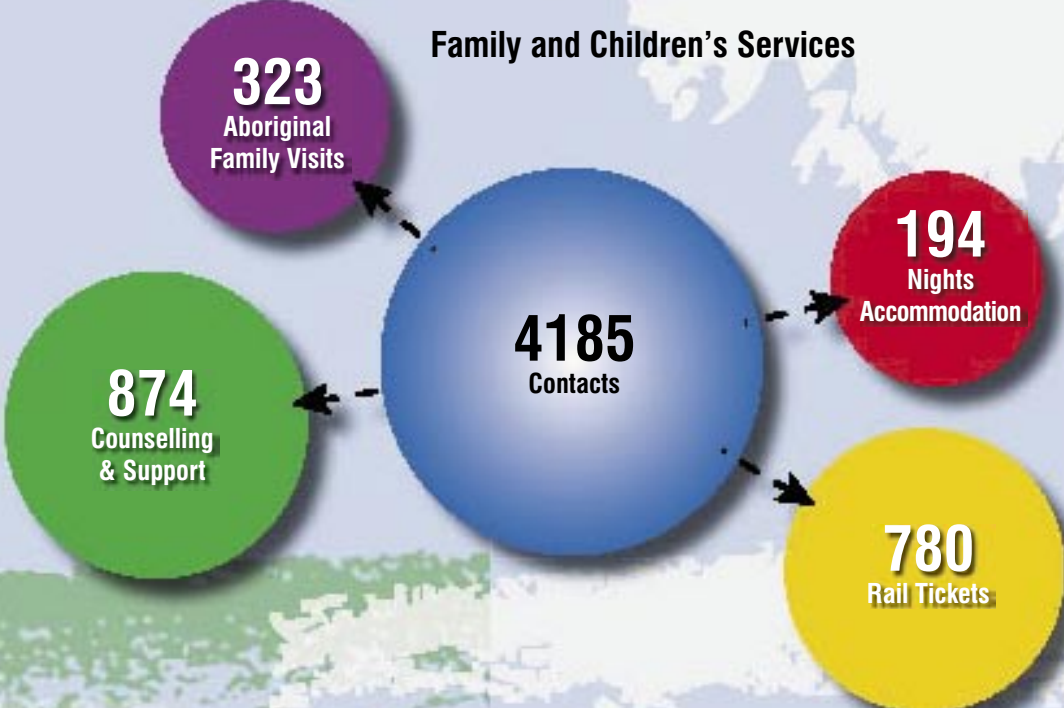


# Family & Children’s Services Report

- **Accommodation** at Mulwilla House (Beechworth) and Blake Cottage (Castlemaine) for individuals visiting family members in Beechworth, Loddon or Tarrengower prisons. This service supports VACRO’s long held belief that maintaining familial bonds during incarceration is a strong factor in developing positive outcomes upon release. Blake Cottage is a partnership with the Sisters of Charity (Community Care). A recent evaluation of this program showed overwhelming support for the work undertaken and responses from families indicate it is a well received service.
  - “I’ve got kids and they were just great with them”
  - “They are willing to talk to you about anything”
  - “They are just so hospitable”
  - “It was a chance to feel like I was at home and gave me more time to visit my partner”
  - “I’m just so grateful for the respite after the prison”

*‘In the field of corrections in this state (Victoria) VACRO I think has lead the way in increasing sensitivity on how to be child responsive. We have got a transformation of our correctional services to engage in and there’s a huge number of children, more children than are in state care, who are the children of adults who are in prison in Australia today.’\**

\* (Source: 11 September 2008 ‘Think Child, Think Family, Think Community: Building the Capacity of Adult Services to respond to the needs of Vulnerable Children’ Professor Dorothy Scott (Director, Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia)



# Treasurer's Report

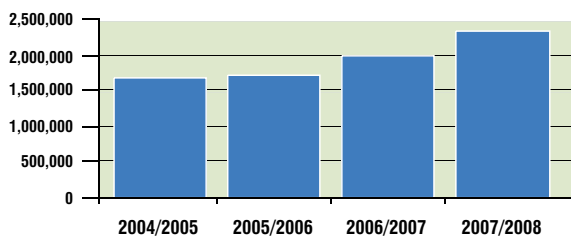


VACRO has continued to successfully grow the number and coverage of its range of important programs, and this growth has been reflected in the increased financial funding that the organisation has secured. Our financial management approach continues to be one of prudently and appropriately managing the economic

resources of the organisation, with the objective of managing within budget and with a goal of appropriate long-term financial security for VACRO.

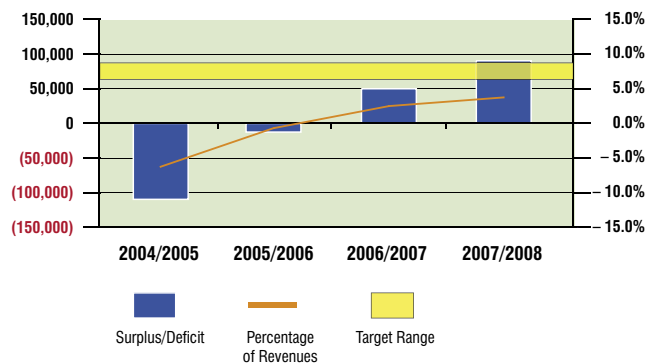
VACRO concluded the financial year with a surplus of \$90,011, representing 3.8% of funding for the year. Overall total equity of the organisation is a modest but healthy \$856,735. Funding sources remain predominantly Department of Justice based, although alternative federal and state government sources, as well as non-government sources continue to support the organisation.

**VACRO Total Funding**



The council continues to monitor the financial health and forecasts of the organisation, and has set a minimum annual surplus target in the range of 6 – 8% of revenues. This target has been established to support the long-term financial viability of VACRO. The VACRO Financial Model provides for minimal program management services costs, maximises the provision of services for the benefit of clients, and always strives to provide an exceptional program outcome. This Financial Model, while providing a strong financial resource to programs, ensures financial security for staff and VACRO in times of financial volatility, and is a solid investment in the long-term provision of the valuable services VACRO provides the community.

**VACRO Surplus Analysis**



We are looking forward to another strong and successful year, working in partnership with our many funding agencies, donors and members who continue to provide VACRO with generous and invaluable support.

We extend our thanks and gratitude to all who make VACRO possible. Thank you also to our staff for their invaluable work – their commitment and professionalism is outstanding.

**Matt O'Keefe**  
Treasurer



# Thank you to our Supporters

**A special thank you to all of our members, donors, partners and supporters – the support offered from such a wide range of individuals and organisations ensures that VACRO is able to continue to do the work that we do.**

- ACSO
- The Adult Parole Board
- The Anglican Parish of Holy Trinity
- Dawn & Brian Ash
- The Australian Federal Police
- Australian Red Cross
- Barbara Ballanden
- Caraniche Pty Ltd
- Jean Cheshire
- Christ Church, Geelong
- The Collie Foundation
- Joy Collins
- Corrs, Chambers, Westgarth
- The City of Melbourne
- Alan Clayton
- Court Network
- Ann Cunningham
- June Danks
- The Dara Foundation
- Roger Dench
- The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)
- The Department of Justice
- Donkey Wheel
- Catherine Doolan
- Allan Elliott
- Embelton Limited
- Family Drug Help
- Fulham Correctional Centre (The GEO Group Australia)
- The Hon. Mr Justice David Harper
- Jenny Hempel
- Dr Jane Hendtlass
- Home Detention Unit (Corrections Victoria)
- Jesuit Social Services (The Brosnan Centre)
- Cecily Johns
- The Judy Lazarus Centre
- Anne Kantor
- Rob Kerr
- Leanne Lacey
- Helen Leyshon
- MarketU
- Kay Mc Cartney
- W C Meagher
- The Melbourne Assessment Prison (MAP)
- Melbourne Citymission
- The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO)
- Janelle Morgan
- Sylvia Morrissey
- SK, EW and JM Muntz
- Dame Elisabeth Murdoch A. C., D. B. E.
- The Myer Foundation
- Paul Natoli
- The Neighbourhood Justice Centre
- Matthew O'Keefe
- Ombudsman Vic
- Our Lady of the Pines, Donvale
- Frank Pearce
- Port Phillip Prison (GSL Custodial Services Pty Ltd)
- Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH)
- Glenys Reardon
- The Salvation Army
- Scoresby Uniting Church
- Paul Shannon
- The Sisters of Charity (Community Care)
- Charlotte Stockwell
- St Peters Primary School, Epping
- Streetsmart
- Travellers Aid Society of Victoria
- Assoc. Professor Chris Trotter
- The R E Ross Trust
- David Youssef
- Victims Service Agency (VSA)
- The Victoria Law Foundation
- Tanya Zabenko

# Financials

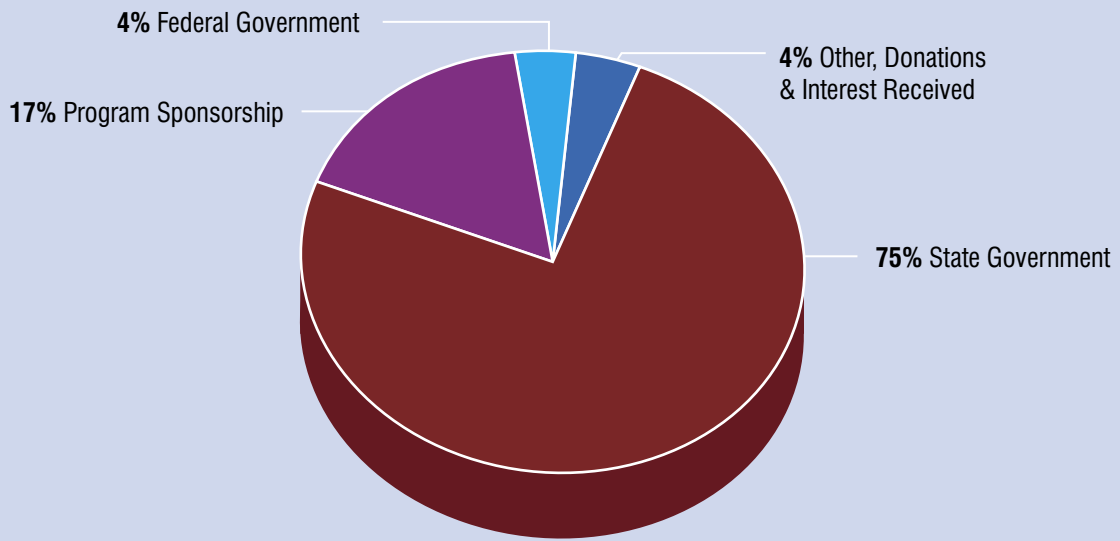
## Financial Statement Year Ended 2008

	2007/2008	2006/2007
<b>Revenue from Ordinary Activities</b>	\$	\$
Government Grants	1,872,151	1,567,824
Consultancy Fees	564	55,570
Donations & Bequests	41,235	43,853
Project Sponsorships	396,738	256,104
Interest	38,738	14,397
Other Revenue	6,035	77,175
<b>Total Revenue from Ordinary Activities</b>	<b>2,355,461</b>	<b>2,014,923</b>
<b>Expenses from Ordinary Activities</b>		
Employee Benefit Expenses	1,514,754	1,306,117
Depreciation Expenses	38,926	28,865
Consultancy Expenses	65,124	47,290
Motor Vehicle Expenses	217,792	141,836
Occupancy Expenses	78,307	38,628
Administration Expenses	61,923	177,162
Client Expenses	109,811	97,547
Other Expenses	178,813	125,867
<b>Total Expenses from Ordinary Activities</b>	<b>2,265,450</b>	<b>1,963,312</b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit from Ordinary Activities</b>	<b>90,011</b>	<b>51,611</b>

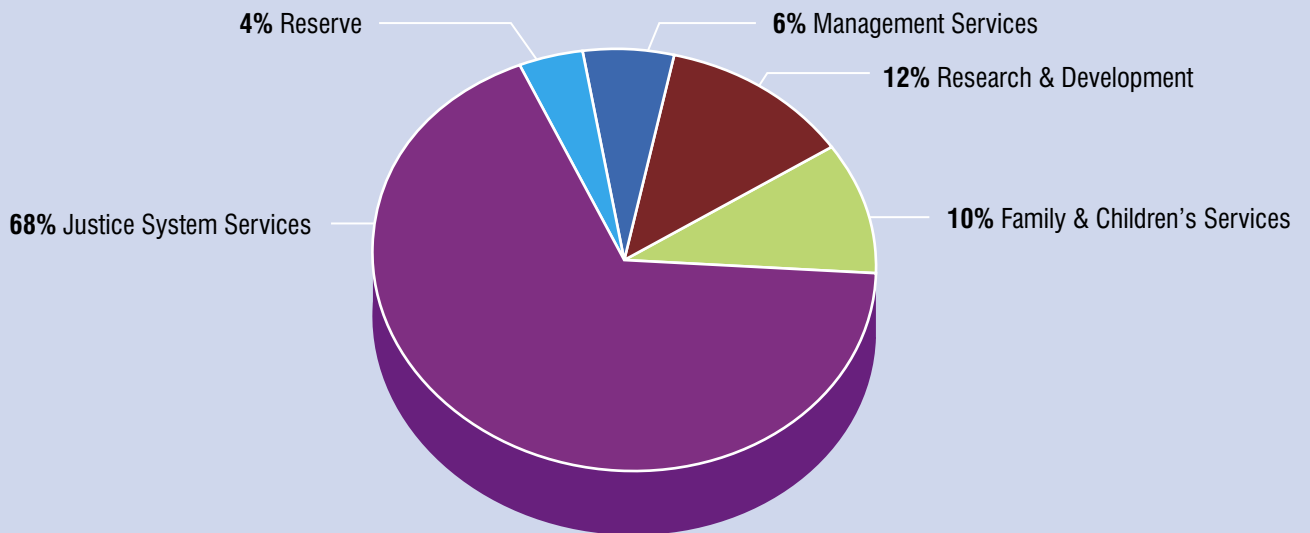
Assets	2007/2008	2006/2007
<b>Current Assets</b>	\$	\$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	707,617	182,637
Trade and Other Receivables	123,703	355,860
Other	21,964	15,894
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>853,284</b>	<b>554,391</b>
<b>Non Current Assets</b>		
Property, Plant and Equipment	513,811	531,507
<b>Total Non Current Assets</b>	<b>513,811</b>	<b>531,507</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1,367,095</b>	<b>1,085,898</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Trade and Other Payables	127,532	123,569
Provisions – Employees	97,716	74,242
Deferred Revenue (Unearned Income)	271,860	112,207
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>497,108</b>	<b>310,018</b>
<b>Non Current Liabilities</b>		
Provisions – Employees	13,252	9,156
<b>Total Non Current Liabilities</b>	<b>13,252</b>	<b>9,156</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>510,360</b>	<b>319,174</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>856,735</b>	<b>766,724</b>

# Financials

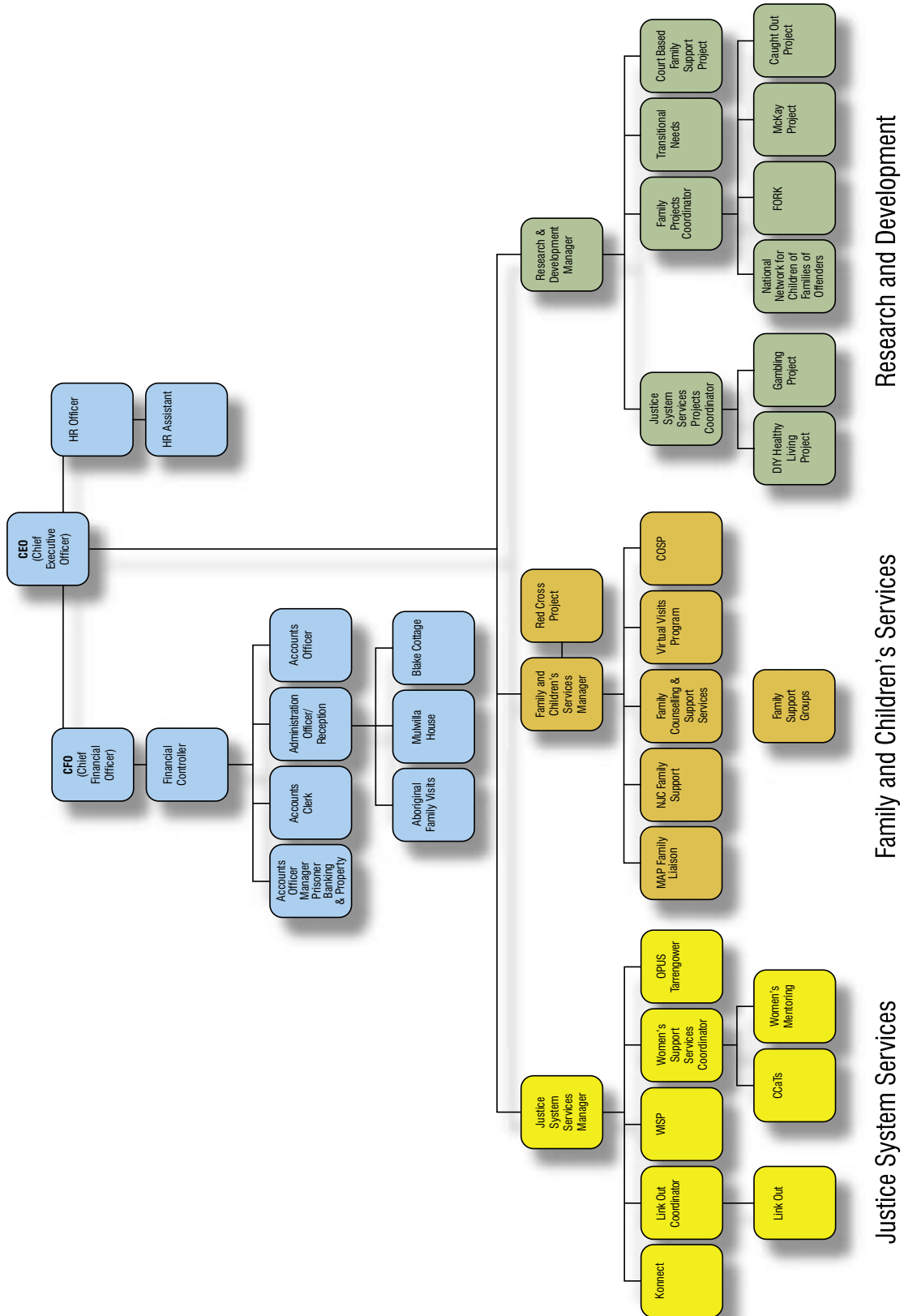
**Funding Source**



**Funding Application**

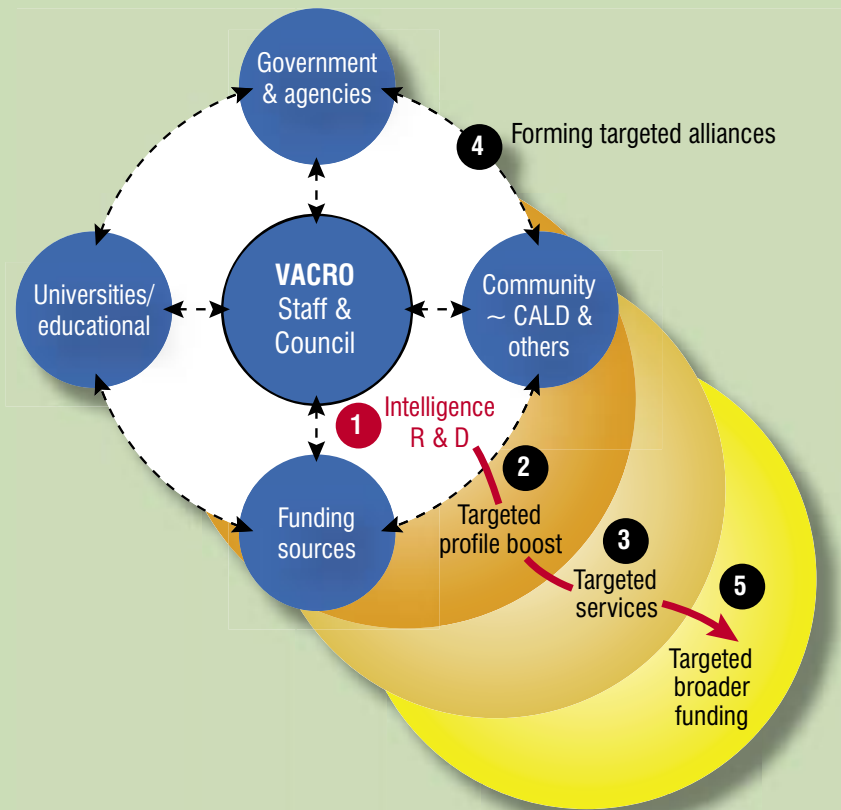


# Organisational Chart



# Strategic Plan

## VACRO's Strategic Priorities – Led by Boosted Intelligence and Research & Development





**VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE CARE & RESETTLEMENT OF OFFENDERS**

First Floor, 116 Hardware Street, Melbourne, VIC. 3000

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