

Anika Legal

PILOT IMPACT REPORT 2019-2020



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Welcome

We waited for someone to tell us why this idea couldn't work. We met with experts in a variety of fields expecting someone to poke a hole in our concept and sink it. After months it dawned on us that no one could definitively tell us if Anika could or couldn't work because no one had given it a real go. The enormous amount of work we would have to do just to test the idea was daunting, to say the least.

The support we received in the early days - from students, advisors, friends, employers, and universities - gave us the courage to take the next step. The support echoed what the team had been thinking for a long time: 'Why hasn't this already been done?!' This support, combined with the dire state of access to justice, spurred us to continue putting one foot in front of the other. Step by step we built the team, developed the partnerships, raised the funds, and created the product needed to give Anika the go it deserved.


This pilot showed that with hard work and staying true to our vision of a world where everyone can access justice, Anika absolutely can work. More than that, it has the potential to work on the bold scale we initially envisaged. This pilot has given the team relief that the idea is viable, and a whole lot of excitement as to the positive impact it can have.

Noel Lim


Noel Lim
Co-founder & Chief Executive Officer




Anika co-founders and the Moonee Valley Legal Service team




Feb 2018
Winners of Melbourne Global Legal Hackathon




April 2018
Runners-up of World Global Legal Hackathon




Oct 2018
Receives government funding for a pilot program with Moonee Valley Legal Service




Feb 2019
Online platform is developed and testing begins



July 2019
Anika is launched in partnership with Moonee Valley Legal Service



Feb 2020
Anika partners with Tenants Victoria



March 2020
Anika services its 50th client

THE UNMET LEGAL NEED

490,000

Australians don't get the legal help they need each year

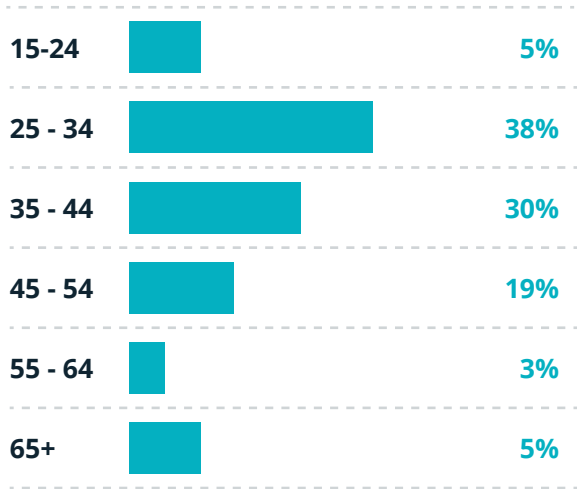
1.26m

Renters in Victoria

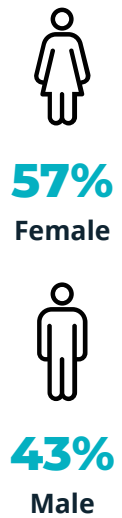
Victorians with an assessable income of \$360/week or less qualify for free legal aid.

THE CLIENT

Age



Gender



Lives in Melbourne's Northern Suburbs

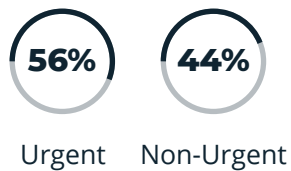
Average income of \$757 per week

Where do they live?

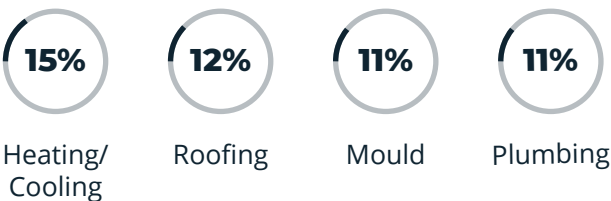


Repairs

Urgent vs Non-urgent



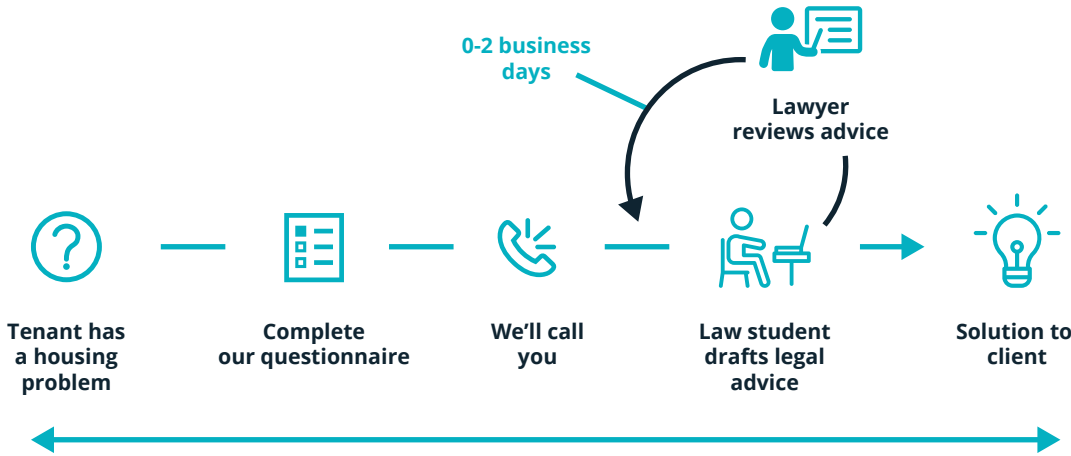
Most Common Repairs



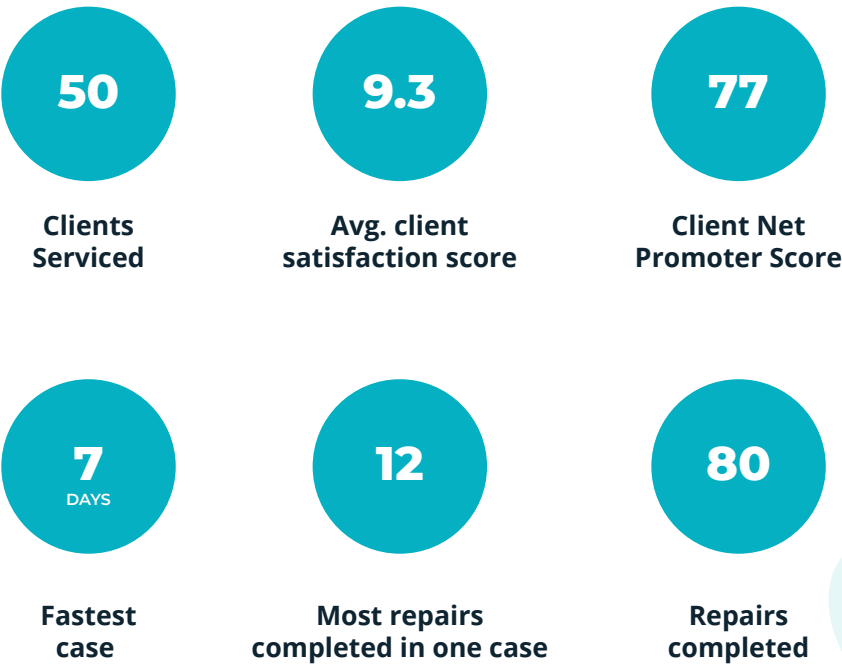
OUR SERVICE

What is success?

Renters deserve to live in a safe and secure home without having to go through a hellish legal experience. Anika succeeds every time we assist a client to get their home repaired through a positive legal experience. This achieves a community impact of providing access to justice and engendering trust in the legal system.



OUR STATS



OUR VALUES

Anika values integrity, compassion, curiosity, and courage. They are the reason we started Anika, what's brought us here, and how we'll continue working towards our vision.

Here's how we lived our values in this pilot.

Integrity - 30 referrals

A number of clients approached Anika with legal problems which were beyond our scope. Anika's vision is a world where everyone can access justice. That's why we made sure all people who contacted us were correctly referred to the legal help they needed.

Compassion - 67% of clients indicated that the thing they loved about Anika was the 'human element.'

It's easy for things to lose their sense of humanity when they're digitised. At Anika, we understand that our clients are often going through stressful, frustrating, and downright terrifying times. That's why we understand the importance of listening to our clients' stories and providing reassurance as part of the Anika service. This proves that the human element doesn't have to be lost even without the face to face interaction.

Curiosity - 52 updates to our legal materials.

The materials worked fine from the start, but we're always curious about how we can provide clients with the best possible experience. That's why we never stopped asking for feedback, user testing, and improving the service.

Courage - 10 clients negotiated with the landlords and got their homes repaired independently.

Once we advised them of their legal rights, these renters were empowered enough to stand up to their landlords and enforce their rights. At Anika, this is the best outcome we could hope for. Our legal advice is so user-friendly that it gives our clients the confidence to self-advocate and get justice themselves.

CLIENT CASE STUDY

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.

When Louise's young family moved in, they faced a leaking roof, broken oven and stove, exposed wiring and windows sealed shut. "After months of trying to get any action from the landlord, I broke down, burst into tears" Louise explains.

"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 had moved into the property in early June, assured by her agent that a new oven and dishwasher would be installed to replace the failing and dangerous appliances at the property. However, upon moving in, Louise was met with excuses, and found an increasing number of problems with the property. A Consumer Affairs Inspection found 12 urgent and non-urgent repairs.

"We'd tried following the advice from Consumer Affairs but nothing made the landlord budge! The landlords were lawyers themselves, so I was nervous about challenging them in case they knew some loophole. When they appeared at the property unannounced and started yelling at me - that's when I really started to lose sleep."

Anika aims to serve clients in situations like this. For Louise:

"[Anika] was exactly the service I needed - I couldn't have asked for anything better. I was so used to everyone else that I'd dealt with letting me down - agents, landlords, even law firms. Sam (the Anika law student) was just that one solid person I could completely count on when I needed him. The empathy that everyone at Anika showed for our situation was amazing, and with Sam taking over, everything just became so much easier for me."

We empower clients like Louise. Anika works to provide an effective legal solution and a human-centred approach:

"I desperately didn't want to go [to VCAT], part of me just wanted it all to go away, I couldn't deal with it. My trust had been shattered." "But I spoke to Sam the day before and he calmed me down and gave me the confidence to go to VCAT. I knew I wouldn't be able to rest until it was done, and with the baby coming I just needed these repairs sorted."

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.

"I felt like this really sad person that I wasn't. All these issues had just felt like a massive weighted blanket. It had just gone on for so long without any end in sight. To get the repairs completed, and within such a short timeframe - I just started to feel like me again."



What clients loved about Anika

Compassionate, personalised assistance - Our clients remark over and over that having someone there to explain, listen, and reassure them was the most valuable part of Anika.

Easy to access and understand - Many of our clients wouldn't have been able to improve their situation without legal advice they could easily understand, and obtain without having to travel to a legal centre.

Speed - Urgent repairs are...urgent. That's why we set ourselves the goal of a one business day turnaround for legal advice. We know that speed is an important part of an excellent solution.

STUDENT CASE STUDY

Sam, 23 - Law Student (Monash University)

I began working with Anika in November 2019 as a law student with no volunteer experience. While most universities strive to ensure students are prepared for the corporate sphere, I had always felt a bit jaded with the industry but lacked access to experience in the non-for-profit sector. ***One community legal centre replied to an application I had sent out 15 months later, long after I had given up hearing back, simply because of the massive number of students seeking alternate pathways.***

To be quite honest, Anika has completely altered my understanding of what it means to be a lawyer. From day one, law students are told to embrace the cut-throat nature of the degree. While many people flourish in such an environment, it alienates a large proportion of my cohort. This is the value of Anika - we demonstrate the power of compassion and provide unique, rewarding and practical experience to students who desperately need alternative options to standard scanning, filing and printing tasks of many student volunteers and paralegals.

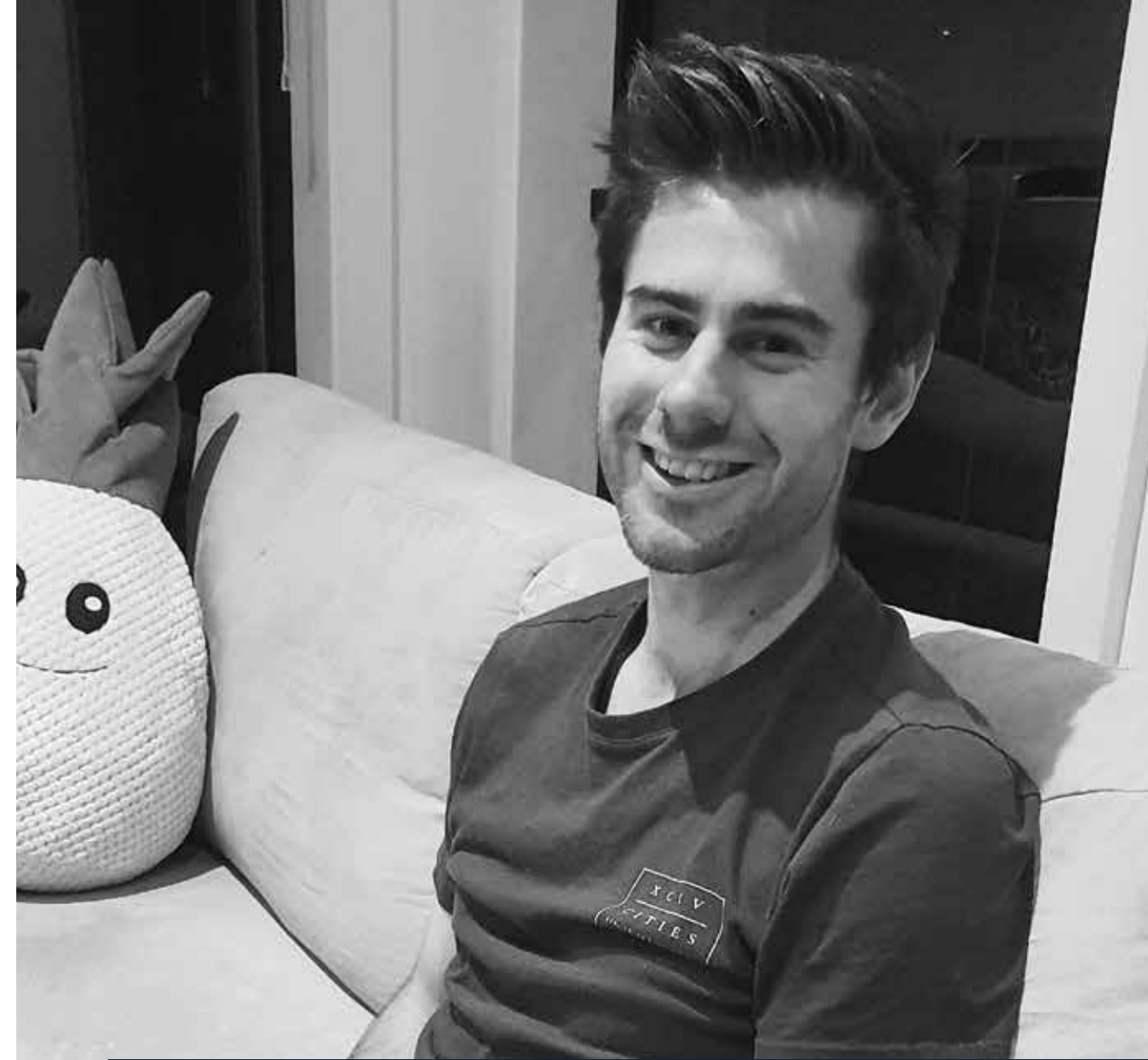
Anika is revolutionising the way law students gain access to practical legal training - providing experience in our chosen field, broadening our horizons and assisting vulnerable members of our community at the same time. Every client I have assisted has taken the time to express their gratitude and tell me how valuable they have found our service. Many of them have said if they hadn't found Anika they would have stuck out the duration of their tenancy agreement in a property which oftentimes required urgent repairs just to be liveable.

One of my earliest clients demonstrated to me just how important the work we do at Anika is. Louise had recently moved into a rental with her partner and toddler, and was expecting her second child when she contacted Anika. It was heartbreaking to hear the frustration in her voice as she explained the plethora of repairs that her property required. Despite being assured that the faulty oven would be replaced before signing the lease, Louise and her partner were still without a way to cook for their family 9 months after moving into the property.

The support myself and the Anika team provided to Louise ultimately gave her the courage and legal backing to challenge her landlords - and WIN!

Seeing how our assistance empowered Louise during what she told me was one of the most stressful periods of her life, emphasised to me the ***unique and powerful social justice organisation Anika is poised to become.*** Interestingly, I also felt the need to thank Louise for letting me work with her. No paid legal work scanning documents or researching precedent has ever given me such valuable experience as taking Louise's case - working with a supervising lawyer to draft her advice and liaise with her landlords and agents.

My experience thus far with Anika has provided me with such a great insight into the industry, and motivated and excited me to complete my degree in a way in which no textbook based subject at university has in the last 4 years.



What students loved about Anika

Meaningful Work - Law students learn the skills they need to be a good lawyer, period. Taking cases with Anika means talking to clients, drafting legal advice, and negotiating with the other side. Not filing or getting coffees for the team.

Flexibility - Getting legal experience can be time-consuming. Several days a week of travelling to legal offices doesn't leave much time for studying, let alone part-time work. The ability to gain real-world experience remotely with a manageable caseload makes it an experience that works with students' busy schedules.

Improving Access to Justice - Each case a student takes means one more renter in a safe and secure home. Students are an integral part of the impact Anika has. They love the rewarding feeling of making a difference.

This project was delivered via
partnership with Moonee Valley
Legal Service



This project was made possible by
the Victorian Government through
Pick My Project.

