

Circle Green Community Legal

A Road Map for Social Return on Investment (SROI) Evaluation of the Protection Visa and Appeals Service Model

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GLOSSARY

Terminology

Attribution	The extent to which the outcomes observed can be credited to the intervention being evaluated, rather than to the actions of other organisations, services, policies or external factors.
Deadweight	the proportion of an outcome that would have occurred anyway, regardless of the intervention.
Dropoff	The reduction in the level or value of an outcome over time.
Materiality	the degree to which outcomes, impacts and information are significant enough to be included in an analysis because they could reasonably influence the decisions of stakeholders.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAT	Administrative Appeals Tribunal
ART	Administrative Review Tribunal
ART	Administrative Review Tribunal
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DoJ	Department of Justice
FCFCOA	Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PV	Protection Visa
SCALES	Southern Communities Advocacy Legal and Education Service Inc.
SROI	Social Return on Investment
SVI	Social Value International

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Access to timely, fair and effective legal support is fundamental to the integrity of Australia's migration and protection systems. For individuals seeking protection, the appeals process is often complex, prolonged and emotionally taxing, with outcomes that carry profound consequences for safety, wellbeing and long-term settlement. Within this context, community legal services play a critical role in upholding procedural fairness, supporting vulnerable people to navigate legal processes, and contributing to more efficient and just system outcomes.

Circle Green Community Legal's Protection Visa and Appeals Service has provided specialist legal assistance to people seeking review of adverse protection visa decisions. The service intersects humanitarian need, legal complexity and public administration, and its impacts extend well beyond individual case outcomes. These include impacts on client wellbeing, demand on government systems, tribunal efficiency, downstream service use, and broader social and economic participation.

This report sets out a proposed framework for undertaking a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of the impact of Circle Green's Protection Visa and Appeals Service. The purpose of the proposed SROI is not only to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the service model, but also to better understand the value created by this service – and costs avoided, across the wider protection visa appeals ecosystem in Western Australia. This includes key government departments, review bodies, courts, detention and compliance systems, health and social services, and other legal assistance providers.

Importantly, the proposed approach applies a systems-thinking lens. Rather than examining Circle Green's service in isolation, the analysis seeks to explore how legal assistance at the appeals stage influences system flows, decision quality, timeliness, resource allocation, and reduction in persistent case backlog, across multiple actors. By identifying where value is generated, shifted or lost across the system, the SROI aims to highlight opportunities for improved coordination, cost savings, and more effective use of resources.

This 'road map' for an SROI analysis is intended to guide the design of a robust, credible and proportionate analysis that centres key stakeholders, while also responding to the information needs of funding bodies, policymakers and service partners. Ultimately, the proposed SROI is envisaged to be a tool for learning and improvement – supporting Circle Green Community Legal to strengthen its service model, demonstrate its contribution to a more effective and efficient protection visa processing system, and inform evidence-based reform across the broader ecosystem of protection visa and appeals administration.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 Purpose of an SROI analysis in assessing value and multi-stakeholder system efficiency

A Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis is used to understand how value is created, experienced and distributed across a system involving multiple stakeholders. Rather than focusing on the performance of individual programs or organisations in isolation, it provides a system-level assessment of whether resources, effort and funding are being used efficiently and effectively to deliver outcomes that matter most to impacted stakeholders.

In a multi-stakeholder context, SROI helps identify how costs, benefits and risks are shared across service providers, funders, government and communities. By examining the full-service pathway, the analysis highlights where duplication, delays, gaps or misaligned incentives reduce overall system effectiveness and dilute social value. This enables a clearer understanding of where value is generated, where it is lost, and how system design influences outcomes.

SROI analysis also provides a robust evidence base to support strategic decision-making, funding and commissioning choices, and policy or service redesign. By identifying high-leverage interventions, unintended negative outcomes, and areas of avoidable cost or inefficiency, the process supports targeted system improvements that can increase social value without proportionate increases in investment. In particular, the proposed SROI also seeks to inform broader system reform discussions by highlighting opportunities for improved coordination, efficiency and value creation across the protection visa appeals ecosystem.

1.2 Scope of the Proposed SROI

The proposed SROI will focus on the Protection Visa and Appeals Service as the primary intervention, while explicitly recognising that outcomes are co-produced within a complex, multi-actor system.

Service Scope

The SROI will examine the activities and outcomes associated with Circle Green's Protection Visa Appeals Service, including but not limited to:

- Legal advice, representation and case preparation for protection visa applicants at the merits review, judicial review and related appeal stages.
- Client support and referral pathways linked to the appeals process.
- Engagement with review bodies, courts and other decision-makers.

- Collaboration with other legal assistance providers and community services.

The scope will consider the service model as it operates in practice, including eligibility criteria, resourcing, delivery methods and constraints.

Stakeholder Scope

Consistent with SROI principles, the proposed analysis will prioritise material stakeholders. A stakeholder is considered material if their inclusion is necessary to accurately represent the scale, distribution or nature of impacts arising from the activity being evaluated.

In an SROI context, material stakeholders are those who experience meaningful change as a result of the service, contribute critical resources or capabilities, or bear costs or benefits that influence assessments of effectiveness, efficiency or value for money. Excluding a material stakeholder would risk overstating, understating or misrepresenting the social value generated.

Stakeholder groups identified during an initial SROI scoping phase are outlined below. These stakeholders should be considered in defining the scope of the analysis, based on the extent to which they influence, contribute to, or are expected to be impacted by Circle Green's Protection Visa and Appeals Service and its associated processes.

Final stakeholder inclusion will be determined through a materiality assessment during the SROI mapping phase, in consultation with the Circle Green Protection Visa and Appeals team. Sample criteria that may be used for identifying material stakeholders is attached as Appendix A.

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS
Protection Visa Applicants and their Families Circle Green service users Circle Green clients PV applicants – legally represented PV applicants – self-represented
Circle Green Community Legal PV and Appeals legal team PV and Appeals non-legal ancillary staff Intake, administrative and support staff Management and Human Resources Volunteer/ Pro-bono contributors
Government departments and agencies responsible for migration and protection visa processing. Department of Home Affairs (DHA) Department of Justice (DoJ)
Merits review bodies, courts and tribunals Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA)
Private Legal Service Providers Lawyers, Barristers and Solicitors working with immigration matters
Community and NGO Legal assistance and advocacy organisations operating within the protection visa system. Law Council of WA Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) Legal Aid Law Access SCALES
Community/NGO Social Service Providers/Referral Agencies
Health, mental health and social support services affected by client outcomes and system pathways.

Table 1. Stakeholder engagement coverage

1.3 System Boundaries and Analytical Lens

The proposed SROI adopts a systems-thinking lens to define boundaries that extend beyond organisational performance alone.

Rather than focusing solely on direct service outputs or client outcomes, the analysis will explore how Circle Green's Protection Visa and Appeals Service influences:

- System flows and process efficiency across the application and appeals pathway.
- Demand pressures on government, tribunal and court resources.
- Duplication or re-work resulting from incomplete, low quality, delayed or unsupported appeals.

- Longer-term social and economic participation outcomes for individuals and families

This approach recognises that legal assistance can generate value at multiple points across the system, including value that is not always visible within organisational reporting frameworks. Therefore, the analysis will help to identify where costs associated with resource allocation across the system and its stakeholders can be avoided, as an outcome of the protection visa and appeals service.

1.4 Temporal and Geographic Scope

The proposed SROI will define a clear time frame over which outcomes are expected to occur, balancing analytical rigour with data availability and feasibility. This may include:

- Short-term outcomes related to appeal processes workflow, effective service provision, and service use – such as client understanding, application quality, confidence and decision-making capability, reduced re-working.
- Medium-term outcomes associated with system improvement such as information flow across stakeholders, collaboration, service accessibility, stability and sustainability, client wellbeing and reduced uncertainty, and service awareness.
- Longer-term impacts at the system-level where evidence and assumptions are robust – such as reduction in case backlog and processing delays, improved system integrity, equity of access, system efficiency and cost effectiveness.

The timeframes associated with short-, medium- and long-term outcomes expected will be defined through consultation with stakeholders. However, it is widely accepted that for most organisations, long term impacts should be able to be observed in an approximate timeframe of 3 years from strategic implementation (Hubbard et al., 2019).

Geographically, the analysis will focus on the jurisdictions in which Circle Green Community Legal delivers its Protection Visa and Appeals Service in Western Australia while acknowledging interactions with systems and decision-makers operating at the Commonwealth level.

1.5 Exclusions and Limitations

The proposed SROI will not attempt to attribute all outcomes within the protection visa and appeals system to Circle Green Community Legal. The analysis will explicitly account for counterfactuals – the contribution of multiple stakeholders,

attribution, deadweight and displacement in line with SROI methodology (Nicholls, et al., 2012).

Certain impacts may be excluded where:

- Outcomes cannot be reasonably evidenced or valued.
- Data collection would be disproportionate to the intended use of the SROI.
- Impacts fall outside the agreed system boundaries.

These exclusions will be documented transparently as part of the SROI design.

2. METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

2.1 Overview of the Approach

The evaluation will apply a forecast Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology, aligned with Social Value International's [Principles of Social Value](#) and adapted to the complexity of the multi-actor protection visa appeals context.

The 8 Principles of Social Value are an internationally recognised set of principles drawn from foundational principles of evaluation practice, cost-benefit analysis, financial accounting, social accounting and audit, and sustainability reporting (Social Value International, 2012).

PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL VALUE

- 1: Involve all stakeholders**
- 2: Understand what changes**
- 3: Value the things that matter**
- 4: Only include what is material**
- 5: Do not overclaim**
- 6: Be transparent**
- 7: Verify the result**
- 8: Be responsive**

2.2 Type of SROI and Analytical Orientation

A forecast SROI is the most suitable approach where consistent historical or baseline data may not be available across a multi-stakeholder system. Rather than an evaluative SROI, which relies on retrospective outcome data, this approach models expected outcomes based on current system conditions, stakeholder evidence, comparable benchmarks and best-available data.

This approach is particularly appropriate in complex systems where:

- Multiple agencies and providers hold fragmented or non-comparable data
- Outcomes occur across long or non-linear pathways
- Value and costs are realised by different stakeholders at different points in time
- The system itself is undergoing reform or redesign

A forecast SROI will enable stakeholders and government funders to assess potential value for money and identify touch points where system modification, redesign could reduce future resource demand and downstream costs.

The process of undertaking a forecast SROI will provide the foundational framework for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the protection visa and appeals service.

2.3 Key Stages of the SROI Process

1. Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders
2. Mapping outcomes
3. Evidencing outcomes
4. Establishing outcome value
5. Calculating the SROI
6. Interpretation of results – reporting, using and embedding

These stages will be discussed in further detail in Sections 4 and 5 as they pertain to the proposed analysis.

2.4 Systems Thinking and Ecosystem Analysis

The methodology will explicitly map system interactions, feedback loops, bottlenecks and points across the protection visa appeals ecosystem where efficiency could be improved, with a focus on contribution, system efficiency and cost avoidance.

A systems-thinking approach is required to evaluate the effectiveness of Circle Green Community Legal's Protection Visa Service model because the outcomes it seeks to influence are produced not by a single service, but by a complex, interconnected system of processes and actors, many of which sit outside Circle Green's direct sphere of influence.

Why a systems-thinking approach is required

Outcomes are system-dependent, not service-dependent

Protection visa outcomes are shaped by the interaction of multiple elements, including funding stability, immigration law, departmental decision-making, tribunal processes, judicial review pathways, legal representation, evidence quality, language access and applicant vulnerability. The effectiveness of Circle Green's service model is therefore highly contingent on how these components function together. A systems approach recognises that no single intervention can be assessed in isolation without misrepresenting its true impact.

Costs and benefits accrue across multiple government actors

In the protection visa system, costs are often incurred in one part of government while benefits are realised in another. For example, early access to high-quality legal assistance may increase upfront service costs but reduce downstream expenditure associated with appeals, and judicial review. Systems thinking makes these cross-agency cost and value flows visible, supporting more informed funding and policy decisions.

Inefficiencies emerge from interactions, not individual failures

Backlogs, delays and escalating caseloads are rarely the result of a single point of failure. They typically arise from feedback loops, bottlenecks and misaligned incentives across the system – for example, inconsistent decision-making, late legal intervention, poor information flow, or applicants self-representing due to access barriers. A systems lens allows these structural drivers of inefficiency to be identified and addressed, rather than attributing problems to individual stakeholders.

Vulnerable cohorts amplify system risk and demand

Circle Green's clients often experience intersecting vulnerabilities such as language barriers, trauma, disability, financial stress or family violence. Without timely and coordinated legal support, these vulnerabilities can increase system demand, leading to incomplete claims, higher refusal rates and repeated engagement with costly parts of the system. Systems thinking recognises legal assistance as a preventative and demand-management intervention, rather than a standalone service.

System performance determines value for money

Assessing value for money in this context requires understanding how the service model influences system flow, decision quality and escalation rates, not just case volumes or unit costs. A systems approach enables government stakeholders to assess whether investment in the service contributes to improved efficiency, reduced rework and better allocation of public resources across the protection visa ecosystem.

Sustainable improvement requires coordinated change

Meaningful and lasting improvements to the protection visa system depend on coordinated action across policy, funding, service delivery and governance settings. Systems thinking provides a shared framework for government departments, tribunals and legal service providers to engage around common outcomes and identify high-leverage points for reform.

2.5 Ethical, Data and Governance Considerations

The evaluation will be conducted using trauma-informed, culturally safe data collection practices, particularly as it pertains to current and/or past service users. Methods of collection of qualitative and quantitative data from clients/service users may require ethics review prior to engaging with the stakeholder cohort.

All stakeholder engagement will involve clear communication regarding the purpose of the SROI evaluation and how the data will be stored and used and individual data obtained through surveys, focus groups and/or interviews will be de-identified.

2.6 Verification and Use of Findings

Findings of the SROI evaluation will be transparently documented and suitable for independent review, supporting service improvement, funding discussions and policy engagement.

By explicitly articulating a Theory of Change and testing underlying assumptions with evidence, this SROI analysis will enable verification of causal links between inputs, activities, outcomes and longer-term impacts of the service. This strengthens confidence that observed outcomes are attributable to the intervention and supports assurance that funds are being used as intended.

The SROI methodology supports verification of cost effectiveness by systematically assessing costs alongside outcomes experienced by multiple stakeholders. Through consistent valuation and the application of counterfactuals (including deadweight, attribution and displacement), funding bodies and operational leaders can distinguish genuine value creation from outcomes that would have occurred in the absence of funding. This enables comparison across resourced initiatives and identification of which program components generate the greatest social and economic return (or reduce it!) relative to investment.

Findings from an SROI analysis can be used to inform improvements to program design and delivery and in advocacy for policy change. By identifying which activities contribute most strongly to desired outcomes, appropriate recommendations can be made to refine service models, adjust processes, and reduce duplication or inefficiencies across the broader service system. This evidence supports adaptive management and ensures resources are directed toward activities that optimise effectiveness without unnecessary additional expenditure.

3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

3.1 Stakeholder Identification and Prioritisation

Stakeholders will be identified through a structured mapping process, prioritising those expected to experience material change. Key stakeholders should be involved in every stage of the SROI process, and will include:

- Circle Green's Protection Visa and Appeals legal service team – including lawyers, social workers, and administrative staff involved in service delivery
- Other service providers – including partner organisations, legal service providers and referral agencies

- Government funders and departments
- Decision-making bodies and system actors
- Service users/clients (direct and indirect beneficiaries)

3.2 Engagement and Data Collection Methods

Data sources will include service data, de-identified client outcomes, stakeholder feedback, government cost data and relevant research. All data provided for the Forecast SROI will be treated as system-level evidence and used in aggregate form only.

Stakeholder engagement and data collection methods may include interviews, focus groups, surveys, workshops and review of administrative data, undertaken in a trauma-informed and culturally safe manner.

Where data maturity varies across stakeholders, conservative assumptions and proxy measures will be applied and tested through sensitivity analysis. The approach is designed to support transparency, minimise data burden and provide a sound basis for identifying priority areas for system improvement and cost avoidance.

The ability to obtain quality stakeholder data from government departments and decision-making bodies will need to be facilitated through early strategic and supported engagement with key stakeholders such as the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) for example, to foster a clear understanding of the aims of Circle Green's Protection Visa and Appeals Service Model, the purpose and benefit of undertaking the SROI analysis, and to encourage organisational data collection practices required to develop a robust Monitoring and Evaluation Framework across the onshore Protection Visa and Appeals ecosystem.

Sector benchmarks and secondary data sources will be utilised to strengthen assumptions where the ability to access primary data is limited – for example clients/service users and their families, particularly those whose protection visa appeals have been unsuccessful. Peak bodies and advocacy groups are likely to be able to provide insights to complement available primary data.

4. THEORY OF CHANGE AND THE SOCIAL VALUE MAP

A Theory of Change (Weiss, 1995) provides a structured way of setting out how and why a program or intervention is expected to create change. It clarifies the problem being addressed, who the intervention is intended to benefit, the outcomes sought, and the conditions that must be in place for those outcomes to occur. By making assumptions and causal pathways explicit, a theory of change explains not only *what* a program does, but *why* it is expected to be effective.

A Theory of Change is usually developed during program design and is informed by evidence, practitioner knowledge and underlying assumptions about behaviour and change. Unlike a program logic model, which typically presents a linear sequence of activities and outputs, a theory of change has explanatory depth, articulating the mechanisms through which activities are expected to lead to outcomes.

Developing a theory of change strengthens program rationale and supports more effective delivery, funding justification and communication with stakeholders. It is particularly valuable in SROI analysis, as it provides a clear framework for testing assumptions, examining whether intended pathways are working as expected, and identifying where change is occurring or breaking down. This enables evidence to be gathered and assessed in a purposeful and systematic way.

A well-developed Theory of Change typically defines the context and long-term goals, sets clear boundaries around what the program can and cannot influence, explores potential solutions and enabling conditions, and explicitly documents key assumptions. Importantly, the process of developing a theory of change can also engage program staff and intended beneficiaries, helping to surface tacit knowledge, build shared understanding, and improve the likelihood that the program will achieve its intended outcomes.

Circle Green has developed a Protection Visa and Appeals Logic Model, attached as Appendix C, from which a revised Theory of Change can be developed in consultation with key stakeholders. This Theory of Change will inform the development of an SROI Value Map, which will articulate the *monetary value* of the inputs contributed by each key stakeholder group, what is being done to address the problem, and what change is expected to occur through the activities carried out in relation to the Protection Visa and Appeals Service.

STAKEHOLDERS	INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		IMPACT
Who is impacted by, or influences the activities of the PV & Appeals Service?	What is the monetary value of the resources contributed by stakeholders?	What activities are carried out?	What is the quantitative summary of the activities?	What changes are expected to occur for <i>each stakeholder group</i> as a result of the Protection Visa and Appeals Service, in the short and medium term?		What is long term change expected to occur as a result of the Protection Visa and Appeals Service?
				SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	

Fig. 1. Elements of an SROI Value Map for the Protection Visa and Appeals Service

4.1 Stakeholders

Key stakeholders for the proposed analysis are those from the identified groups in Table 1. who are considered to have a highly significant level of influence on Circle Green's Protection Visa and Appeals Service activities, and those who are expected to be most significantly impacted or experience the most significant change from the service outputs.

The Administrative Review Tribunal (ART), Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and PV clients/service users are examples of key stakeholders who should be prioritised in early stakeholder engagement to clearly communicate the purpose of the analysis, and to involve them in the process, which will help to ensure timeliness and sound data quality, and enable strategies to be implemented in advance to address any potential challenges associated with obtaining quantitative and qualitative data.

It is important to remember that stakeholders are on the SROI journey together and the evaluation is about '*starting where you are*' with an emphasis on collaboration and learning around shared goals.

4.2 Inputs

The inputs for an SROI analysis are the monetary value of each stakeholder's contribution to the activities of the service. This may include direct funding, the value of allocated resources, and/or time. For example, the 'inputs' for Circle Green Community Legal include the monetary value of human resources invested in the service to provide legal expertise, administrative and systems support, and project management in addition to costs of team training and education, systems infrastructure and technology, organisational infrastructure and partnerships as well as the time of volunteers.

A crucial first step will be to ascertain the availability of external stakeholder input data required for the SROI analysis, and the levels of data maturity across key

organisations and government departments. An example of the types of questions asked to obtain insight into the level of data maturity and availability from key stakeholders is attached as Appendix B.

The information obtained from key stakeholders through this process will provide a snapshot of the level of data that can be utilised and assist organisations to improve data collection methods where necessary that can enable them to better understand how their resources are directed and monitor operational outcomes.

4.3 Activities

The Protection Visa and Appeals Service produces a coordinated set of activities across service delivery, system design, capacity building and collaboration, aimed at improving outcomes for clients while strengthening system efficiency.

Service design, systems and continuous improvement

The service designs and maintains a holistic, trauma-informed model of service, supported by clear operational processes and data-driven decision-making. This includes time recording, defined referral pathways, alternative delivery models (such as overflow and outreach services), and ongoing monitoring and evaluation to support continuous improvement and system learning.

Delivery of legal services to clients

Core legal service activities include client intake, provision of legal advice (including urgent advice), merits assessments and legal representation in protection visa and appeals matters. The service also provides resources and referrals, undertakes outreach to improve access, and collects client feedback through surveys to inform service quality and effectiveness.

Building sector and client capability

The service contributes to broader system capacity through targeted professional development, training and educational initiatives. This includes the development of self-help resources for clients, legal and educational resources for the sector, and delivery of Community Legal Education (CLE) programs to strengthen understanding and capability across stakeholders.

Collaboration, coordination and advocacy

The service actively facilitates collaboration through partnerships with legal and non-legal organisations, cross-sector coordination and data sharing, and participation in network groups. It also undertakes systemic advocacy, including

the development of position papers and law reform submissions (such as through SCALES), to address structural issues within the protection visa system.

4.4 Expected Outcomes to be Evaluated

Outcomes of the analysis will tell the story of what change is experienced by the key stakeholders as a result of the Protection Visa and Appeals Service in the short and medium term, as well as the long-term impacts. The outcomes expected to result from the PV and Appeals Service are highlighted in the Circle Green Program Logic (Appendix C) however these broad outcome areas will become further refined for SROI analysis through the stakeholder engagement process and appropriate indicators developed to provide an accurate measurement tool for each outcome. Other unexpected outcomes may become evident that, if material, should also be included in the analysis.

SHORT – MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES		
PV Applicants and Families	Government Departments/Agencies Justice System – Review bodies, courts, tribunals	Circle Green Project Team
Improved access to timely, trauma-informed PV legal assistance	Improved quality of evidence submitted to decision-making bodies	Improved understanding of costs & resources required for service sustainability
Improved access to information and resources to navigate PV pathway	Reduction in the time and resources required for resolution of PV matters	Improved processes & data systems to support a cost efficient & effective service
Improved understanding of law, rights & responsibilities to support informed decision-making	Improved fairness, equity & efficiency in case management	Improved data-driven decision-making to support continuous learning & improvement and improved service delivery
Increased confidence & knowledge to make informed decisions relating to visa application and appeals	Strengthened partnerships & relationships across the PV and Appeals ecosystem	Enhanced knowledge, skills & capacity in immigration law & case management
Increased access to support for associated wellbeing needs	Improved understanding of the service and how resources and funds are allocated and the requirements for a sustainable PV legal service	Strengthened engagement & collaboration across sector
	Decision-makers are better informed through increased information sharing.	
	Enhanced knowledge, skills & capacity across the WA legal sector & service providers	

Table 2. Summary of high level short- to medium-term outcomes of the PV and Appeals Service to be captured in the evaluation

LONG TERM IMPACTS		
PV Applicants and Families	Government Departments/Agencies Justice System – Review bodies, courts, tribunals	Circle Green Project Team
<p>Development of knowledge & skills for self-advocacy</p> <p>Greater confidence to seek legal (& non-legal) support independently</p> <p>Improved ability to make informed decisions in relation to PV applications and appeals</p> <p>Improved access to timely, best practice PV legal services</p> <p>Reduced need for long-term social support and services</p> <p>Improved overall wellbeing /mitigation of prolonged negative wellbeing impacts</p>	<p>Reduction in the backlog of PV matters</p> <p>Improved process and workflow efficiency across the PV and Appeals system</p> <p>Improved fairness, equity and responsiveness across PV and Appeals system</p> <p>Strengthened partnerships, communication & relationships across PV and Appeals system actors</p> <p>Improved knowledge and understanding of the value of the PV and Appeals legal service and the resource requirements for a sustainable PV legal service</p>	<p>Improved resource allocation, management, and efficiency to demonstrate innovation</p> <p>Improved funding security, service and workforce sustainability & scalability of service</p> <p>Improved use of data to inform decision-making and support continuous learning & improvement</p> <p>Recognised leadership and best practice in responsive PV legal service delivery</p>

Table 3. Summary of high-level long-term impacts of the PV and Appeals Service to be captured in the evaluation

5. APPROACH TO EVIDENCING AND VALUING OUTCOMES

Outcomes are identified through engagement with key stakeholders across the system, including applicants, funders, legal service providers, advocates and relevant agencies, to ensure that the analysis captures changes that are material to both individuals and the functioning of the system.

Evidence is gathered using a combination of administrative and service-level data, such as case progression records, decision outcomes, appeal rates, time to resolution, withdrawal or remittal rates, and indicators of procedural efficiency. Quantitative data is complemented by qualitative evidence from interviews, surveys, focus groups and practitioner insights to capture outcomes that are not

fully reflected in system metrics, such as improved case preparedness, reduced procedural errors, practitioner capability, workplace-related caseload impacts or increased applicant understanding and engagement with the process.

Suitable indicators will be developed as part of the evaluation process to measure outcomes. Where direct measurement of outcomes is constrained by data limitations or confidentiality requirements, the analysis applies carefully selected proxy indicators drawn from comparable legal, tribunal or migration datasets. All proxies and assumptions are clearly documented and grounded in credible sources to ensure transparency and defensibility.

To avoid overstating impact, the SROI explicitly assesses the extent to which observed outcomes can be attributed to the intervention rather than to external factors such as policy changes, tribunal practices or parallel supports. This includes applying adjustments for deadweight, attribution, displacement and drop-off, informed by stakeholder evidence, comparative case data and expert judgement. Particular attention is given to system-level dynamics, recognising that improvements at one stage of the migration process may generate downstream efficiencies or cost avoidance across other parts of the system.

Throughout the analysis, evidence is triangulated across multiple sources to strengthen confidence in findings, and limitations related to data availability, case complexity and policy volatility are clearly acknowledged. This ensures that the SROI provides a credible, proportionate and decision-useful evidence base to inform resource allocation, system reform and investment decisions within the Protection Visa and Appeals system.

6. RISKS, ASSUMPTIONS AND SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Key risks include data limitations, and attribution challenges. Mitigation strategies to address these risks include conservative assumptions, triangulation and sensitivity testing.

Outcomes can be influenced by policy, legislation and system settings and resourcing beyond Circle Green's control. Therefore, in conducting the SROI analysis, there will be a set of underlying assumptions underpinning the forecast analysis which will include the following:

- The target community will be aware of and willing to access the services.
- Skilled staff will be recruited & retained.

- Accurate and comprehensive data will be available to monitor and evaluate impact.
- Partner organisations will actively participate in collaborative efforts.
- Legal & policy environment will be receptive to evidence provided.
- The backlog can be reduced with the funding provided.
- Advocacy efforts will influence policy change and/or funding allocations.

External factors/risks that may influence service outcomes for different stakeholders may include:

- Cessation or disruption of funding/resources or changes to funding priorities
- Delays or changes in the judicial process could further impact case resolution timelines
- Immigration Policy changes
- Significant political change within the Australian Government
- Security conditions (war/conflict/humanitarian crises/conflict zones could increase the number of applicants seeking protection)
- Geopolitical changes impacting Australia's international relations
- Media/culture/public perceptions influencing service uptake

7. PRESENTATION, USE AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

Once calculated, the SROI is presented as a *ratio* which represents the net present value of benefits, divided by the value of the inputs. This ratio can be described as the total value of impact created for every dollar invested in the service. The overall findings of a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of the Protection Visa and Appeals service will be presented as a document to provide a robust, evidence-based foundation for decision-making across government, legal services, funders and system partners. By quantifying social, economic and administrative value alongside costs, the SROI identifies where interventions deliver the greatest return relative to investment, enabling stakeholders to target resources to the stages of the process that most effectively reduce case backlogs, processing times and avoidable delays.

SROI findings can be used to prioritise funding and operational resources toward high-impact activities—such as early legal assistance, triage, case preparation and systemic coordination—that prevent escalation to later, more resource-intensive stages of the appeals process. This targeted allocation supports cost savings across the broader system by reducing duplication, inefficiencies and downstream pressures on courts, tribunals and government agencies.

At a policy level, SROI evidence provides a credible basis for advocating reform where structural or procedural barriers are shown to generate poor outcomes or unnecessary costs. Clear articulation of social and fiscal value strengthens the case for policy adjustments that improve efficiency, fairness and system sustainability.

Finally, SROI findings support funding stability by demonstrating the long-term value of sustained investment in effective service models. This enables funders and governments to move beyond short-term or crisis-driven funding toward strategic, multi-year investment that underpins successful intervention outcomes and contributes to a more efficient, resilient Protection Visa and Appeals system.

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APPENDIX A

SROI Materiality Decision Assessment – Circle Green Protection Visa and Appeals Service

Materiality Test Question	Decision Criteria	Application to Protection Visa & Appeals Stakeholders
Is the outcome significant to the stakeholder?	The outcome represents a meaningful change in the stakeholder's circumstances, rights, wellbeing, or costs.	Outcomes such as visa security, reduced risk of removal, improved safety, mental wellbeing, and access to lawful work are highly significant for protection visa applicants and therefore material.
Does the outcome relate directly to the service intervention?	There is a clear causal link between Circle Green's activities and the outcome experienced.	Legal advice, representation and advocacy are directly linked to appeal outcomes, procedural fairness, and reduced stress associated with navigating the protection visa system.
Would excluding this outcome distort understanding of value created?	Omission would materially misrepresent the scale, distribution or nature of social value generated.	Excluding outcomes such as avoided detention, reduced appeal backlogs, or improved system efficiency would understate the true value created for applicants and government stakeholders.
Is the outcome relevant to government decision-making?	The outcome informs assessments of effectiveness, efficiency, risk management or value for money.	Outcomes related to reduced caseloads, avoided downstream costs, and improved tribunal efficiency are material to Commonwealth agencies and policy makers.

Is the outcome experienced by a priority or affected stakeholder group?	The stakeholder group is directly affected by the intervention or bears costs or benefits.	Protection visa applicants, the Administrative Review Tribunal, and the Department of Home Affairs are primary stakeholders and their outcomes are therefore material.
Is the outcome measurable or credibly evidenced?	The outcome can be supported by qualitative evidence, administrative data, or reasonable proxies.	Case outcomes, processing times, service data, and stakeholder testimony provide sufficient evidence to include outcomes in the analysis.
Does the outcome occur at a scale that justifies inclusion?	The outcome affects a sufficient number of stakeholders or has high consequence even if experienced by fewer people.	Even where experienced by a smaller cohort, outcomes such as successful protection claims or avoided refoulement are high-consequence and therefore material.
Does the outcome align with the purpose and scope of the SROI?	Inclusion supports the stated objectives and system focus of the evaluation.	Outcomes relating to legal system efficiency, access to justice, and protection of human rights align directly with the SROI purpose and scope.

APPENDIX B

Data Required for the Social Return of Investment Impact Analysis

Please advise if this data is available for the financial years below, by simply stating 'Available' 'Not available,' 'Some available' or Other (for Other, please comment below).

Data Required	2023-2024	2024-2025
Total financial inputs of [REDACTED] into the protection caseload (\$)	Please select	Please select
Any in-kind or non-monetary inputs to the protection caseload and their approximate value	Please select	Please select
Total N of individual protection cases managed by [REDACTED]	Please select	Please select
Total N of FTE [REDACTED] with active protection caseloads	Please select	Please select
Substantive hearing time for protection matters (breakdown into represented vs. self-represented applicants)	Please select	Please select
Average N Hours spent on a protection case by [REDACTED] (if possible, by represented/non-represented subgroup)	Please select	Please select
Total N of FTE administrative staff managing the protection matters (enquires, intake and allocation etc)	Please select	Please select
Average N Hours spent on a protection case by administrative staff (if possible, by represented/non-represented subgroup)	Please select	Please select
Average backlog size (measure by N applicants/matters) per FTE [REDACTED]	Please select	Please select

Please also indicate if you are prepared to share this specific data with Circle Green under question 4 below for the purpose of this analysis, to help improve efficiency and cost effectiveness of the Protection Visa and Appeals process, for stakeholders.

1. If the data is available and [REDACTED] is prepared to share it with Circle Green, could you please provide an approximate date when this information might be available to share?
2. Are you aware if any public data is available on the backlog of protection matters at [REDACTED]?

APPENDIX C

Circle Green Protection Visa Project Evaluation Program Logic

Protection Visa Project Evaluation Framework

5.4. Program logic

A visual or diagram that maps your program's inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, and shows the causal links (the relationship between intervention and outcome), based on evidence of what works (Useful Planning Resource: [Community Impact Planner](#))

Inputs What resources are needed to conduct your activities?	Activities What tasks will you deliver to address the problem and achieve your outcome?	Outputs What are the tangible results you will produce through your activities?	Intermediate outcomes What are the short to intermediate changes expected of your intervention(s)? Usually at the learning/action level e.g., awareness → behaviour or practice change.	Long-term outcomes What is the long-term impact you hope to achieve? E.g., social
Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHA DoJ Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clients Department of Justice Law Access Law Council of WA Private lawyers Barristers Legal Aid WA SCALES ART FCFCA Community organisations Consultants Human Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experienced legal team & specialist legal practice CG Humanitarian stream Principal lawyer Project manager PV and Appeals legal team Social worker Data analyst Social Impact Advisor Procedures & protocols <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RMF, Legal Practice Management Guidelines Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft SharePoint Actionstep PowerBI Data analysis tools 	Design & Develop Model of Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistic, trauma-informed model Processes Data-driven Time recording Referral pathways Alternative service models (overflow, outreach) Monitoring & evaluation Deliver Legal Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intake, Legal advice, Urgent advice Merits assessments, Representation Resources Referrals, Outreach Client surveys Build sector capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted professional development Self-help resources for clients Legal & educational resources to sector Training & educational initiatives Community Legal Education (CLE program) Facilitate collaboration & advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships (legal & nonlegal) Cross-sector coordination & data sharing Network groups Position papers for law reform advocacy (SCALES) 	Service Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service model concept map Process documents Data reports Time Quality control Impact framework Impact reports Legal Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client demographic data # clients advised, represented # & type of referrals # & type of legal services Client survey results Waiting time Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development activities Resources developed Education & training sessions CLE delivered Client feedback surveys Stakeholder & Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder list Sector engagement Networking groups, events Position papers for law reform 	Circle Green <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Improved understanding of costs & resources needed for a sustainable PV legal service (including avoided costs) Improved processes & data systems to support an efficient & effective service model Increased data-driven decision-making to support continuous learning & improvement Enhanced knowledge, skills & capacity in immigration law & case management Strengthened engagement & collaboration across sector Client <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to timely, trauma-informed PV legal assistance Understanding of legal issues, rights & responsibilities to support informed decision-making Access to resources to navigate legal issues, increased support to address non-legal needs. Increased confidence & knowledge to make informed decisions. Justice System <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Improved fairness & efficiency in case management (1.1) Improved understanding of costs & resources needed for a sustainable PV legal service Improved quality of evidence submitted to decision-makers Decision-makers are more informed through increased information sharing Enhanced knowledge, skills & capacity across the WA legal sector & service providers. Established & strengthened partnerships & relationships across the legal & non legal sector 	Circle Green <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable, scalable, holistic & responsive PV legal service model Circle Green is recognised as a leader in protection visa legal service delivery Client <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Access to timely, best-practice PV legal services Clients are equipped with knowledge, skills & resources to self-advocate, make informed decisions, & seek legal (& non-legal) support independently Justice System <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced backlog in PV system, & a fairer, more efficient PV system, informed by evidence. PV legal service is sustainably resourced through long-term funding.