Melbourne Law School Clinics give students an opportunity to hone their skills while contributing to the work of Melbourne Law School’s community law partners.

In September 2021, Kate Fischer Doherty (Director, Melbourne Law School Clinics) and Dr Brad Jessup (Senior Lecturer and Co-ordinator, Sustainability Business Clinic) signed the Climate Justice Pledge. In so doing, Melbourne Law School Clinics (MLS Clinics) joined other student law clinics around the world in committing to raising awareness of climate change and supporting law students to contribute to climate justice. In November, MLS Clinics introduced a student life, co-curricular initiative and joined the 2021 Student Law Clinic Global Day of Action for Climate Justice.

The focus for the Global Day of Action in 2021 was plastics. Dr Jessup and his students tested the limits and possible reach of the new Victorian Environment Protection Act on behalf of what they termed Victoria’s ‘plastics communities’: people who live in Melbourne suburbs near sites of plastics manufacture, plastic waste storage and incineration.

Their report fills an information gap and includes a five-step guide to empower ‘plastics communities’ to use the law to demand that businesses dealing in plastics have the risk management measures in place to prevent environmental or health disasters.

"Our environmental justice project centred on the lives of people living in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Providing legal information, we increased their capabilities to participate in environmental governance that affects their lives. By giving students the lead in this project we also increased their skills to advocate for communities confronting environmental harm."

Kate Fischer Doherty, Director, Melbourne Law School Clinics