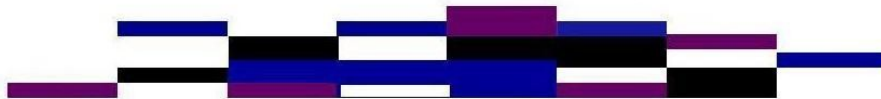


WEST HEIDELBERG
COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICE



2007/2008
ANNUAL REPORT





2007/08 ANNUAL REPORT

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B. President's Report

Working with the community for social justice is an ambitious motto to live by. The West Heidelberg Community Legal Service (WHCLS) strives to connect with the local people and address disadvantage and build a fairer, more equitable community.

Throughout the 2007/08 WHCLS has continued to address a number of issues; some individual, some collective and some structural. The team shows a great capacity to adapt to local needs, listen to the community and empower local people. This is done in a variety of formats and is often a task that has multiple layers and some lateral thinking. Over the past year the Board has acknowledged the many challenges Community Legal Centre's face, particularly those with outdated funding allocations. The West Heidelberg model is clearly strong, with formidable partnerships with La Trobe University and Banyule Community Health. The need to strengthen the relationships and face the challenges has led us to the need for a review and future plan for WHCLS. The review has a strong consultation and will analyze sector trends and also investigate opportunities for a more robust and reflective service to the needs of our local community. The continued existence of the CLC sector sits with the sector to reinvigorate itself to be relevant. I thank Cath Whelan for her work with the Board in building a vision for the future.

The past year has seen some turnover of staff and Board.

Ann Trott retired from the Board after many years of service. Ann has represented the community as a local Councilor, Community Health Board Member and Community Legal Centre Board Member. Ann's insight to the community was always accurate and will be sadly missed.

Victoria Smith leaves us after two years as Coordinator. Victoria was a key driver behind recent improvements and changes within the service. Her professional and personal manner has raised the bar within the service. Good luck in the new position.

Pat Williams' retirement after 26 years will change the face of the WHCLS. For so long we have been welcomed by Pat at reception or on the phone. Her knowledge, compassion and commitment will be missed. We thank her for her years of dedication and wish her luck in her retirement.

Liz Curran also moves on to a great new opportunity at World Vision. Liz has been an amazing asset for both the LaTrobe and WHCLS. Liz has been significant in WHCLS 'fighting above its weight' in the justice area. Her tenacious advocacy and passionate teaching has kept West Heidelberg on the map. Her work will help guide us in the future. Good luck to Liz.

The vacancies have also created a new energy at WHCLS, experienced old timers Gary Sullivan and Denis Nelthorpe are joined by a dynamic group of legal professionals. Peggy Kerdo (LaTrobe Uni Supervising Solicitor). Lee Bonney, Tina Kotsabas and Sally Goldner provide our legal reception and finance services. We look forward to the team coming together to deliver high quality services to the community in coming years, with the support of directions from the review and the students from LaTrobe University.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the Board for their commitment and foresight to take on the review. Also to LaTrobe University and Banyule Community Health who provide the backbone to a fruitful partnership. The leadership shown by the partner agencies acknowledge the complexity of justice issues and its connection to the health of the

community, as well as West Heidelberg being a remarkable learning environment for future lawyers .



Mick Geary

President, West Heidelberg Community Legal Service

C. Committee of Management

Committee Members 2007/08

President

Mick Geary (*Community Programs Manager, Banyule Community Health*)

Treasurer

Cameron Bragg (*Office Manager, Olympic Adult Education*)

BCH Representative

Jim Pasinis (*CEO, Banyule Community Health*)

La Trobe University Representative

Mary Anne Noone (*Senior Lecturer, La Trobe Law*)

Secretary

Cheryl Delalande (*Darebin Community Health*)

Outgoing Community Representative

Ann Trott (*Local Resident*)

Community Representative

Sister Frances Baum (*Local Resident*)

Community Representative

John Ryan (*ANEX*)

Staff Representative

Gary Sullivan (*Principal Solicitor*)

West Heidelberg Community Legal Service's Patron is The Hon John Cain, former Premier of Victoria

D. Staff 2007/08

Principal Solicitor

Gary Sullivan

Gary's main responsibilities include providing legal advice to clients or taking on their cases and representing them at court. In his role he must hold a current Solicitor's Practising Certificate; be responsible for managing the Legal Service's Trust Account and ensure Professional Indemnity and other appropriate standards and legal requirements are met by the Legal Service. Gary's other roles include being the staff representative on the West Heidelberg Community Legal Service Management Committee, convenor of the Federation of Community Legal Centres' Professional Indemnity Insurance Working Group and Federation Representative for Department of Justice Infringements Oversight Unit Standing Committee and Legal Services Commissioner Community Consultation Committee.



Legal Secretary and Reception Desk Operator

Pat Williams

Pat's responsibilities include assisting clients with booking in for appointments to see a solicitor, referring clients to appropriate agencies if the Legal Service is unable to see the client i.e. lack of expertise or conflict of interest. Pat is also responsible for the maintenance of client files, including entering information into the Legal Service database. In her role she also assists the Principal Solicitor and Legal Education Clinic with administrative tasks.



Legal Secretary
Tina Kotsabas

Having joined the team at the West Heidelberg Legal Service in September last year in a relief Receptionist position, I was happy to secure a more permanent position following the birth of my third daughter earlier this year.

I have found the workplace and my role here to be both exciting and privileged in being able to support and assist people who are in need of the Legal Service.

Part of my role is to ensure people are attended to appropriately and made to feel welcomed and part of the 'community' here at the Legal Service. I look forward to continuing to meet more of and work with, both the staff and the residents of Banyule.



Coordinator
Victoria Smith

Victoria began her employment with West Heidelberg Community Legal Service in late September 2006. Her responsibilities involve accountability reporting to the legal service's funding body Victoria Legal Aid, liaising with the Finance Officer to collect financial and accounting data, administrative management of all Legal Service projects, updating and refining policy and procedure, and ensuring the Legal Service is properly resourced with equipment, stationery and library items.



Insurance Project Manager

Denis Nelthorpe

Denis Nelthorpe was employed as locum Principal Solicitor during September 2006 and returned in February 2007 to commence his Insurance Project. Denis' main responsibility is to educate Community Lawyers and Financial Counsellors of methods for resolving their clients' insurance complaints or third party debts without going through the law courts.



La Trobe University Legal Education Clinic Supervisor

Liz Curran

Liz is employed by La Trobe University but predominately based at West Heidelberg Community Legal Service. The Legal Education Clinical Placements are undertaken by Final Year La Trobe Law students. Liz is a practicing solicitor and is responsible for supervising students when they provide legal advice to or seek legal representation for clients. Liz's responsibilities include educating students about law reform, legal ethics and legal practitioner administration duties. Liz's responsibilities outside the legal service include being a Committee Member of Liberty Victoria and a member of the Ministerial Advisory Roundtable on Youth Justice and member of Prison Stakeholder Forum of the Corrections Commissioner.



E. Farewells

Pat Williams

Pat retired from the Legal Service after over 25 years of service.



If I had been asked in July 2007 whether I had any intention of finishing work in the near future I would have said that I had not even considered it as I was still feeling useful to many members of the community and the Latrobe University Law students. I didn't mind coming to work each day and I was pleased that I could fulfill my role in the legal service very capably, run a household as well as pursuing lots of interests outside of work hours.

I had no doubt when the time came that I would miss the clients, the staff of the legal service and the community health service **but I would never miss the phone calls**. How many phone calls do you think I answered and gave advice on over twenty-six years? How many students would have come through the Clinical Legal Education Program whom I assisted greatly and enjoyed every minute of it?

Well in May this year I decided that it was going to be my last year and I would bow out gracefully, not ease out. It was a very big decision to make and I had to be sure as there would be no coming back. It was a very uplifting occasion when I had the opportunity to let the staff of the legal service and the community health service know personally that I was leaving before the information was sent around on email. I circled the building not missing anyone, advising staff that I would be leaving at the end of June 2008, the staff couldn't believe it. They were happy for me but sorry that I was going.

Well I did retire on June 22nd this year and would like to thank the legal service and the community health service and others for their fond farewells, kind words, cards, flowers and party. The speeches were very much appreciated also.

I will continue to keep in contact and look forward to the BCH Christmas break up and will attend both the AGM's.

Pat Williams

Liz Curran

"As you will see I have left La Trobe Law and my delightful clinical legal education students and the West Heidelberg community to take up a role with World Vision. I am still very much working in the social justice area to try and stop the systemic conditions that lead to disadvantage. My work now is around eradication of poverty, global health, climate change and sex trafficking and child labor. It is utilising all my human rights knowledge but I am also able to tap into my past lobbying work and media work too. Also I am doing a bunch of research and policy work as well as the advocacy. I still have involvement with a group of young people called 'Vgeners' active and enthusiastic young people and I do capacity building work with them. They are mainly later school and university age (turns out that many are law students committed to social justice) and this keeps me 'groovy' and energised just like the clinical students at La Trobe did!!! I am only in my early days (three months) in the new role and so it is still taking shape"

Liz Curran

National Community Campaigns Leader

World Vision Australia

F. Principal Solicitor's Report

Report from Principal Solicitor – AGM 07-08

The last twelve months has been another busy year.

Our student program goes from strength to strength. Liz Curran must be congratulated as she is responsible for having transformed it into a modern operation. Students and clients receive much more than in the “good old days” which were perhaps not so good after all.

We are getting used to modern premises. The Community Health Centre building is not just a good place for clients to come to; it is also a great place for staff to work in. We continue to receive active support from our Community Health Centre.

Rather than discuss the various areas of Legal work we undertake I thought it would be a good idea to give a snapshot of a particular case and through that make some reflection on legal practice in a Community Legal Centre.

The following case is a “Social security” case. It highlights the developing relationship between the community legal service movement and the private legal profession. The Public Interest Law Clearing House – PILCH - has been in operation for at least a decade and people from communities such as West Heidelberg have been able to make valuable use of the services.

The facts of the case – slightly modified for the purposes of the client's privacy – are as follows; Mrs. D. had been receiving the age pension. She had suffered some mental health problems in the past. She had not been born in Australia and in fact had decided to travel to the country which she was born in to reside there for a time. While overseas she became quite unwell. She ultimately found herself the recipient of mental health services in that country. She had a break down overseas. She was cared for by that country's mental health authority.

It appears she was not receiving mail, even from her family.

When she finally returned to Australia her pension had been cut off because Centrelink had not had contact from her. She was able to get back on the pension but she was denied the bulk of back payments. The justification for this was that Centrelink had written to her and she had not responded within three months.

The relevant legislation was recent and created what are known as “deeming provisions”. We challenged Centrelink in the Social Security Appeals Tribunal but were unsuccessful. Gary represented Mrs. D.

We were dissatisfied with the result and took the view that the legislation itself was unfair. Mrs. D wanted to appeal so we had the matter referred to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

We made application to PILCH for a Barrister and were very lucky to obtain an expert in the field of Administrative Law, Fiona McKenzie.
A great deal of research had to be done. There was also significant paperwork setting out the legal arguments and responding to the arguments put by Centrelink's lawyers.

Just before the hearing Centrelink's lawyers contacted us to say that having read our material and considered our position there was no need for a hearing and that they would consent to the appeal.

What this meant was that Mrs. D was able to recover all her pension.

Gary Sullivan
Principal Solicitor

G Coordinators Report

The spirit in which a thing is given determines that in which the debt is acknowledged; it's the intention, not the face-value of the gift, that's weighed.

Seneca - (5 BC - 65 AD) Roman dramatist, philosopher and politician

Just prior to the start of the 2007/08 year at West Heidelberg Community Legal Service, a solicitor and myself were feverishly editing a report promoting the casework and law reform projects of Victorian community legal centres. There were pages scattered about the office, late nights on the computer at home and in the process, I'm pretty sure I cleared the local petrol station of its 'Red Bull' stock.

The report fortunately made it to print in a timely fashion. Though at the time community legal centre funding was never actually compromised, it was a case of times being uncertain and steps needing to be taken to remind the public of what community legal centres were all about: providing access to justice for all, in particular those who are disadvantaged and/or isolated. Our objective was not about drumming-up extra funding – it was about ensuring our rightful place in the legal system.

Towards the end of the 2007/08 year, I opened a letter from the recently appointed Labor Federal Attorney-General, The Hon Robert McClelland. We had recently heard of an announcement of a \$10 million injection into the community legal sector. But to which legal centres and under what conditions would this funding be provided – we were not sure.

The letter read that West Heidelberg Community Legal Service was to receive a generous one-off grant of \$92,000. It was to say the least, an exhilarating time at West Heidelberg Community Legal Service. I doubt anyone at the service could have hardly imagined such strong financial support appearing out-of-the-blue. We also happened to be one of the more fortunate legal centres; we acknowledge that we received one of the largest legal centre grants in Victoria.

However, had I opened that letter and read that we had received say, \$10,000 or even \$100 in grant money – the staff and I would have still been turning cartwheels.

It is a hard slog for an agency trying to help clients (often in desperate need) and run a professional operation on a shoe-string budget. Nothing speaks greater volumes than having someone, let alone the Federal Attorney-General, acknowledge the work we do.

And when reflecting back on times of uncertainty, how disappointing it was to read in the news of a failed tourism campaign that had \$180 million invested in it. During that same period I'd say we had met most of our objectives – most importantly served hundreds of community members – people in debt, victims of crime, those on pensions who have ended up in motor vehicle accidents that were not their fault. To put this all in some kind of perspective we had received in annual funding the equivalent of 0.1% of the aforementioned tourism campaign budget. So, on one hand although it is a battle to be so tightly constrained by resources, I do feel proud that we can provide such a quality service under such conditions.

This one-off federal grant has literally been a breath of fresh air for West Heidelberg Community Legal Service. We can look forward to the future with some certainty and rest assured all our funding will be used to grow the service, increasing access to legal assistance for the community. Plans for development will no doubt be discussed at another time and place. But the highlight of the year, was to be shown the support that this community legal centre deserves.

Victoria Smith
Coordinator

H In The Media

During the year, both students and members of West Heidelberg Community Legal Service have received some media coverage on issues of critical importance to our clients and also feedback on the value of West Heidelberg Community Legal Service/La Trobe University law reform projects. The following media release is an example of the media coverage received.

Sharks still unchecked

As the cost of living soars, payday loan charges can top 700 per cent

At a time of increasing hardship due to rises in the cost of living, vulnerable Victorian consumers have less protection than borrowers in other states from exploitation through excessive fees and charges demanded by payday lenders.

A just-released study by a senior La Trobe University law student forwarded to the State Minister for Consumer Affairs, Tony Robinson, highlights an example where a borrower is required to pay an effective rate of 740 per cent charges on a \$300 loan – despite the government recently capping the interest rate on payday loans at 48 per cent.

Patrick Stobaus, who carried out the study while on clinical legal education placement at the West Heidelberg Community Legal Service in Melbourne's north, said the Victorian Government needed to move beyond its new disclosure requirements and interest cap, and take action to limit the amount in fees that can be charged.

'The 48 per cent cap strictly only applies to interest and is therefore of little value in protecting consumers from excessive fees. Victoria is now, in the words of one consumer lawyer, "embarrassingly" out of step with several other states where the cap is applied across the board to interest and fees,' says Mr Stobaus.

'There is a belief that the very practice of payday lending is centred upon the exploitation of the desperation of battlers, particularly those receiving welfare,' Mr Stobaus says.

'The overwhelming opinion among those who work at the grassroots level, including financial counsellors, is that contrary to being a form of assistance to someone with financial woes, payday loans generally exacerbate the borrower's debt and financial issues.'

Apart from stressing the urgency of further law reform to control payday lending in Victoria, Mr Stobaus has called on the State Government to work with other states and the Commonwealth to 'look at ways of better assisting the most disadvantaged in the community to ensure that dubious means of finance such as payday loans are not their only option'.

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The payday loan law reform study was one of six distributed to leading State and Federal legal decision makers. The studies were supervised by Dr Liz Curran, La Trobe law lecturer and student clinical legal education supervising solicitor at the West Heidelberg Community Legal Service.

High use of capsicum spray by police

With a recently reported 1,600 per cent increase in the use of capsicum spray from 1998-2008, another study suggests the need for better training for police in verbal negotiation and highlights a disproportionate use of force being used against juveniles and people between the ages of 16-25.

Law student Simon Bogli says in his report there are 'cultural concerns within the police force that must be addressed if the police are to improve their standing in the community, especially amongst the youth. He says 78 per cent of young people say that police 'rarely' or 'never' treat them with respect.

'This may explain the mistrust, and to a degree the force, including capsicum spray, that police may have to use against young people. This is not a sustainable relationship. A community policing organisation is more effective if it maintains good relationships with all members of the community,' he concludes. The report was forwarded to Chief Commissioner of Police, Christine Nixon.

Other studies examined the provision of sub-standard and inhumane accommodation through the Office of Housing; lawyers taking advantage of consumers with a limited understanding of the law by claiming legal costs in letters of demand; sentencing of people with an intellectual disability to prison – a practice that the researchers claim may well be in breach of the new Victorian Charter on Human rights; the high cost of expert witnesses and the impact this has on access to justice; and complaints about police misconduct lodged at police stations.

- *For further information or copies of the full reports, please contact Liz Curran, Tel: 0449 288 514 or 9479 1133; Email: e.curran@latrobe.edu.au or Ernest Raetz, Media and Communications, Tel: (03) 9479 2315; Email: e.raetz@latrobe.edu.au*

Wednesday, 25 June 2008

I. Volunteering at West Heidelberg Legal Service - Rebecca Clarke

My name is Rebecca and I have been a Student Volunteer at the West Heidelberg Community Legal Service since March 2008. As a third year law student at the University of Melbourne, I have found my role to be a rewarding experience both academically and personally.

During my time at WHCLS, I have had the opportunity to apply my legal training in a variety of contexts in a way that benefits the community. Through performing tasks including assisting in trial preparation, observing and conducting client interviews, reviewing police interview tapes, drafting letters and legal research, I have been exposed to legal and social issues that arise in the local community whilst gaining invaluable insight into the legal profession.

The most interesting part of my work has without a doubt been conducting client interviews. This has allowed me to communicate one-on-one with members of the community directly affected by matters such as family violence or those who have been charged with crimes. While learning about the sometimes dire situations of people in the community can be emotionally confronting, what is gained from the first-hand exposure go beyond what is taught in a structured, academic law degree. Furthermore, I have derived satisfaction from assisting less privileged members of the community in solving their legal matters.

Overall, I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I have had at WHCLS. It has been privilege to provide legal support to people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are sometimes in dismal situations. I have enjoyed working as part of a dedicated team in providing a useful community service and I highly recommend the volunteer program to students currently studying law.

J Insurance Project Update

1. Training and Support

Training has been provided during the past year at the state and national community legal centre conferences. Training has also been provided for staff and volunteers at 28 generalist and specialist legal centres and 4 financial counselling agencies across metropolitan and rural Victoria.

Training has been provided to the NSW, Qld, South Australian, Western Australian, and Victorian Legal Aid staff training conferences, and the Queensland, South Australian, Western Australian and Victorian State Financial Counselling Conferences.

Arrangements are currently being put in place for the training materials to put on the National Community Legal Centre website to enable the project to provide online training to all CLC's across Australia.

Email and telephone advices (250) have been provided to legal aid, legal centre and financial counselling agency staff across Australia. An arrangement has been made with Victoria Legal Aid to provide advice for any caller seeking information about an insurance dispute.

2. Casework and Dispute Resolution

The proposal for the write off of motor vehicle accident debts on the basis of financial hardship involved a change of thinking for both community agencies and the insurance industry. The project worker was required to engage with representatives of the Insurance Council of Australia, the Insurance Ombudsman Service, the Insurance Industry Code Compliance Committee, management of individual insurers, and the Federation of Community Legal Centres to facilitate the implementation of the process based on the industry Code of Practice.

By the end of the 2008 financial year most large insurers had adopted the proposed process and the Code Compliance Manager at the Insurance Ombudsman had made a presentation to insurers at the Annual IOS Conference which stated that a write off of debt was an essential requirement in dealing with financial hardship.

3. Community Education Materials

Our project partner, the Insurance Law Service in NSW, has produced draft fact sheets in a form which are in common use by the public and financial counsellors and community workers. The sample letters in particular are directed to both workers and the public, the latter often using them in conjunction with telephone

advice. These materials will be finalised and made available to both consumers and workers during the next twelve months.

4. Policy and Research

A dossier of 25 case studies involving a national insurer was prepared with the assistance of a UK law student. The dossier was forwarded to the CEO of the insurer seeking a change in company policy and practice in dealing with third party debtors in financial hardship. The insurer agreed to write off the \$115,000 in client debts and further agreed to engage a financial counselling agency to assist staff to understand and respond appropriately to financial hardship.

Policy contributions were prepared for consumer submissions on:

- The need to ensure coverage of financial hardship within Terms of Reference of the Financial Ombudsman Service - the submission was submitted to the Federal Minister for Consumer Affairs.
- The Review of the Terms of Reference for the Financial Services Ombudsman concentrated on the need to remove exclusions that prevented access for low income and disadvantaged consumers to the Scheme
- The ACCC authorisation process for the Insurance Council of Australia standard definition of flood –The consumer submission persuaded the ACCC to refuse authorisation for the definition.

Ongoing discussions were held with insurers about the adequacy of products such as third party property, home contents and renter's insurance to meet the needs of low income and disadvantaged consumers.

5. Bankruptcy and MVA debts

An unexpected outcome of the project was the need to deal with the vexed issue of the treatment of motor vehicle accident debts under bankruptcy law. These debts are unliquidated and it has long been held that such debts cannot be included in a bankruptcy petition until after a court judgement has been obtained by a creditor. There has been discussion that a court judgement may not be necessary if the parties to the debt reach agreement as to the amount of the debt.

Surprisingly, a major insurer brought the issue to head. The insurer asserted a right to payment despite the inclusion of an unliquidated MVA debt in a debtor's petition. This action was unprecedented in 20 years, correct at law and totally impractical. The insurer backed down but the legal issue remained unresolved. The financial counsellor for the debtor sought advice from the WHCLC.

Research suggested that an 1808 UK case, **Ex parte Mumford 15 Ves. Jun. 288** was authority for the view that a defendant to a claim for damages can accept liability and by agreement with the plaintiff, alter the character of that claim into a claim for liquidated or agreed damages. PILCH arranged an opinion from Counsel, Mr Stephen Waldren, confirming this interpretation of the law.

Discussions have been held with AAMI, ICA, ITSA, AFFCRA, and PILCH regarding the practice of the insurance industry, financial counsellors and ITSA in dealing with the inclusion of motor vehicle accident debts in petitions for bankruptcy. The project worker has proposed that the opinion be used to establish an agreed practice for the practical treatment of these debts within the bankruptcy jurisdiction.

Denis Nelthorpe



K. Law Reform Topics – Semester One

- Legal Costs – Debt Collectors
- Collection of Judgement Proof Debts i.e. pursuing Centrelink recipients for debts they do not have to by debt collectors
- Working with Children Checks/Police Checks – unfair prejudice?
- High interest lending such as payday loans
- Effect on access to justice of high cost expert reports e.g. Doctor's reports
- Effect on access to justice of high cost expert reports e.g. Doctor's reports
- How the legal service began
- Sentencing of people who are offenders with an intellectual disability
- People living in substandard living conditions in Office of Housing accommodation
- Bail Act and remand of people with an intellectual disability to prison – how appropriate?
- Appropriate use of police force – the use of capsicum spray
- Complaints procedure available to people at the police station level who allege police violence during the process of a criminal investigation

L. Statistics

Number of Clients

Total Number of Clients consulted during 2007/08: 457 (Source: CLSIS)

New Clients: 268 (Source: CLSIS)

Repeat Clients: 107 (Source: CLSIS)

Existing Clients (clients with open files as at 30 June 2007): 82 (Source: CLSIS)

Number of Informations Provided

Informations are considered basic information provided to client i.e. pamphlet or referral made to another agency

Total number of informations given during 2007/08 was 307. (Source: CLSIS)

Number of Advices Undertaken

Advice is considered more complex, legal based information or instruction is given to the client from a legal practitioner or Para legal. Advices usually delivered in a verbal manner.

Total number of advices given during 2007/08 was 154 . (Source: CLSIS)

Casework and Number of Files Opened and Closed

Casework is considered through research, negotiation and action taken by the legal practitioner on behalf of the client, can involve court representation.

Total Cases Closed during 2007/08 was 267. (Source: CLSIS)

Total Cases Opened during 2007/08 was 375. (Source: CLSIS)

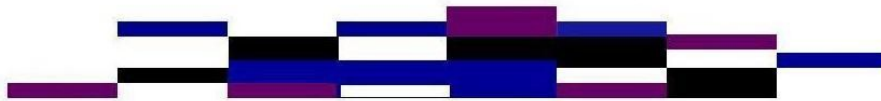
Total Cases Open at Period Start (01 July 2007) was 88. (Source: CLSIS)

Total Cases Open at Period End (30 June 2008) was 108. (Source: CLSIS)

Casework topics were focused around the following matters:

Dishonesty and assault matters; Crimes Compensation (Victims of Crime); Intervention Orders (prosecution and defence); stalking; Social Security Fraud; Fraudulent use of bank accounts; Gambling related matters e.g. defrauding employers; Street offences e.g. drug trafficking, drug possession, incident language, road rage; Wills; Domestic Violence related offences; Infringement Court matters; Consumer-related matters; Social Security Appeals Tribunal matters.

WEST HEIDELBERG COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE



M.

Operating Hours, Location and Services

West Heidelberg Community Legal Service is open to the public Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm. The Legal Service is closed for lunch between 12pm and 1pm, during which voicemail facilities are operating. Clients must make an appointment to see a solicitor; appointments are held on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon with the Principal Solicitor. During semester, the Legal Education Clinic holds appointments on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings. Additional appointments can be arranged outside these times, dependent on the urgency of the matter. Off site appointments and home visits are arranged as required. No advice over the telephone is provided.

West Heidelberg Community Legal Service is located in the Banyule Community Health building at 21 Alamein Rd, West Heidelberg.

West Heidelberg Community Legal Service gives priority to persons on low incomes, who are marginalized or have difficulty navigating the legal system. Close links are maintained with individuals and organizations within our catchment area in order to encourage referral options and improved client outcomes. Some of the activities undertaken by the Legal Service to address the issues of accessibility and equity include:

- Continuation of program of services based at the Banyule Community Health facility
- Home visits where clients were unable to attend the Legal Service
- Telephone interpreters engaged where language barriers were identified
- Appointments offered outside stated hours where accessibility was of issue

- Provision of other relevant legal and non-legal service information to community members and local service providers

We typically cover legal issues such as Criminal Charges, Victims of Crime Issues, Penalties issued for fines outstanding, Youth Law Issues, Social Security Disputes, Motor Vehicle Accidents, Insurance and Debt Related Matters.

B a c k C o v e r

West Heidelberg Community Legal Service
Co-located with Banyule Community Health

21 Alamein Rd

West Heidelberg 3081

Ph: 9450 2002

Fax: 9458 1067

Opening Hours:

Monday – Friday

9am – 5pm