

Welcome to the latest edition of the Victoria Legal Aid newsletter Diversity News. This edition features news about our latest regional office, as well as Victoria Legal Aid publications, services and workshops.

### Legal aid boost for the south west

Victoria Legal Aid's newest regional office opened in Warrnambool on Tuesday 27 May, bringing the resources of the state's major legal aid provider to the south west coast.

The office provides a wide range of legal services to residents in Warrnambool, Portland, Hamilton and surrounding towns and communities. These include advice and assistance in relation to criminal law, family law, social security matters, mental health, debt and human rights.

The Warrnambool office joins Shepparton, Horsham and Ballarat as the fourth new Victoria Legal Aid office in six years. There are another eight regional offices across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Services are available on site in VLA's newly outfitted Fairy Street premises, and in outreach services visiting towns across the south west. The office co-ordinates the free duty lawyer services at the Warrnambool, Hamilton and Portland courts.

The Warrnambool office expects to work closely with regional community agencies, government departments, private legal practitioners, the South West Community Legal Centre, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service.

The Warrnambool office of Victoria Legal Aid is at 185 Fairy Street and is open Monday to Friday between 8.45 am and 5.15 pm. For appointments please telephone 5559 7222.

### New translated publication

*You and family law – a short guide* is now available in Arabic, Chinese, Turkish and Vietnamese. The English version was updated in February 2008. This publication provides a very accessible introduction to family law.

It includes information on separation and divorce, family violence, family dispute resolution, children, dividing your property and a section on where to get help.



You can order these free family law publications online at [www.legalaid.vic.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au) or by calling 9269 0223.

If you have any questions concerning Victoria Legal Aid's translated publications, please contact Kerrie Soraghan, legal resources coordinator, on 9269 0435

### New English-language publications

Victoria Legal Aid has re-printed four of its most popular publications – *Fines*, *Your rights: police powers*, *Road to court*, and *Your day in court*.

***Fines: your options for dealing with fines*** helps you understand your options for dealing with fines.

It covers the following frequently asked questions:

- What happens if I get a fine?
- What if I cannot pay the fine on time?
- Can I ask the agency to review my fine?
- How do I apply for a review?
- What happens if I do not pay the fine?
- What happens at the Infringements Court?
- How do I cancel an enforcement order?
- Can I go to the Magistrates' Court?
- What happens at the Magistrates' Court?

The booklet also includes two extra pages of legal words and plain language definitions.

The changes are substantial. If you have any old copies of the brochure please discard them and order new copies.

**Road to court: a guide to traffic offences in the Magistrates' Court** gives you information about driving offences, new drivers, demerit points, licence suspensions and cancellations and what to do if you have to go to court. It has tips for going to court and what to say to the magistrate and includes a sample character reference.

In this edition there is new information about hoon driving, graduated licences and drink and drug driving offences.



**Your Rights: police powers in Victoria** gives you information about what to expect and what to do if approached by police – giving name and address, getting arrested, being searched, signing papers, taking part in identification parades.

There is specific information about rights for people under 18 and for people with a mental impairment.

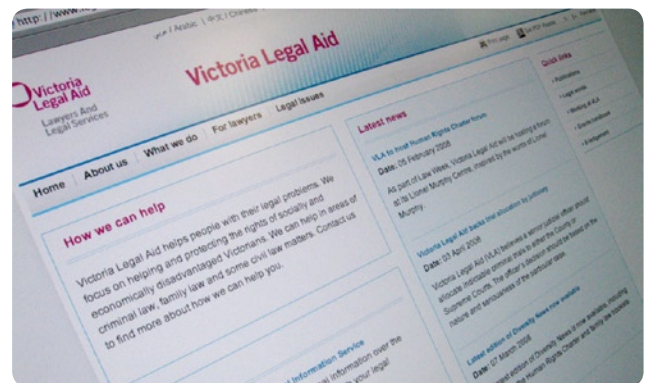
In this edition there are also sections about about terrorism laws, graffiti and the Victorian Charter of Human Rights.

**Your day in court: a guide to attending the Magistrates' Court** gives you information about what to expect and what to do if you have to go to court for criminal offences. It covers how the court system works, getting advice, pleading guilty or not guilty, tips for going to court and what to say to the magistrate. It also contains sample charges, letters and character references.

In this edition there is new information about CISP, court listing times, and some clarification about penalties.

**Using disability discrimination law** has just been updated and will soon be available in print, braille and CD. Many people with a disability experience discrimination, and this book helps in identifying how 'discrimination' is defined in the law, and what options there are. It also explains the differences between state and federal laws. The updated version contains some new examples of how the law has recently been used, the impact of the new Victorian Charter of Human Rights, and new information about assistance animals such as guide dogs for the vision-impaired. More details in the next edition of Diversity News.

## Victoria Legal Aid's new website



The VLA website has been revamped to make it easier for you to find up-to-date legal information. Basic details about our services are in 26 different languages.



The website has easy to understand legal information about refugee law, family matters, traffic offences, fines, and social security. And much more.

Recent updates on the website include new laws about child support and fines for offences such as shoplifting, offensive behaviour and careless driving.

You can also download or order free publications in Arabic, Chinese, Turkish, and Vietnamese covering: information about the law, brochures about our services, VLA forms, and VLA corporate information.

[www.legalaid.vic.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au)

## Family law workshops

Victoria Legal Aid runs free family law information workshops in Melbourne and Dandenong for people involved in preparing a family law case and who may have to represent themselves in court.

**Workshop 1** is an introductory workshop to help you get started. It covers:

- an introduction to the Family Law Act and courts
- applying for and responding to a court order
- what to do at court.

**Workshop 2** provides information on preparing for the hearing. It covers:

- preparing documents for final trial
- witnesses
- how to appeal.

Workshops are held at:

- Melbourne Family Court on the last Wednesday of every month, phone 9269 0223 or 1800 677 402 (country callers) to book
- Dandenong Family Court on the first Wednesday of every month, phone 9767 7111 to book.

At the workshop you will be given a booklet and kit to help you prepare your family law case and represent yourself in court.



You can also order this booklet from [www.legalaid.vic.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au) or by calling 9269 0223

## VLA Legal Information Service

Open Monday to Friday, 8.45 am to 5.15 pm

**Telephone 9269 0120 or 1800 677 402 country callers**



Contact us for free information about the law and how we can help you.

You can speak to someone in English or other languages.

To unsubscribe to this bulletin, email [vinm@vla.vic.gov.au](mailto:vinm@vla.vic.gov.au)

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