

This edition of Victoria Legal Aid's community newsletter looks at Harmony Day, Bushfire Legal Help, new family violence laws, VLA's disability action plan, and a new debt booklet. There's also a chance to win a double pass to the cinema by completing our readers survey.

Victoria Legal Aid's first Harmony Day

Victoria Legal Aid held its first Harmony Day event on Tuesday 17 March, at the Lionel Murphy Centre in Queen St.

The audience of about 45 people included representatives from community legal centres and the Victorian Multicultural Commission, as well as VLA staff.

> Read more about Harmony Day on VLA's website.

Bushfire legal help – unity in adversity



Victoria's lawyers and legal agencies quickly rallied to help victims of the Saturday 7 February bushfires.

Hundreds of lawyers volunteered to help as several agencies joined forces to create Bushfire Legal Help. The agencies are Victoria Legal Aid (VLA), the Law Institute of Victoria, the Federation of Community Legal Centres, the Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH), the Victorian Law Foundation and the Victorian Bar.

Bushfire Legal Help initially had two main services – the **Victorian Bushfire Legal Help Line (1800 113 432)** and lawyers on site at the local relief and recovery centres.

Bushfire Legal Help has received just over 1000 queries from bushfire victims.

The legal help line continues to take queries, while the daily on site visits in February to towns hit by the bushfires were replaced in March with weekly clinics.



The help line and the Bushfire Legal Help website are now the main resources for victims and lawyers seeking legal information. The website includes referral information, advice record forms and a 'reclaiming identification' kit. Check lists, fact sheets, and other community legal education resources are being added to the website.

VLA and new family violence laws

Victoria has new laws about family violence. The laws, introduced in December 2008, aim to better protect the community from family violence and make those responsible more accountable for their actions.

The new laws cover all types of family violence and a wide range of family and family-like relationships. It now recognises that family violence may include economic abuse or psychological abuse.

Also, the law has separated different types of intervention orders into family violence intervention orders and stalking orders.

Victoria Legal Aid has a number of resources to help people understand, and access, the new laws.

Divorce and family law workshops

VLA runs free workshops for the general public on:

- how to fill in a divorce application
- how to run your own family law case.

These workshops provide general information.

The presenters do not give legal advice.

These workshops are presented in English. If you need information in other languages contact the VLA Legal Information Service on (03) 9269 0120 or 1800 677 402 (country callers).

Bookings are essential for all workshops as places are limited.

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.

Our offices

Open Monday to Friday, 8.45 am to 5.15 pm

Bairnsdale	5153 1975
Ballarat	5329 6222
	Toll free 1800 081 719
Bendigo	5448 2333
	Toll free 1800 254 500
Broadmeadows	9302 8777
Dandenong	9767 7111
Frankston	9784 5222
Geelong	5226 5666
	Toll free 1800 196 200
Horsham	5381 6000
	Toll free 1800 177 638
Melbourne	9269 0120
Morwell	5134 8055
Preston	9416 6444
Ringwood	9259 5444
Shepparton	5823 6200
Sunshine	9300 5333
Warrnambool	5559 7222
	Toll free 1800 651 022

All offices are accessible to people with a disability.

Readers survey

Victoria Legal Aid wants to bring you the best community newsletter possible. By filling out the readers survey you can tell us what you like (and don't like) about Diversity News. Plus you'll be in the draw to win a double pass to the cinema.

> Complete the Diversity news survey.

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