



# Eastern Community Law

## Newsletter

Winter 2008

### Mokbel Return Impacts Volunteers Dinner

The Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) Volunteers Dinner was caught out by the return of international fugitive Tony Mokbel.

The event featured Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Simon Overland and was to be hosted by the Centre's Patron, Chief Magistrate Ian Gray. Tony Mokbel returned to Melbourne on Saturday May 17 and appeared before Chief Magistrate Ian Gray on Tuesday May 20. The legal proceedings were adjourned. As DC Overland still oversees the Purana Taskforce, Mr. Gray withdrew from the Dinner to ensure that no conflict-of-interest could be perceived.

ECLC was delighted to welcome Deputy Commissioner Overland as its Special Guest at the annual dinner that recognises the amazing contribution that over 100 volunteers make to the Centre on an ongoing basis.



DC Overland shared with the gathering the importance of addressing family violence and the value of services like ECLC that assist clients through the Intervention Order Support Service, facilitated by staff and pro-bono lawyers along with paralegal volunteers. He also outlined how Victoria Police were responding more actively to family violence and the ongoing improvements being made to ensure victims were being assisted beyond the initial call out, through referral to support services.

At the end of his speech, DC Overland "subjected himself to cross-examination", encouraging questions from the volunteer lawyers and paralegals, which provided a great opportunity for an insight into the developments and cultural change occurring within Victoria Police.

This year, over 20 YRIPP (Youth Referral & Independent Person Program) volunteers were welcomed to the Volunteer Dinner and presented with certificates acknowledging the completion of their training. YRIPP provides trained volunteers to support young people through police interviews where a parent or guardian is unavailable. YRIPP also refers young people to culturally appropriate health and welfare support services to reduce their chances of future offending. The Eastern YRIPP program is operated by the Centre for Multicultural Youth in partnership with ECLC.

Volunteers are an integral part of ECLC and provide valued support to staff and the community. ECLC Manager Michael Smith acknowledged the hard work and diversity of roles that ECLC's volunteers undertake. "Not only do we have volunteers during the evening helping clients, as well as during the day, but at 3am in the morning, there could be an ECLC YRIPP volunteer helping out a young person somewhere in the eastern region." ECLC has 14 volunteer programs across its range of services.

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### ECLC Services

#### Box Hill Office

Suite 3, Town Hall Hub  
27 Bank Street, Box Hill 3128  
Mon – Fri 9:00am – 5:00pm  
Ph: (03) 9285 4822 Fax: 9285 4833  
eclc@eclc.org.au

#### Outreach locations:

Hawthorn  
Ashburton  
Ringwood Magistrates' Court

Serving the Cities of Whitehorse, Boroondara & Manningham

*For an appointment for these services, call (03) 9285 4822*

#### Boronia Office

Suite B, 6 Floriston Road, Boronia 3155  
(PO Box 747)  
Mon – Thurs 9:00am – 5:00pm  
Ph: (03) 9762 6235 Fax: (03) 9762 9751  
Freecall: 1300 79 70 88  
outereast@eclc.org.au

#### Outreach Locations

Rowville  
Lilydale  
Yarra Junction  
Ringwood Magistrates' Court

Serving the Cities of Knox & Maroondah & the Shire of Yarra Ranges

*For an appointment for these services, call (03) 9762 6235*

[www.eclc.org.au](http://www.eclc.org.au)

### Seniors Service Launched

Seniors Rights Victoria opened to the public on April 28 and was officially launched at Melbourne Town Hall on June 16.

Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) is a free legal and advocacy service that has been established to address abuse of older people in the community.

#### Who can use Seniors Rights?

Older people, friends, family members and service providers who are concerned about matters of elder abuse and the exploitation of older people.

**Elder abuse** is any act that causes harm to an older person inflicted by someone they know and trust, such as a family member or friends. Elder abuse may be physical, social, financial, psychological or sexual. It includes mistreatment and neglect.

SRV is a statewide service with regular services to the East based at ECLC. Call SRV for details.



**1300 368 821**

10am to 5pm (Mon-Fri)

Information

Advocacy

Legal Assistance

Education & Training



## Staff Snapshot

ECLC profiles Naomi Milnes, Administration Officer.

ECLC congratulates Naomi on achieving the Certificate III in Business Administration.

*Naomi Milnes (with certificate), Jenny Mansfield (MEGT), Leonie Burnham (Inner East Co-ordinator) and Denise Budge (Outer East Co-ordinator).*



**What work do you do at ECLC?**

It changes daily! Generally I cover front desk and offer my assistance to all staff.

**Why do you want to work in this area?**

I have always had an interest in the law and believe it should be accessible by all.

**What do you like about ECLC?**

The people are great. It amazed me when I first started how close everyone is. Also, that we are such an accessible service for those who otherwise wouldn't have the means for a private lawyer.

**Highlights of this work so far?**

Learning so much as well as meeting so many great people including our wonderful volunteers, who put such a large amount of time into the Centre.

**What was it like to go straight from school into a traineeship?**

It was definitely a shock to the system as unlike my friends, I missed out on the long Christmas break after final exams. I jumped straight into it but it has definitely been straight down my alley as opposed to studying at university.

**What do you think the benefits of the traineeship are and what have you achieved?**

I think the biggest benefits have been the on the job training as well as completing further studies. I would rather be working and gaining that valuable life experience rather than learning from the book. I would definitely encourage a traineeship to anyone who is not sure what to do after VCE.

**Favourite Food?**

Italian & Thai, but what girl can go past some good quality chocolate!

**Favourite Holiday destination**

Merimbula, NSW

## YRIPP Update

YRIPP (Youth Referral & Independent Person Program) assists by attending police interviews with young people under 18 years of age where a parent/guardian is unavailable, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. YRIPP East covers the cities of Boroondara, Knox, Whitehorse, Manningham, Monash, Maroondah, and the Shire of Yarra Ranges.

YRIPP East now has 31 active volunteers, with a further 10 from neighbouring regions covering some of the East stations. YRIPP has also been able to recruit 14 new volunteers for the June-July training program and the numbers are growing daily.

YRIPP is also now operating in some of the Boroondara Police Stations. The program needs more volunteers for the Box Hill, Nunawading, Glen Waverley and Oakleigh stations, so if you are interested, please call the YRIPP Co-ordinator at Box Hill to find out more about being a volunteer in this program.

## Recognising 10 years of Service

At the annual Volunteers Dinner held in May, ECLC took the opportunity to publicly acknowledge and thank four people who have volunteered at ECLC for at least 10 years. It is an amazing achievement and they have all had a huge impact on the community.

Together, they have seen over 1000 clients, attended over 600 sessions of night service and have seen ECLC move from 3 different offices. We take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank:

**James Beeston** – James commenced volunteering in 1993 whilst attending Leo Cussen Institute. In 2004, he joined the Pink Team as a lawyer and 10 years on, is still a member of the Pink Team, assisting clients at night service.

**Adele Katzew** – Adele started volunteering with ECLC as a 5<sup>th</sup> year Arts/Law student in 1998. She joined the night service as a Pink Team member and is still part of that night service team as well as the Intervention Order Service.

**Malcolm Bennett** – Malcolm commenced volunteering at ECLC in April 1997 and has assisted not only ECLC, but other CLCs throughout the years. Malcolm recently retired from Night Service, however is still heavily involved in CLCs through his work with Monash-Oakleigh Legal Service.

**Thomas Mah** – Thomas first volunteered at ECLC in December 1997 while a first year commerce/law student at Melbourne Uni. Once he qualified as a lawyer, he joined night service and continues to see clients as part of the Purple Team. Thomas was also a member of ECLC's Committee for 3 years.



*Malcolm Bennett, Thomas Mah and Helen Gay.*

*New YRIPP volunteers with Vivianne Glöz, (YRIPP Co-ordinator), centre, DC Simon Overland and Michael Smith, back right*



*Staff lawyers and volunteers enjoying the evening*

For information on ECLC's services and projects or to view a map of our office locations, please see the website or call the office directly.

[www.eclc.org.au](http://www.eclc.org.au)



## Deputy Premier Visits ECLC



*Attorney General Rob Hulls delivering his funding announcement*

Eastern Community Legal Centre has welcomed the Attorney-General's formal announcement of funding for the Centre's family violence program.

ECLC was delighted to receive funding from the Victorian Government to continue and expand its Intervention Order Support Service at Ringwood Court. In partnership with Victoria Legal Aid and the Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS), ECLC assists clients at the Ringwood Magistrates Court with family violence-related Intervention Orders.

The state-wide family violence CLC initiative was funded in the 2007/08 State Budget. The Deputy Premier and Attorney General, Mr Rob Hulls, attended a gathering at ECLC at Box Hill on Tuesday May 13 to officially acknowledge the work of the service. Joining Mr Hulls were MP's, local Councillors, pro bono firms, Board members, staff and ECLC supporters.

Michael Smith, ECLC Manager was delighted to welcome the Deputy Premier, the Hon Rob Hulls, to launch the service. "The Centre has a longstanding commitment to respond to family violence and the new funding greatly affirms that work. The State government has taken a number of positive initiatives to address family violence and these are certainly needed by our clients and community.

"When people experience family violence, it is vital that there are clear legal measures that can be taken to ensure their safety and that of their children. It is also essential that there is support available to assist people through an unfamiliar legal process at a difficult time."

In the past 12 months over half of ECLC's legal advice and casework has been in Family Law and Family Violence, with one third of those specifically being Family Violence.

In Mr Hulls' speech, he stated that the United Nations has continued to warn about the impact of sexual and family violence. Mr Hulls said that "sexual and family violence is a bigger threat to women and children than any other forms of violence".

In response to the increase in family violence within communities, Mr Hulls said that the Government was trying to "improve the lives of families in and around the eastern suburbs. It's about tackling, in our small way, a problem that continues to plague not just our community, but communities around the world."

The Intervention Order Support Service operates on a Tuesday and Friday morning at Ringwood Magistrates Court. ECLC strongly advises clients to seek legal advice before they attend Court.

A new brochure has been released regarding this Service. If you would like copies of this new Intervention Order Support Service Brochure, please call the office or download it from ECLC's website. For more information on how ECLC can assist you, please call the Box Hill or Boronia office.

## Night Service Volunteering

With some expansion in Commonwealth funding, ECLC has established a new project to focus on the Centre's night service programs, operated by its fantastic volunteers.

ECLC has operated an evening legal advice service, staffed by volunteers for over 34 years, for 32 years in Blackburn but more recently from Boronia and Box Hill. Local lawyers from a range of firms, government departments and elsewhere offer advice in a range of areas of law such as:

- Family Law
- Intervention Orders
- Minor Criminal matters
- Traffic Offences & fines
- Debt
- Neighborhood disputes
- General

Acting in the capacity of a Volunteer Lawyer can be very rewarding, allowing skilled professionals to exercise their higher duty to the community and contribute in a local meaningful way. Many new skills can be learnt and great friendships have been made over the years. ECLC is currently approaching a range of lawyers to become a part of this invaluable program and asking that they share this call for assistance with their colleagues, including junior lawyers, as a way they may begin to establish their professional pro-bono commitment to the community.

The new project focuses on both recruiting new lawyers and paralegals to ECLC's night service programs and offering additional ongoing support to these programs across our catchment.

ECLC has welcomed Donna Askew to the staff to establish this project. Donna has great experience as a volunteer and staff lawyer and community development worker with ECLC and other CLCs and the Victorian Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission.

If you would like to volunteer or have suggestions for Donna, please contact her through the Box Hill office.

## Knox Accord Update

VicHealth funded a community strengthening initiative led by the Knox Community Health Service in mid 2007. The aim of the project was to bring together agencies in the Knox area to work together to reduce violence against women and strengthen community responses to violence against women in the Knox Community.

To date over 1300 signatories in support of the Accord have been obtained. This has now included the Attorney General and Deputy Premier Rob Hulls who publicly signed the Accord at the announcement of Family Violence funding for the ECLC.

Currently, the Knox Accord working group is close to finalising a Business Information Pack which includes a poster and brochure and fact sheets for businesses that demonstrate the impact that violence against women has on the workplace and the role that an employer can play in providing access to support services. A media campaign will also be starting shortly.

With funding for the project coming to an end in a few months, it is hoped that alternative funding will be secured so that further exciting initiatives can be explored and developed.

### Would you like to donate to ECLC?

For more details on how to donate and how your donation will be used, please visit ECLC's website. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible and can now be made on-line.



## Boost for Social Inclusion

Michael Smith, Manager

There are about 200 Community Legal Centres (CLCs) across Australia with a range of styles. Many (like ECLC) are generalist CLCs, focused on their local communities. Others are specialist CLCs with an emphasis on a specific target group (eg. young people) or an area of law (eg. the environment).

At the Commonwealth level, after a number of years with limited attention and no real funding increases, CLCs appear back 'on the radar' with the release in April of both a major Commonwealth review and a one-off funding boost of \$10million nationally. The Rudd Government has acknowledged that CLCs play a crucial role in improving social inclusion, a feature of its policy and program agenda.

The Review has been welcomed as a broadly supportive analysis and approach to the diverse work of CLCs. Crucially it acknowledges the excellent and carefully targeted work of CLCs around Australia:

*The review ... confirmed that (the CLSP Program) is providing services to clients who are significantly disadvantaged. For example, 58% of clients received some form of income support, 82% of clients earned less than \$26,000 per annum, and almost 9% of clients had some form of disability.\**

*In addition, there is a growing body of evidence that many disadvantaged members of the community often face a 'cluster' of problems that, if left unresolved, increase their social exclusion with long term implications for their health, employment capacity and general well being. Community legal centres' client centred approach to service delivery means that they are well placed to address this need.\**

The review's recommendations propose the primary function of CLCs as "the provision of early intervention and related legal services designed to deal with identified client needs". This early intervention role encompasses both direct legal services and a wide range of community development activity including education and advocacy.

The review also notes that CLCs generate many positive outcomes for clients that are difficult to measure through the current accountability arrangements that focus on outputs (what was done). It is seeking to develop ways of recognising these broader impacts.

With the support of the Review and the expressions of support from the Commonwealth government, it is a critical time for CLCs to work together and advocate for the changing needs of their communities.

ECLC was delighted to receive \$46,200 within this one-off funding and in keeping with our Strategic Plan has emphasised volunteer support and recruitment in the use of these resources.

Beyond this, ECLC will remain active at local, state and federal levels in reminding governments and communities of the needs of our clients and communities.

\*Review of the Commonwealth Community Services Legal Program, Commonwealth of Australia, 2008.

For information on ECLC's services please see the new improved website or call the office directly.

You can also download copies of ECLC's brochure and the Intervention Order Support Service brochure from the website.

Just click on "Resources" and follow the links.

[www.eclc.org.au](http://www.eclc.org.au)

## Law Week 2008

ECLC was part of this year's Law Week 2008. The focus this year was "Reaching Out" in particular to those who may find it difficult to access legal services and information.

Overall, ECLC had displays in 20 libraries across Whitehorse, Manningham, Maroondah, Knox and Yarra Ranges. It is estimated that over 50,000 had the opportunity to take ECLC's brochures and the Victorian Law Foundations booklets.

Thanks to Eastern Regional Libraries and Whitehorse Manningham Regional Library Corporation for your assistance in this project.

## Warm Blankets Needed!

So far, this winter has been bitterly cold! Can you imagine what it would be like to be on the streets or transient during this cold winter, with paper thin clothing and nothing that could keep you warm?

ECLC is putting out the call to all of its volunteers, members and supporters to get behind the MFB's Annual Blanket Appeal. Blankets can be new or good quality second hand ones. You may have some blankets in the cupboard that you no longer use or need.

### Victorian Winter Blanket Appeal 2008

Donate warm blankets at the nearest Melbourne or Country Fire Brigade Station during business hours. Branches include Box Hill, Croydon, Burwood, Ringwood, Templestowe, Boronia, Scoresby, Hawthorn, North Balwyn or Nunawading.

Your kind donation of a blanket can have such an impact on someone's life! Thank you for partnering with community services to help those less fortunate. Donations must be made before 31<sup>st</sup> July ☺

## Tenancy Issues

ECLC has recently received a flurry of calls asking for help with tenancy matters. Unfortunately, ECLC is not able to assist people with tenancy advice.

For advice on all tenancy issues, please call Consumer Affairs Victoria on 1300 55 81 81. For those who are seeking advice but need an interpreter, please call 131 450

The Tenants Union of Victoria also has a good range of fact sheets. Go to their website [www.tuv.org.au](http://www.tuv.org.au) click on 'Advice' and then "Publications". Tenants Union also have a telephone advice line. Call (03) 9416 2577 to speak to a trained tenancy volunteer or TUV worker.

## Support

The ongoing support of these financial and other partners is gratefully acknowledged:

- Victoria Legal Aid
- Commonwealth Government
- City of Boroondara
- City of Whitehorse
- Knox City Council
- Rotary Club of Balwyn
- Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission
- Box Hill Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
- Council On The Ageing (Victoria)
- EACH (Eastern Access Community Health)
- EDVOS (Eastern Domestic Violence Service)
- Family Access Network
- GordonCare
- Inner East Community Health Centre
- Knox Community Health Service
- Knox Infolink
- Loddon Campaspe CLC
- Louise Multicultural Community Centre
- Migrant Information Centre (Eastern)
- PolMin
- Public Interest Law Clearing House
- Ringwood Magistrates' Court
- Women's Legal Service Victoria
- JH Legal
- Mercader
- Moores Legal
- Robinson Gill
- Volunteers and Members of ECLC