



ST KILDA LEGAL SERVICE
Law in the community
Lawyer – Vanda Hamilton

Community Legal Services – Quick overview

- Community Legal Centres (CLCs) are independently operating not-for-profit, community-based organisations that provide legal services to the public, focussing on the disadvantaged and people with special needs;
- 200 centres Australia wide;
- Funded primarily by state governments, with some federal and philanthropic funding;
- Mostly staffed by volunteers, and also rely on pro bono assistance from the profession.

St Kilda Legal Service and drug outreach lawyer position

- St Kilda Legal Service one of the oldest in Victoria;
- Staffed by a principal solicitor, administrator, community legal education lawyer, drug outreach lawyer, family violence lawyer and volunteer coordinator. Only the administration and drug outreach position are full-time.
- Staffed by volunteer lawyers three nights a week. Volunteer lawyers and para-legals also work during the day.

Drug outreach lawyer

- Funding for the position obtained in 2003 pursuant to identification of five drug hot spots in Victoria, St Kilda being one;
- Fitzroy Legal Service has a similar position. These are the only two such positions in Australia;
- St Kilda position funded to work with people with drug and alcohol issues and the sex work industry;
- Outreach model means that DOL can assist people who might otherwise find it difficult to access legal services;

Outreaches



Sacred Heart Mission

RhED

Salvation Army Bridge Programme

Windana Drug and Alcohol Programme

Hanover Accomodation Services

Benefits of working relationship with RhED and police

- Unlike most other lawyers, DOL is 'embedded' in the community.
- Also unlike most other criminal defence lawyers, DOL works with both offenders and victims.
- RhED and DOL - symbiotic relationship
- DOL and police – A relationship which has developed over the years, and has been facilitated by changes to the way St Kilda Police work.

- Relationships between lawyers and police – especially community lawyers – can be fraught;
- Good relationships between police and DOL beneficial – whilst understanding at times will be tensions;
- Level of trust between police and DOL helps facilitate better outcomes for clients in a range of areas – whether criminal clients or victims;
- Essential that relationships with RhED and DOL are supported and driven by senior and managing officers at St Kilda.

Problem solving

- DOL committed to problem solving model;
- Therefore partnerships within community vital;
- Importance of police as first responders to client issues acknowledged;
- Working collaboratively for both clients and the community – an acknowledgment that we live and work in community and that community safety and amenity is important.

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