



Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Newsletter

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“To Buy or Not to Buy”

Michele Zaccaro Civil lawyer

Have you come across the saying, “an offer to good to be refused!” Well the next time you are offered an item to buy, by someone you don't know be careful. Ask them who actually owns or has title to the article. Think twice before you part with your cash. There can be heavy and expensive problems placed on you if something that is not purchased from a shop turns out to be stolen property.

Some of the questions you should think about are:

- Why is the item being sold?
- Does the person who is selling the item really own it (can they prove it e.g. have they got a receipt)

You should consider whether the price you are paying seems fair and check what the market value of the item is. The law says that if you buy something at a very low price you should investigate whether it is stolen.

If you can't prove lawful ownership of the item, and possibly, the chain of ownership (who previously owned it) this could cause problems if you should need to sell it. If the police suspect that an item has been stolen they may confiscate it. If a previous owner has reported an item stolen and received an insurance pay out on the item then the Insurance company may be the new owner.

If an item is cheap, with no receipts, no chain of ownership, bought in the pub or at a Sunday market or the like, then be warned! A stolen item may be defective and have no guarantee. If a car for instance is stolen, and requires registration, a certificate of ownership,

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Life as a new VALS Client Service Officer

Loretta O'Neill recently was appointed as our latest VALS Client Service Officer. She has been employed by VALS for about a month now and during that time has acquired a greater understanding and appreciation of the operation of VALS and the quality and support it gives it's clients.

Her role so far has been to liaise with police concerning the welfare of Aboriginal persons in custody, and to inform our clients of their basic rights

Client Service Officers also do prison visits to ensure the legal needs and the wellbeing of our clients and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders imprisoned. This helps to maintain links with their families and communities.

Loretta says that she is enjoying the job, particularly as it is different to her previous work experience.

Farewell Marcus Dempsey

Marcus Dempsey, one of our criminal laws section solicitors is leaving us to take up a position with Victoria Legal Aid. We wish him the best and thank him for his service here at VALS.



To Buy or Not to Buy....cont. from p1.

or other written official title will be required to register it. You can ring VIC Roads to check whether a vehicle is stolen.

In the case of a car that has been reported stolen and is now owned by an insurance company, you may be asked to negotiate with that insurance company and may be expected to offer to purchase the item from them.

Remember if you are not sure, talk to us at your Legal Service. If you have questions we have the legal answers and we are paid to help you. It may save you a great deal of stress and money.

Message from VALS CEO

Nigel D'Souza CEO

Despite the rain and cold the turnout on this year's Sorry Day/Journey of Healing on May 26th was heartening. Particularly encouraging was the attendance of Koories from all around the state. The speeches and laying of the flowers on the steps of Parliament House was a poignant moment and the support of the new Victorian Premier and the entire House was the most positive development since the infamous statements of Howard and Herron.

On June 8th the Magistrates Court of Victoria expressed its regret and apologized for past injustices against Aboriginal people. Finally the march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the biggest march in the history of this country in relation to any matters, showed the deep and solid support for action towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal service has just undergone an effectiveness review carried out by independent consultant appointed by ATSIC. This is a regular five yearly review of the entire national program and we were one of the last services to go through the process. I am confident that this service is in good shape but look forward to the recommendations for improvements. A summary of the report will be provided at a later date.

VALS Family Law Solicitor to Work Interstate

Paula King our recently appointed family law solicitor has been granted leave from VALS to be attached to the Federal Family court as a Judges associate.

This will require her to travel interstate, working with one Family Court Judge on the Alice Springs-Darwin circuit, and also closer to home with the Chief Justice of the Family Court. The experience gained from this exposure to cases interstate will be valuable for both Paula and towards family law cases she is involved with in the future. She will be on leave from the 8th of June until September this year. Her duties will be performed at VALS by Family law solicitor Elisa Whittaker. She has extensive experience at Victoria legal Aid and working for Community Legal Centres

Victoria Legal Aid Meeting

VALS Staff attended a Victorian Legal Aid Principal Solicitors meeting recently concerning closer communication between VLA regional officers and VALS Client Service Officers

Shepparton Workshop

VALS was invited to attend a Victoria Legal Aid Regional Community Legal Education seminar in Shepparton. Client Service Officer, David Atkinson and VALS Community Education worker, Catie Pitman provided information about legal rights when dealing with police on the street and police stations. The forum was aimed at service providers and attended by over thirty people.

Legal Education Pamphlets

The Victorian Law Institute have sought permission from VALS to adapt our Koori Community Legal Education pamphlets for a project of theirs involving non-English speaking persons.