



# Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Newsletter

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## • Intervention Orders Research project

- Stephanie D'Abreo *Law Student*

Intervention orders are a key method by which to intervene in domestic violence incidents. However the need for understanding of and the knowledge about the implementation of Intervention Orders in Victorian Aboriginal Communities has not been extensively researched and prior research into them interstate produced conflicting findings. In order to explore and better understand the issues facing Aboriginal communities, family violence and Intervention Orders, the Intervention Orders Research Project was initiated.

Victoria Police have recently adopted newly revised methods in an attempt to effectively deal with family violence. The introduction of changes to Victorian Police practices regarding domestic violence has raised concerns about the impact of these changes within Aboriginal communities and, in turn, has instigated debate about the most effective programs for victims of domestic violence. One significant change to Police practices has been the introduction of a complaint and warrant process (arrest and bail approach) to initiate Intervention orders.

In response, the Intervention Orders Research Project is investigating exactly what Koori women, who have taken out Intervention Orders in the past, think of the process and its consequent results. To do so, Koori women from metropolitan and country Victoria are being interviewed or will complete questionnaires so as to provide their opinion on a range of questions on the Intervention Orders process. By asking what Koori women think of the current procedures we hope to gain a better understanding of what changes should be made to make the process more beneficial to Koori women.



## • VALS CEO'S MESSAGE Women's Legal Needs Study

*Antoinette Gentile Acting CEO*

I am happy to announce that Leanne Miller And All in Production have been employed to do a consultation with Koori Women about their legal needs. Leanne is Chairperson of the Indigenous Women's Legal Resource Group and helped to establish 'Koori Women mean Business'.

Contact Antoinette Gentile for further information.

## United Nations Review

VALS have attended meetings with organisations interested in developing a submission to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Over the next eighteen months Australian community and non-government organisations have a unique opportunity to hold Australian governments accountable for their record on eradicating poverty and upholding the economic, social and cultural human rights of all Australians. The UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights is undertaking a preliminary review of the status of economic and social rights in Australia in May 2000 followed by a final review in November 2000. In reviewing Australia, this committee wants to hear from those on the frontline of struggles against discrimination and poverty. It wants to know what the issues are so that it can put the hard questions to the Australian Government. It recognises that community Organisations have a vital role in monitoring Australia's human rights performance.

**Want to get involved? If you have concerns that the situation of your client group is deteriorating or not improving as a result of government action or inaction – including cuts to services, discriminatory laws or practice; contact Chris Dunk at VALS for further details.**

## • VALS Staff Moves

Welcome to Sherry Nakalevu and Catie Pitman, VALS new Community Legal Education Unit Project workers.

Farewell and belated thank you to Kelly Koumalatsos, Shea Rotumah and Mandy Johnston for their good work in establishing the VALS community Legal Education Unit.

Farewell and thank you to Peggy Swindle, VALS Trainee Legal Secretary and Angelo Natoli one of our Solicitors. Welcome to Marcus Dempsey our new Solicitor.

## • ACDF Funeral Fund Update

*Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund Pty Ltd and the Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund No. 2 Pty Ltd. offering products as ACBF to Aboriginal Consumers and Northern Territory Federal Court decision.*

Michele Joseph Zaccaro  
Civil Lawyer

As detailed in the Article in VALS Newsletter of August 1999 the Australian Securities & Investment Commission had taken ACBF to the Federal Court in the Northern Territory. We have been advised via Media Release Facsimile on 24 September 1999 of recent Consent Orders agreed to and sanctioned by the Court as follows:

- ACBF will advise its clients that ACBF is not connected with or supported by a government or Aboriginal organisations;
- Remove the Aboriginal flag and words from marketing materials suggesting that ACBF was established to advance the welfare of Aboriginal people;
- Adhere to specific conditions governing entry onto Aboriginal land; and
- Offer refunds to Aboriginal consumers in certain communities.

It was also revealed in the Media release that ASIC may also consider investigating the development of a code of conduct for financial service providers operating in these areas.

VALS have had several complaints about ACBF. If any member of the Koori Community wishes to address concerns/complaint/request release from membership from the ACBF then please contact the writer at this your Legal Service, we are here to listen and act for you.



## • Anti Violence Week

This year's anti violence week is from 25<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of October. The theme for this year is Family and Friends. In the past month there have been a number of announcements about Family Violence.

Senator Newman announced in the AGE Oct 6<sup>th</sup> that \$25million would be spent over four years largely on prevention. Earlier in September Senator Herron and Gatjil Djerrkura announced that the ATSIIC Ministerial Council had agreed to a National Strategy to tackle the problem. The funds will be part of the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Program. Senator Newman's Media release indicates that \$6million will be spent on grassroots projects to strengthen Indigenous Communities efforts to address family violence.

Other initiatives will be funded in relation to community Education, family strengthening and better responses by mainstream organisations. The State Government has held a meeting with Koori organisations to talk about a whole of government policy to Family Violence.

The John Herron media release also announced increased ATSIIC funding for legal services for Women.

## • Kicking Goals

Congratulations to VALS Client Service Officer Bradley Boon who topped the Goal kicking in the Central Goulburn Valley Football League. Bradley averaged more than four goals a game, and his team, Rumbalara, won the premiership this year, for a second year in a row. Interestingly, a team from Cummeragunja near Echuca, achieved this a century ago (1898 & 1899).

This years win was particularly good as the team were the underdog in each final and had lost by some 7 goals in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semi final to the team that they defeated in the Grand Final. Pat Farrant another VALS Client Service Officer, who lived in the Shepparton area until recently,

was involved in the Rumbalara Football Netball Club Inc for over 15 years. The netball team too has won premierships. For a number of years the club sought entry into the leagues which covered the area. Eventually only four years ago they were invited to join. The club also runs a host of community programs including Healthy Eating and Lifestyle, Youth Suicide Prevention, and has a strong emphasis and support for keeping young indigenous people in Education Employment and Training and is heavily involved in Justice Issues. The club has non-indigenous members as well. The clubs sporting success has galvanized community spirit and increased contact with families across the region whom meet when seeing the various teams in action. Congratulations Rumbalara!