

# Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd Newsletter

April - August 2011

## Message from the CEO:

By now most of you would know that I have commenced as the CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. I am a Yorta Yorta/Barkinji man with a background in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, community development, justice and wellbeing. I offer strong management, research, evaluation, facilitation and development skills and experience across the diversity of private, public and community sectors. I have been involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, justice and community affairs for over 20 years. I also hold a number of tertiary qualifications in the areas of; Management, Criminology, Education and Training.

I am enthusiastic about my new role as VALS CEO and also excited about our future direction. VALS provides specialist legal advice, legal aid related assistance, broad justice support and advocacy, and community capacity building for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders within the State of Victoria. VALS does not only provide legal advice and representation in Court but promotes social justice for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples. VALS strives to take a holistic approach to the problems faced by our clients and endeavours to assist them in accessing the support they require either from VALS or through other Government and non-Government agencies.

VALS aims to take a preventative approach to issues faced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and is actively involved in community development, policy development and law reform to attempt to address systemic issues faced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community. Our objectives over the coming three years include:

- Meeting the legal needs of the Aboriginal

and/or Torres Strait Islander community in Victoria through legal services;

- undertake related Services which may help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- run the VALS Legal Service effectively, efficiently and strategically; and
- work cooperatively and collaboratively with other organisations for the benefit of clients.

Since joining the organisation in late January 2011 it has been non-stop familiarising myself with the organisations operation; engaging with stakeholders; advocating on behalf of the organisation and community as well as securing the next triennial funding agreement with the Commonwealth Attorney-Generals Department. I look forward to working hard for a better future for the Service and our clients.



- Wayne Muir



Above L-R: Human Rights Law Centre's Emily Howie; Koorie Heritage Trust Board Member (and previous VALS solicitor) Beth Charles; and VALS CEO Wayne Muir at the Annual Human Rights

## Special points of interest:

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## Staff News

**VALS farewells:** Criminal Law Solicitor, Alexander McLennan; Bairnsdale Administrative Assistant, Lesley Kenny and Client Service Officers (CSOs), Verna Eade and Steven Bowden.

**VALS welcomes:** CSOs Anthony Kirby (Swan Hill), Martin Peterson (Mildura) and Jamie McConnachie (Metro); Criminal Law Solicitor, Miles Brown; Prisoner Support Worker and Client Service Officer, Lee-Ann Carter (see over page for Lee-Ann's biography feature). VALS also welcomes previous VALS volunteer, Tabitha Ormiston-Smith on her Clinical Criminal Law Placement through the College of Law.

# Staff Bio:

## Lee-Anne Carter

*I have family spread from the south west Western Australia to New South Wales. I have lived in Melbourne since completing my secondary schooling to attend Melbourne University in 1994.*

*My personal interests are in my footy team, the mighty Bombers; community events; friends; sports and in the disability sector (in particular Autism as I have two children with ASD). I am generally busy with family; kids sports and activities; school council; fundraising and advocating for better resources and supports in our kids schools and educational opportunities.*

*I want to ensure that our children who are our future have the same options and tools to ensure they are self sufficient and equipped to deal with any struggles. I am passionate about my family and community and am approachable to those who need assistance; information or resources.*

*The focus of my work is to ensure that the identification of gaps in programs and services are followed up and brought to the attention of those responsible in bringing about change and having the*

*ability to impact on our community, our children and future.*

*For the past 15 years, I have held positions within the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, Regional Law Courts, Department of Justice holding a dual position as the Aboriginal Liaison Program Coordinator and Court Integrated Services Program Case Manager. For the past 18 months prior to coming to VALS, I was employed with arbias (alcohol related brain injury assessment service) as a case manager.*

*I took the opportunity to work for VALS as the Prisoner Support Worker as it places me back in community and provides me with an opportunity to use my skills and experience within community. I recently took on an additional role with VALS as a Client Service Officer (CSO).*

*My focus is on ensuring that clients in custody have all the legal supports and access to all options available including diversion, access to programs, supports, housing, health and any other services I can identify which might help my client. I believe I can be part of the change that is required to provide accessible and just outcomes for Aboriginal people.*

*- Lee –Ann Carter.*

## Cultural Awareness Training

*My tour of the Lower South West region of Victoria (Gunditjmara country) started at Cape Nelson, Portland. Along the cliff-face were rows of sea shells of various types - evidence that a water-based culture inhabited the area and enjoyed what would have been a delicious fare of seafood. I was told by my guide, Wayne Bell ("Swisher"), that the Gunditjmara people would cook their food in the ground and after consumption, leave the shells at the cooksite. Over time, the site would be covered by sand and debris, and the process of cooking and discarding shells would continue – thus creating the rows of shells within the cliff-face.*

*Lake Condah Mission was our next stop: a journey on sealed and unsealed roads, made more adventurous by the absence of a spare tyre in Swisher's jeep. Here the remnants of several stone buildings sit neatly on the grassy plane. They have no roofs and most of the exterior walls have crumbled, but you can still identify the layout of each house: where a kitchen once stood and a fireplace once stirred.*

*A vast green plane sets a tranquil backdrop for Lake Condah Mission, but being in such a beautiful place was bittersweet: one could not overlook the history of good intentions that estranged the Gunditjmara people from their land-based traditions, while the remaining stones bear silent witness.*

*Driving past blue gum forests, we reach Lake Condah. Immediately I think of the land that time forgot: still water (the colour grey) stretching across the land like a giant mirror with swans gliding along, oblivious to the flow of time.*

*In 2008, the Gunditjmara people won a Native Title claim over Lake Condah, which is known as the world's largest and oldest aquaculture system. Lake Condah hosts the remains of numerous stone huts. These structures once existed within an intricate maze of water channels where the strategic placement of stones redirected the flow of water towards long narrow baskets that served as eel and fish traps. These stone huts show how the Gunditjmara culture lived interdependently with the land and water.*

*So if you find yourself in Gunditjmara country, give Wayne a bell (pardon the pun) and he will give you a tour of the rich history of Aboriginal culture in the Lower South West of Victoria and tell you some war stories along the way.*

*-Martin Ha.*

**Right:  
Criminal  
Law  
Solicitor  
Martin Ha  
tours  
Lower  
South  
West  
Victoria**



# Law Reform & Advocacy

## Office of Police Integrity (OPI)

VALS responded to a draft of the OPI's review of the Victoria Police Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008. VALS congratulated the OPI on a fruitful investigation of the issues concerning Victoria Police's Strategic Plan, however noted that the lack of solid recommendations building on its findings to Victoria Police was disappointing and problematic. Following the release of the OPI's final report, VALS wrote to OPI Director, Michael Strong, expressing our disappointment that our concerns and suggestions were not reflected in the final product.

## Rights of the Child

VALS, as part of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS), provided a shadow report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for the upcoming review of Australia. In this submission we communicated our concerns in areas such as: over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in alternative care and the criminal justice system; family reunification; separation from parents due to detention or imprisonment; discriminatory laws; specialised courts; legal assistance; minimum age that a person can be tried as an adult; and detention as a last resort (mandatory sentencing etc).

## Sorry Day

On 26 May 2011 VALS observed Sorry Day and paid respect to members of the Stolen Generations. VALS produced a Media Release calling on State and Federal Governments to address the issue of long-overdue reparations and establish a Stolen Generations Reparations Tribunal. Sorry Day was also marked by the Indigenous Peoples Organisations (IPO) Network (of which VALS is a member) through a Statement to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in New York. The Australian delegation bowed their heads for a minute of silence.

## RCIADIC

In recognition of the passing of 20 years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC), VALS is involved in a number of initiatives to focus ourselves, the community and Governments on what has been achieved, and how far we have to go in reducing Aboriginal deaths in custody. Examples include: a joint NATSILS Media Release; Australian Inquest Alliance letter to the Federal Attorney-General and Minister for Indigenous Affairs in relation to police accountability mechanisms; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services submissions to the Australian Indigenous Law Review Special Edition for publication later this year.

## Charter of Human Rights Review

As part of the review of the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006*, VALS made a written submission, gave verbal evidence and provided supplementary information to the public enquiry and produced a media release. VALS argued for the retention and strengthening of the Charter to

include self-determination rights; child rights; economic, social and cultural rights; and the appointment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner role for Victoria.

## Statutory minimum sentencing

The Victorian Government has asked the Sentencing Advisory Council (SAC) to give advice on minimum sentences for serious injury offences involving gross violence. In our submission we expressed grave concerns for the introduction of statutory minimum sentences in Victoria as applied to adults and juveniles aged 16-17 years old. VALS evidenced other Australian jurisdictions with mandatory or minimum sentencing laws having high imprisonment rates without reductions to crime rates or recidivism rates. It was contended that because punitive sentencing laws do not allow for the causes of crime to be addressed, they fail to deter offending nor rehabilitate offenders. VALS' submission also included:

- argument against the introduction of statutory minimum sentences in favor of retaining judicial discretion in sentencing;
- evidence that mandatory sentencing laws are discriminatory; do not deter criminal activity; result in greater rates of offending; are costly; create inconsistency; undermine existing programs; overlook RCIADIC findings and recommendations; and breach human rights;
- the impact of statutory minimum sentencing laws on VALS' clients and their community (including a case study);
- interaction of sentencing practices with human rights; and
- community expectations.

Also, VALS Criminal Law Solicitors Jill Prior and Ellena Pappas spoke about these issues on 3CR Community Radio. In addition, VALS produced a media release and contributed to a media release produced by the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS).

## Community Workshop

In partnership with the Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC), VALS co-hosted community workshops at the Aborigines Advancement League concerning the HRLC's Police Use of Force Project, which addresses human rights in police use of force, and the National Human Rights Action Plan Baseline Study Draft.

***For full details of initiatives and copies of reports, submissions and media releases mentioned above, head to our website at: <http://vals.org.au/law-reform-and-policy-development>***

# International Engagement



**Top: ALRM Chairperson, Frank Lampard, ALSWA Advocacy Solicitor Tammy Solonec & VALS CEO Wayne Muir in New York. Above: IPO Delegation at the UNPFII**

Earlier this year VALS secured funding from the Australian Human Rights Commission for CEO Wayne Muir to attend the Tenth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in New York 16-27 May 2011.

The Indigenous Peoples Organisation (IPO) Network, to which VALS is a member, had a strong presence at the Permanent Forum, crafting and delivering a number of interventions on topics such as:

- The right to water
- Implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur
- Social and economic development
- Free, prior and informed consent

The IPO Network also marked Sorry Day at the Permanent Forum, producing a media release and holding a minute silence.

The Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia (ALSWA), Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, South Australia (ALRM) and VALS also hosted a side event to the Permanent Forum, *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: 20 years on, it's time for change!* Held on 25 May 2011, the event was well attended with over 33 people.

**Photos, media releases and presentation slides for events mentioned above are available on our website: <http://vals.org.au/news> under "An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice at the United Nations - United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2011" posted 18 May 2011.**

## Koori Court Conference 2011

The annual Koori Court Conference was held this year at The Sebel in Albert Park, 19-20 May. This year the conference theme was *Koori Courts: What is respect?* There were approximately 120 people in attendance over two days which included Elders and Respected Persons, Koori Court Officers and Court staff including Magistrates.

The theme of respect for the Courts and Elders and Respected Persons came through many presentations and forum discussions. This included comments by Victorian Attorney General, the Honourable Robert Clark, who opened the conference by recognising respect as being the core of the Koori Courts.

Other presentations over the two days covered issues in future development and practice of the Courts and the range of services available for clients which included the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service, Baroona Youth Healing Service as well as the Sentencing Advisory Council, Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place and Courts and Tribunal Unit.



**Right: VALS Board Member Terrie Stewart & Executive Officer of Legal Practice, Jill Prior, at the 2011 Koori Court Conference.**

# Community Legal Education

## Aboriginal Credit and Debt Clinic

In the 2010/11 financial year, the Public Interest Law Clearinghouse (PILCH) and VALS piloted the Aboriginal Credit and Debt Clinic (ACDC) (May-Aug 2010, Shepparton, Ballarat, Morwell, Mildura) to provide free assistance to Aboriginal peoples in rural and regional Victoria.

The partnership involved engaging pro bono lawyers to assist with debt related matters. The outcome was that 60 clients were assisted (24 of these were in prison). The following was found:

- Unmet legal need;
- Clients had multiple debts to a variety of institutions and government departments. Most common was through loans and credit cards, utilities debts and debts to government departments resulting from infringements or Centrelink; and

- It was common that clients had other legal issues such as family law or criminal law issues that were closely related to their financial legal needs.

## Civil Law Outreach

VALS' Community Legal Education Officer, Loretta O'Neil, and Civil Law Solicitor, Chris Howse, have conducted Clinics regarding wills and other civil law issues. The clinics offered in relation to wills proved effective in:

- Introducing VALS civil lawyer to the community and groups; and
- Providing a conversation starter. It was common for individuals to ask VALS' civil lawyer further questions about civil law after the topic of wills had been addressed.

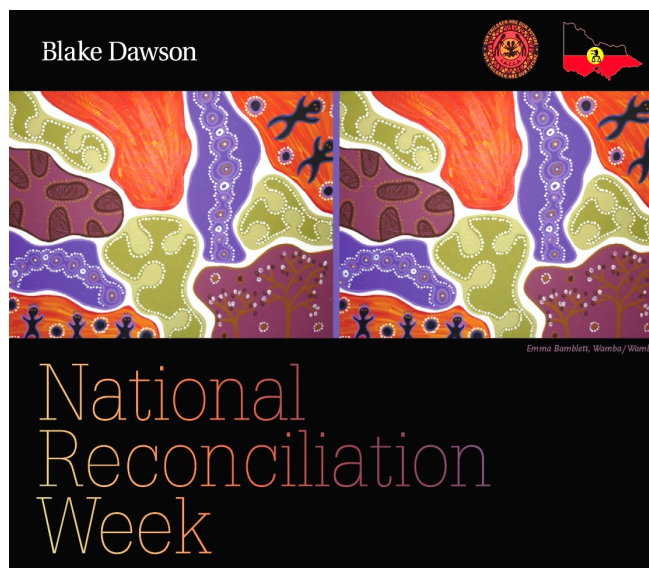
## Reconciliation Week

On 1 June 2011, VALS partnered with Blake Dawson and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) to mark Reconciliation Week. Hosted by Blake Dawson, our event was open to all and was designed to support the reconciliation process in Victoria. The event also aimed to raise awareness of important issues for Aboriginal Victorians, recognise the work of Aboriginal organisations, promote cultural awareness and education and assist in the development of strategic partnerships. Speakers at the event were Dr Alf Bamblett, Mr. Wayne Muir and Professor Muriel Bamblett AM.

Dr Bamblett spoke about constitutional change and argued that debate on this issue must be steady and informed, remembering that the successful 1967 referendum was 10 years in the making. He argued that changes to the constitution by way of a preamble are over simplistic and do not address the real issues of First Nations recognition.

Professor Bamblett spoke about the importance of parents and community talking about their culture with children and the critical importance of children knowing where they come from and who they are and where they belong.

Mr. Muir spoke about the link between self-determination rights and reconciliation, arguing that one cannot be achieved without the other. Mr. Muir's speech is available on our website at <http://vals.org.au/law-reform-and-policy-development/presentations>.



## We Are Moving!

VALS' head office will be moving in order to better cater to the needs of our workforce and better service the community. The new head office not only has much greater flexibility to meet staff needs and client needs but also allows for spaces where community can meet and where training and community legal education can occur.

The new office is located at 273 High Street, Preston (just North of Bell St).

With possession of the property to occur in the coming months, we hope to refit the building and all going well move

our service across later this year or early 2012.

We will keep the community updated on how our progress to the new premises through this newsletter and on our website.

VALS is sad to leave Fitzroy - a place where the Service has had a long history with and connection to. VALS intends to seek and secure funding to launch a project researching and documenting the history of VALS in Fitzroy and the people who founded and worked VALS to make it what it is today.

# Law Week Afternoon Tea with Tarwirri



To celebrate Law Week in May, staff and members of Tarwirri (The Indigenous Law Students & Lawyers Association of Victoria) and VALS got together for afternoon tea and a good yarn. Over delicious savouries and cakes there were discussions about employment opportunities, common goals and common challenges.

Tarwirri's main aim is to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students graduate at the same rate of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students. Tarwirri provides support programs for students as well as legal professionals and offers bursaries, advocacy, access to mentoring programs and identified positions at some of Melbourne's top tier law firms. The Association also visits schools and attends community festivals to encourage secondary school students to finish school and consider pursuing a career in law.

Tarwirri is the only resourced body of its kind in Australia, and is primarily funded by the Victorian Government as part of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA). In terms of membership, Tarwirri currently has four barristers, 14 practicing lawyers, 12 graduates who are working in academia, policy and management, 16 law students and 5 lawyers who are currently practicing interstate.

For further information about Tarwirri, contact:

Aislinn Martin – Executive Officer  
Indigenous Law Students & Lawyers Association of Victoria  
– Tarwirri

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[amartin@liv.asn.au](mailto:amartin@liv.asn.au) [www.tarwirri.com.au](http://www.tarwirri.com.au)



## Gender, Drug Use and Criminalisation

Executive Officer of Legal Practice, Jill Prior, delivered a speech at the *Gender, Drug Use and Criminalisation* forum run by The Centre for the Rights of Imprisoned People (CHIRP), 5 May 2011 at the Multicultural Hub, Melbourne. Jill was asked to speak on discrimination and the law. Jill's speech was centered around her experience in Victoria as a Criminal Law Solicitor at VALS and the discrimination she sees "artfully laying in wait around the criminal justice system and therefore the daily lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples." Jill describes how she could easily pick a single incident and describe how that incident involved discrimination. Instead she contends that to identify single incidents is too easy, and that instead the whole picture must be considered if our community is ever to move forward.

*...for each area of law where I see discrimination...we tend to distance ourselves from the systemic network of discrimination that provides the opportunity for these individual instances. And as long as we focus on these individual instances we don't acknowledge the role we play in doing too little...*

A copy of Jill's speech can be downloaded from our website at:

[http://vals.org.au/static/files/assets/25ba869a/Jill\\_Prior\\_CHRIP\\_5\\_May\\_2011\\_final.pdf](http://vals.org.au/static/files/assets/25ba869a/Jill_Prior_CHRIP_5_May_2011_final.pdf)

# Protective Service Officers: Community threat or community protection?

There is extreme concern within the community around the extensive powers that the Victorian Government is proposing for new Protective Service Officers (PSOs) for the Melbourne rail network. The *Justice Legislation Amendment (Protective Service Officers) Bill 2011* proposes changes to 12 Acts to enable wide-ranging powers for armed PSOs that have previously been enjoyed only by sworn police officers, including:

- Arrest without a warrant of a person on bail if they believe that person has broken bail conditions;
- Arrest without a warrant of a minor who has refused to provide them with their name and address where the PSO believes they have consumed alcohol;
- Detain and search a person under 18 years old if they are inhaling, or may have inhaled, a volatile substance and there is a risk of immediate and serious harm to that person;
- Apprehend a person who appears to be mentally ill;
- Arrest of a person who has or may be suspected of committing a graffiti-related offence;
- Detain a person for as long as is reasonably necessary to conduct a search of a person or property;
- Prevent a person from driving a vehicle or entering a vehicle, including use of reasonable force, when a lawful direction is not followed;
- Direct a person to move on for a breach of the peace, or a likely breach of the peace;
- Remove people who are presenting a danger or annoyance to the public or hindrance to police or any authorised officer or employee of a transport company;
- Seize property.

The President of the Law Institute of Victoria, Caroline

## Coming up at VALS

**Deadly life lessons DVD.** VALS' "Deadly Life Lessons" DVD is in the process of being finalised and approved with our partners and will be due for release and distribution in the near future. Keep an eye on our website for updates.

**Australian Indigenous Law Review (AILR).** VALS, along with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, will be contributing to a special edition of the AILR to mark 20 years since the report and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Scheduled to be published in October, VALS' article will focus on the cultural awareness training of police.

**Constitutional Recognition.** In partnership with other Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, VALS plans to host and report of a community meeting to discuss and prepare for the Constitutional Reform process. VALS will

Counsel, believes these laws will increase the risk of shootings of young people or those suffering a mental illness. She believes that these powers are likely to escalate issues to the point where PSOs will use the weapons rather than negotiating or calling in appropriate health professionals.

The LIV questions the necessity for these unwarranted powers that do not seem to be mandated by any crime wave on our public transport system. She notes that Victoria already has a dubious record of police shootings and that these powers can only add to the danger of vulnerable youths and mentally ill people being shot by armed public transport guards.

Similarly, the Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria (FCLC) and the Mental Health Legal Centre (MHLC) believe that armed PSOs will be failing, not protecting the community. In their joint media release, 17 August 2011, they argue that giving PSO's on Melbourne trains powers to apprehend a person who hasn't committed a crime but whom they believe is mentally unwell, is an ill-conceived measure that will not address crime or safety.

The amount and quality of proposed training of PSOs is also an area for concern. Initially planned for 9 weeks, PSO training has been pushed out to 12 weeks after public and parliamentary criticism. While PSOs will be required to take the same two-week operational tactics and safety training that is currently taken by police officers, VALS is concerned that like with police, training for PSOs will focus on weapons use without appropriate training provided to reduce the need for weapons use through methods of containment, negotiation and de-escalation techniques.

The Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Hon. R. A. Dalla-Riva, noted in parliament 30 August 2011 that PSOs will also receive community engagement and diversity training similar to that received by police officers. While VALS is pleased at this inclusion to the PSO 12 week training, we hold concerns for the quality of this and other cultural awareness training of Victoria Police and look forward to more detail on this area.

make the outcomes of this meeting available on our website.

**Parole.** The Victorian Attorney-General has tasked the Sentencing Advisory Council to review the Adult Parole Board Framework. VALS is in the process of drafting a submission that will call for procedural fairness in parole proceedings.

**Access to Justice.** The Parliament of Victoria is undertaking an Inquiry into access and interaction with the justice system by people with Intellectual and cognitive disability. The Inquiry will look at participants' knowledge of their rights; availability of appropriate support services and supports; dealings with police; and the operation of the courts. VALS is planning to make a formal submission to this Inquiry and has been granted an extension until 23 September.

# Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd

## 24 Hour Legal Service

### CURRENT ADDRESS

6 Alexandra Pde  
[P.O Box 218]  
Fitzroy VIC 3065

**1800 064 865 or 9419 3888**

### FUTURE ADDRESS (late 2011/early 2012)

273 High St  
Preston



*VALS was established in Victoria as a community controlled co-operative society in 1973 to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice system.*

*VALS plays an important role in providing referrals, advice, duty work or case work assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the State of Victoria.*

*VALS solicitors specialise in three areas of law, being criminal law, family law and civil law.*

*VALS maintains a strong client service focus which is achieved through the role of the Client Service Officer (CSO) CSOs act as a bridge between the legal system and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.*

**VALS is now on Facebook! Visit us there and on our website!**

**[www.vals.org.au](http://www.vals.org.au)**

## News In Short:

**Historic Victorian Stolen Generation compensation.** Neville Austin, a member of the Victorian Stolen Generation, received an out of court settlement on 24 June 2011 for compensation and an apology from the Victorian Government. Mr. Austin is the first victim of the Stolen Generation in Victoria to receive compensation.

**Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (YRIPP) given a future.** The Victorian Government showed support for YRIPP and secured the future of this important youth support service following the intervention of Deputy Premier and Minister for Police and Emergency Services Peter Ryan.

Mr Ryan acknowledged YRIPP in providing a free 24-hour service for young people who are interviewed by police when a parent or guardian was unavailable to attend the police station.

More than 350 trained volunteers attend over 100 police stations across Victoria to support to young people under the age of 18 who are being questioned by police. For more information about the YRIPP visit <http://www.cmy.net.au/YRIPP/YRIPPHome>

**New prize to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students.** The Federal Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, announced a new prize to recognise excellence amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are undertaking law studies. The Australian Government's "Indigenous Law Student of the Year" Prize acknowledges the achievements and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal students to Australia's justice system. The Prize will recognise law students who have not only achieved good academic results but have made

contributions to their community. The recipient will receive \$2,500 to further their legal studies. For more information go to <http://www.ag.gov.au/indigenouslegalaward>.

**Koori Graduate Recruitment.** The Department of Justice is recruiting for its 12 month Koori graduate scheme to start in January 2012. Applications close Friday 28 October. For more information head to their website at:

[www.justice.vic.gov.au](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au).

### **Artwork by Jarrod Atkinson**

**"Meeting Place" depicts families from different parts of the country coming together, trading weapons, ochre, food, knowledge at a very spiritual place.**