

# Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd

## Newsletter February 2005



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### Staff Update

VALS wishes to thank Graeme Davis (Acting Executive Officer - Legal Practice), who left VALS in February 2005, for his service. Graeme will do the Bar Readers Course to become a Barrister. VALS wishes to congratulate John Sutton on his appointment as Executive Officer - Legal Practice. VALS wishes to welcome Cilla Brookes to the position of Criminal Law Solicitor.

VALS wishes to thank Emma Venables who completed a three week placement at VALS as part of her Advocacy and Mediation Course at Victoria University. Emma undertook a valuable project of inquiring into levels of support service infrastructure for Indigenous Australians.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **Indigenous Women's Justice Forum - Invitation to Indigenous Australian and non-Indigenous Australian Men and Women**

The details of the next Indigenous Women's Justice Forum (IWJF) are as follows:

- Date: Tuesday 22 March 2005.
- Time: 9.30am – 4.00pm (lunch provided).
- Venue: Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre - Cnr Bell Street and St Georges Road, Preston.

To RSVP please contact Greta Jubb at VALS on: 9419 3888 or email [gjubb@vals.org.au](mailto:gjubb@vals.org.au).

VALS invites both Indigenous Australian and non-Indigenous Australian men and women to attend the forum to discuss the topic of family violence. VALS acknowledges that as family violence is a family issue it is important for men and women to meet together and not work in isolation.

#### **Men's Referral Service Telephone Counselor Training Program**

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited (VACSAL) is involved in a project with 'No to Violence Incorporated' (NTV) which attempts to meet the needs of Indigenous Australian men in the context of family violence. VACSAL and NTV are working together to provide training and support to Victoria's Indigenous community.

The Men's Referral Service Telephone Counselor Training Program is commencing soon. The information and selection day will be on Saturday 2nd April 2005 (contact: 9428 3536 or [mrs@ntv.net.au](mailto:mrs@ntv.net.au) for an application kit).

### **Nominations Sought For Koori Young Achiever Award**

Aboriginal Affairs Victoria is seeking nominations for the Koori Young Achiever Award until 1 April 2005. Winners of the Koori young Achiever Award will be announced during Youth Week in April 2005. People wanting to make a nomination for the award should contact Craig Horne (Communications Manager) at Aboriginal Affairs Victoria on 9208 3233 or email [craig.horne@dvc.vic.gov.au](mailto:craig.horne@dvc.vic.gov.au).

### **Victoria Police Consultations on Family Violence**

Victoria Police has received funding from the Law Enforcement Drug Fund to examine the response of Victoria Police to family violence in the Indigenous Australian community, particularly where drugs and alcohol are involved. Victoria Police will be conducting consultations as follows:

Mildura 17 <sup>th</sup> of March	Swan Hill/Robinvale 18 <sup>th</sup> of March
Echuca/Bendigo 19 <sup>th</sup> of April	Northern/Southern Metro 25 <sup>th</sup> of April
Shepparton 3 <sup>rd</sup> of May	Bairnsdale/Sale 17 <sup>th</sup> of May
Lake Tyers 18 <sup>th</sup> of May	Morwell/Warragul 24 <sup>th</sup> of May

### **Is Prison Obsolete? Sisters Inside 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference**

Sisters Inside is holding their 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on the topic of 'Is Prison Obsolete?' The details are as follows:

- Dates: 20-22 July 2005.
- Venue: Hotel Y (489 Elizabeth Street Melbourne VIC 3000).

Sisters Inside is seeking expressions of interest from female Indigenous Australians who have been in prison to participate in an Indigenous Australian panel. Participants on the panel will be given the opportunity to discuss Indigenous Australian women's experience of the prison system. The conference will be free of charge to such participants and is also free of charge for Elders.

For further information contact Sisters Inside on 07 3844 5066 or go to <http://www.sistersinside.com.au/conference2005.htm>

### **Facts about VALS**

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited (VALS) provides free legal and legal related services to Indigenous Australians. VALS is an Indigenous Australian community organization with an elected Board of Directors. VALS contains a Legal Practice Unit made up of criminal, family and civil law solicitors. VALS contains a

Research Planning and Development Unit made up of Research Officers and Community Legal Education Workers. VALS contains a Client Support Unit made up of four Client Service Officers in metropolitan Melbourne and six Client Service Officers in Regional areas. Client Service Officers act as a bridge between the Indigenous Australian community and the legal system.

### **Update on Request for Tender for the Purchase of Legal Services for Indigenous Australians**

In December 2004 VALS submitted a response to the request for tender for the purchase of legal services for Indigenous Australians, released by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. To date, the Attorney-General's Department has not announced who the successful tender bidder is. The successful tender bidder will commence operations as of 1 July 2005.

### **Research, Planning and Development Unit**

VALS is in the process of applying for funding for the Research, Planning and Development Unit from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department for 2005-2006. The Attorney General's Department has separated the funding of 'legal aid and related services' with 'law and justice advocacy services', as the former was not included in the request for tender for the purchase of legal services for Indigenous Australians. VALS recognises the need to not only provide legal casework assistance, but to also undertake research, become involved in law reform debates and undertake Community Legal Education.

### **Contact Details**

If you require information about the contents of this newsletter or wish to subscribe to the mailing list, please contact VALS. Previous newsletters are available on the VALS website.