

### What you can expect from HPLS

- Legal help from HPLS is free.
- HPLS will respect your right to privacy: everything you talk about with the lawyer will be confidential unless you agree otherwise.
- HPLS will treat you with respect.
- HPLS will give you advice, but it is your decision how you use it.
- If HPLS can't help with your legal problem, we will tell you who can.

### To contact HPLS

Visit one of the HPLS Clinics.

Phone: (02) 8898 6545

E-mail: [homelessproject@piac.asn.au](mailto:homelessproject@piac.asn.au)

For an electronic copy of this newsletter send us an e-mail to the above address.

### Contributors to this edition of *STREET RIGHTS* NSW

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### Your views and ideas

HPLS welcomes contributions to *STREET RIGHTS* NSW. If you have a comment about anything that's covered in this newsletter please contact HPLS.

HPLS would also love to hear from artists and cartoonists who want to contribute.

HPLS is very keen to get contributions from people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

### Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the firms that provide lawyers for the clinics: Allens Arthur Robinson, Baker & McKenzie, Clayton Utz, DLA Phillips Fox, Ebsworth & Ebsworth, Gilbert + Tobin, Henry Davis York and Minter Ellison.

And to the host welfare agencies: Edward Eagar Lodge; Matthew Talbot Hostel; Newtown Mission and Newtown Neighbourhood Centre; Parramatta Mission; The Station Ltd; Street Level Café; Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre.

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## THE HPLS CLINICS

Day (weekly)	Time	Location
Monday	10:00 am - 12:00 noon	The Station Ltd 82 Erskine Street, Sydney
Tuesday	11:00 am - 1:00 pm	Matthew Talbot Hostel 22 Talbot Lane, Woolloomooloo
Wednesday	11:00 am - 1:30 pm	Parramatta Mission 119 Macquarie Street, Parramatta
Wednesday	12:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Streetlevel Mission Derby Lane (off Albion St), Surry Hills
Thursday	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Edward Eagar Lodge 348a Bourke Street, Darlinghurst
Friday	11:00 am - 1:00 pm	Women's & Girl's Emergency Centre 177 Albion Street, Surry Hills
Friday	1:30 pm - 2:30 pm	Newtown Mission 2 Erskineville Road, Newtown

## Have you been the victim of a crime?

Unfortunately, sometimes people have awful experiences, like violence and abuse. However, if they happen, there are some ways to get help.

If you have been the victim of a crime in NSW, or if a member of your family has been murdered, you may be able to get **free counselling** to help you deal with your experience. You will need to complete and send in an application form to Victims Services, which is a NSW Government service.

If you were injured as the victim of a crime, you may also be able to get some money to pay for things you need because of the crime, like medical expenses not covered by Medicare, physiotherapy, new prescription glasses or contact lenses or new security for your property (such as changing locks). These are covered by the **Victims Assistance Scheme**, which is a new service starting in February 2007. You must apply within two years of the crime occurring. You only get money if you had to pay for at least \$200 of expenses because of the crime and the most you can get is \$1,500.

Some victims may also get more money as **compensation** for their injuries. This is only available to you if your injuries are assessed to be above a certain 'value'. Documents from hospitals or doctors can be useful in working this out so make sure you keep any records of them and any you get from the police. You should apply within two years of the crime, but you can sometimes get an extension of time especially for sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse claims.

The Homeless Persons' Legal Service lawyers can help you apply for counselling, money from the Victims Assistance Scheme and compensation. Talk to them if you have a question about these things.

The information here is about crimes done in NSW but, if you have been the victim of a crime in another state or territory, ask the lawyers to find out if any services are available to you.



### Launch of Newtown Legal Clinic

The new HPLS clinic at Newtown is being launched on Friday 2 February 2007 by the NSW Attorney General, the Hon Bob Debus MP. The clinic is held at Newtown Mission, staff from the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre attend and lawyers from DLA Phillips Fox provide the legal assistance.



**Homeless Persons'  
Legal Service**

Free Legal Help for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.  
See the back page for where to get legal help.

## Legal Aid Services

The Homeless Persons' Legal Service provides advice in many areas of law, but for family and criminal law matters, we will often recommend that you go to Legal Aid for help. Legal Aid NSW is paid for by the government, but it is an independent organisation.

### Advice

If you have to go to a Local Court for a criminal matter and you want Legal Aid, you should find the duty lawyer at 9:00am on your first day at court.

If:

- (a) your criminal matter is in the District or Supreme Court; or
- (b) you want to plead 'not guilty'; or
- (c) your case has been adjourned,

you should make an appointment to see a lawyer at the Sydney office by calling 9219 5000. At Parramatta, you can go to 91 Phillip Street without an appointment for criminal matters on Tuesdays 2:00-4:00pm.

If you have a family law problem (for example, about seeing your children), you can get free advice from Legal Aid without an appointment:

- on Mondays to Fridays, 9:00am-4:00pm, at 323 Castlereagh Street, Sydney; or
- on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 9:00-12:00noon, 1:00-4:00pm at Suite 502, Level 5, 91 Phillip Street, Parramatta.

### Ongoing Legal Help

If you need more than just advice about your legal problem, you may need to apply for ongoing legal help, which is called a grant of legal aid. This grant can be used to pay a private lawyer or a lawyer from Legal Aid. If you are successful in getting a grant, you may need to pay some money towards it, but this will depend on your financial situation. If you want ongoing legal help in family or criminal law, ask your caseworker or the lawyers from the Homeless Persons' Legal Service for the application form.

## Have Your Say

The NSW State Election will be held on Saturday, 24 March 2007. Everyone 18 years old or over who lives in the State has the right to vote. Voting means you get a say in who represents you in the NSW Parliament. It is important to vote for these reasons:

1. Voting gives you the chance to decide who will represent you in the Parliament.
2. By voting you get the chance to decide which political party will be the Government.
3. Your vote may be crucial in a marginal electorate.
4. Political parties undertake research about which groups of people vote for them. By voting, you can show that you want the politicians to take homelessness seriously.
5. Politicians are ultimately accountable to the electorate. That means you.

You can find out which party you agree with most on issues that affect you such as homelessness, housing or health care and vote accordingly. The more homeless people who enrol and vote, the more power and influence that homeless people and their advocates will have.

## Enrolling to Vote

postal ballot), your enrolment may be cancelled. Also, the Australian Electoral Commission will send you a letter asking for an explanation for not voting. If your reason is not considered good enough, you could be fined up to \$110. If you think you are in this situation, you should get advice from an HPLS lawyer about what you can do. The good news is that, if you send in your enrolment form, you can't get fined for not being enrolled before. If you want to vote in the March election, you must enrol as soon as possible.

### What is my electorate?

When you do enrol, you need to do so in a particular electorate. You also have to vote in that electorate unless you either make arrangements to complete a postal ballot or vote absentee. Your electorate will be:

- where you last lived for at least one month,
- where your next of kin is currently enrolled, if you have not previously been entitled to enrol,
- where you were born if neither of the above is applicable, or
- the area where you have the closest connection, if you were born outside Australia.

### Where do I vote?

In your electorate, the usual place to vote is at any polling station within the boundaries of that electorate. If you are not in your electorate on election day then you may cast an absentee vote at any polling station in NSW. If you are not in NSW on election day you can arrange a postal ballot or apply to register a pre-poll vote.

For further information on the NSW Election, contact the NSW Electoral Commission on 1300 135 736 (local call cost). For enrolment forms and information on how to enrol, contact the Australian Electoral Commission on 13 23 26 (local call cost). Or, for any questions about enrolling, voting or fines, contact your nearest HPLS clinic (details on the back page).



### Who can enrol to vote?

Homeless people who are Australian citizens are entitled to enrol to vote. You may enrol if you are an Australian citizen and you are 17 years of age or older. If you are 17 years old, you have to wait until you turn 18 before you can actually vote.

### How do I enrol?

The Australian Electoral Commission handles electoral enrolment for Federal, State and Local elections. This means you only have to fill out one form. If you have no permanent address, you need to complete the 'Application for Enrolment for Persons with No Fixed Address' form. You can get this form from the Commission or by asking the lawyers from the Homeless Persons' Legal Service. The lawyers can also help you complete the form and send it in.

### I'm worried about getting fined.

Enrolment and voting are not compulsory for people without a fixed address. However, if you enrol and then don't vote (either in person, by absentee or