

## 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<sub>NSW</sub>

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## Your views and ideas

HPLS welcomes contributions to *STREET RIGHTS<sub>NSW</sub>*. 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 PILCH members that provide lawyers for the clinics: Allens Arthur Robinson, Baker & McKenzie, Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Deacons, DLA Phillips Fox, Ebsworth & Ebsworth, Gilbert + Tobin, Henry Davis York, Legal Aid Parramatta and Minter Ellison.

And to the host welfare agencies: Edward Eagar Lodge, Matthew Talbot Hostel, Newtown Mission and Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, Norman Andrews House, Parramatta Mission, The Station Ltd, Street Level Café, Wayside Chapel, 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
Monday	10:00 am - 12:00 noon	Wayside Chapel 29 Hughes Street, Potts Point
Tuesday	11:00 am - 1:00 pm	Matthew Talbot Hostel 22 Talbot Lane, Woolloomooloo
Tuesday	12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Norman Andrews House 77 Roscoe Street, Bondi
Wednesday	11:00 am - 1:00 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 361 Riley Street, Surry Hills
Friday	1:30 pm - 2:30 pm	Newtown Mission 280a King Street, Newtown

## Trying to make changes for the homeless

The Homeless Persons' Legal Service has been doing work for a while on making the process of prison release fairer. One of our concerns is that the amount of money given to people when they are released from prison (the Centrelink Crisis Payment) is not enough to survive on for the first two weeks out. Many homeless people have told us about how hard they've found it coming out of prison, so now we're hoping that we can achieve some positive changes.

HPLS has also started to think about whether it should be against the law for people to be treated differently because they are homeless. A law like this may mean that, if you were going for a job, trying to get some accommodation, getting served at a shop or speaking to the government, they could not treat you any differently because you were or are homeless. If you feel that you have been treated differently because you are homeless and would like to share your story confidentially, please call Chris at HPLS on 8898 6510.

If you have any suggestions about other ways we can make things fairer for homeless people, please also feel free to call Chris at HPLS.



## Mental Health Legal Services Project

Two new staff at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre have been given the task of identifying the gaps in legal services available for people who are mentally unwell and to develop services to fill those gaps. At the moment, they are looking at what is currently happening and what other countries have done in this area.

If you have a mental illness and would like to make suggestions about how legal services could be best provided to people with mental illnesses, contact Stephen Kilkeary, the Project Co-ordinator, on 8898 6513 or [skilkeary@piac.asn.au](mailto:skilkeary@piac.asn.au).

## Problems with Identification?



If you are having trouble getting hold of ID, HPLS is happy to help. But, if you are doing it yourself, here are a couple of handy hints about dealing with a few places where you may need ID.

**Centrelink:** Many people think that if you have lost or don't have your ID, you can't get a Centrelink payment. However, Centrelink may let you get a payment for up to six months if you can answer some questions about yourself. When you go to Centrelink, explain that you're homeless and you have no ID. If you're still having trouble, ask to see a social worker.

**Medicare:** If you don't have ID and you're homeless, Medicare will give you a Medicare Card if you have a letter from your social worker, a Minister of Religion (including a Captain in the Salvation Army), a lawyer or a police officer that lets Medicare know that you are who you say you are.

If other places are asking for ID that you do not have, it is always worth explaining your situation in case they have another way through. If you are having trouble with ID, talk to a lawyer at an HPLS clinic (see the back of this newsletter).

One of the areas HPLS helps homeless people with is getting identity documents (ID). Being homeless can make it difficult to keep hold of ID. It can also be quite a challenge to get your ID from some government departments, especially if you have no ID on you at all!

## Can HPLS really help? Client Stories

HPLS can't guarantee happy endings for every matter but we'll certainly try to help. Here are two stories from the past few months...

**A woman** with a mental illness destroyed her identity documents during a psychotic episode. She was refused Centrelink payments for failing to have sufficient ID. Shortly afterwards, she spent five months in hospital. During that time her social workers tried in vain to have her Centrelink payments reinstated. On release from hospital, the woman saw HPLS lawyers who applied for a review of the decision to stop her payments. An Authorised Review Officer decided that Centrelink should pay the woman for the whole period her payments had stopped.

**An elderly man** living in a Department of Housing unit was verbally and physically abused by his neighbour to such an extent that he did not feel safe living there. He moved into an emergency shelter and tried to get a transfer with Department of Housing. The application was unsuccessful, his Department of Housing tenancy was terminated, and the man moved into an over-crowded boarding house in the city. HPLS lawyers helped the man get put back on the Priority Housing register and successfully transfer to a bed-sit apartment in an area he was familiar with but away from the previous neighbour.

If you would like to tell us about your experience of the legal system, you can contact HPLS on 8898 6545 or [homelessproject@piac.asn.au](mailto:homelessproject@piac.asn.au).

## Superannuation

If you have ever worked, it is possible that your employer paid superannuation into a fund for you. This money is kept for you by that fund. HPLS Lawyers can help you find out if you have any superannuation in a superannuation fund. They can also help you access it.

If you don't know if you have any superannuation or if you don't know where it is, there is a way to search for it. To do a search for lost superannuation, you need your full name, date of birth and tax file number. Then, you can call 13 28 65 or you can do the search on the internet at [www.ato.gov.au/superseeker](http://www.ato.gov.au/superseeker). If you want some help, see the HPLS Lawyers.

Usually there are rules about how old you must be before you can get the money held by your superannuation fund. But, if there are special reasons, you can ask the fund to give you the money earlier. For example, if you are having a really hard time financially or you are really sick and need the money, you could apply for the money to be released early. If you know where your superannuation is, you can contact the fund to ask about how to do this. If you are having trouble with this, feel free to talk to the HPLS Lawyers about sorting it out.



## How can HPLS help you?

You might have seen our new colourful posters. They list the types of things that HPLS can help with. Here they are:

- Fines
- Problems with government departments, banks and other organisations
- Appealing Department of Housing decisions
- Evictions and other problems with landlords and boarding house owners
- Appealing Centrelink decisions
- Debts and bankruptcy
- Problems with the Office of the Protective Commissioner or the Public Guardian
- Getting counselling and compensation for victims of violence and abuse

- AVOs (Apprehended Violence Orders)
- Problems with employment
- Discrimination
- What happens at court
- Criminal matters where there's no chance you'll go to jail
- Getting Legal Aid for criminal matters
- Filling in divorce forms
- Getting Legal Aid for family law (seeing your kids, separating from your ex-partner)

If we can't help you ourselves, we will give you some information and try to find a lawyer who will be able to help. For example, we will help you find a lawyer for immigration, writing wills, personal injury, most criminal law and family law.