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Introduction to the HPLC

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PILCH Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic

Overview

- About homelessness
- Homelessness and the law
- About the HPLC
- Homelessness and human rights
- HPLC policies and procedures

What is homelessness?

- Different definitions from different places...
 - Supported Accommodation Assistance Act
 - Australian Bureau of Statistics
 - UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
 - Other

The extent of homelessness

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8qZOINbKyw>

Some of the myths...

- It's their own fault;
- People should take more responsibility for their own lives and actions;
- People choose to be homeless;
- They're all lazy, welfare bludgers;
- It's because they've made bad choices in the past;
- It's only because they have drug/alcohol/mental health problems

The causes of homelessness

- Structural causes
- Social and fiscal policy causes
- Individual causes

Homelessness and the law

- Legal problems can cause, contribute to, or maintain homelessness
- Homelessness can cause, contribute to or maintain legal problems
- Resolution of legal problems can address homelessness

Overview of the HPLC

- Provides free legal assistance in the areas of civil, administrative and summary criminal law to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Undertakes significant law reform work, public policy advocacy and community legal education

Aims of HPLC

1. Provide free legal services to people experiencing homelessness in a professional, timely, respectful and accessible manner that has regard to their human rights and dignity.
2. Promote and protect human rights of people experiencing homelessness.
3. Use the law to redress unfair and unjust treatment of people experiencing homelessness.
4. Reform the law to redress unfair and unjust treatment of people experiencing homelessness.

Common legal issues

– Fines	39%
– Criminal	8%
– Debt	11%
– Personal injury (includes VOCAT)	11%
– Housing	11%
– Social security	5%
– Guardianship/Administration	3%
– Other	14%

Law Reform and Policy Activities

- Work to identify and redress laws that impact in a negative or discriminatory way against people experiencing homelessness
- Advocate for improved recognition of rights for homeless people in state and federal legislation:
- Consult with individuals who have experienced homelessness to ensure their voices and ideas are heard in the law reform process.

Human Rights Based Service Delivery

Delivers services in accordance with key human rights principles:

1. Treat people with dignity and respect;
2. Treat people with equality and non-discrimination;
3. Give primacy to client's voice and empathise;
4. Adopt a 'whole of person' approach;
5. Promote client empowerment and participation; and
6. Engage in systemic advocacy and public education.

Engage in Systemic Advocacy and Public Education

- Generate, engage in, contribute to and influence public debate, public policy and public expenditure.
- Promote view of poverty as a societal issue rather than an individual dysfunction.

Promote Client Participation and Community Development

- All persons have the right to self determination (*ICCPR*, art 1 and *ICESCR*, art 1) and to participate fully in public affairs and policy development (*ICCPR*, art 25)
- Promotes client autonomy, control and independence
- HPLC Consumer Advisory Group
- Consultations for law reform and public policy projects

Consumer Advisory Group

- CAG established in 2006.
- Significantly involved in community education, law reform, shaping public policy and training volunteer lawyers.
- 7 people from varying backgrounds who have experienced homelessness or who are currently homeless.

Consumer Advisory Group

- CAG meets monthly and provides invaluable guidance and advice
- CAG helps the Clinic improve the quality and accessibility of its legal services and its policy, education and community development activities.

Roles and responsibilities

- PILCH
 - Coordinates Clinic
 - Principal Solicitor
 - Holds Clinic Practising Certificate and PI Insurance
- Team Leaders at each firm
 - Liaise with agencies
 - Induct and roster lawyers to attend
 - Extranet/Review of status of matters

Roles and responsibilities

- Senior Lawyers at each firm
 - Supervise advice provided by volunteer lawyers
 - All advice must be checked by Senior Lawyer within 24 hours
- Volunteer lawyers
 - Attend Clinic as rostered
 - Provide oral and written legal assistance, advice and advocacy
 - Extranet
 - Law reform work

HPLC policies and procedures

- HPLC procedures (see quick guide)
- HPLC contact and matter closure forms
- HPLC referral manuals
- HPLC extranet
- HPLC website resources

HPLC resources

- PILCH intranet – www.pilch.org.au/hplc
 - Login: hplclawyer@pilch.org.au Password: teamleader
- Homelessness Law and Advocacy Resource Manual
- The Fitzroy Law Handbook 2007
- Senior Lawyers, Team Leaders
- HPLC staff
- Community legal centres
 - www.communitylaw.org.au

The HPLC team

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