



Issue 12

Autumn 2010

Does Australia Need a Human Rights Act

Despite much media in recent times the Government is still to make its position known on whether or not Australian should have a Human Rights Act. They have not made a response to the Brennan Committee's recommendation on the matter.

If you have a strong position on this matter now is the time to act: Lobby your local MP, the Attorney General or key cabinet members to let them know your feelings.

See also page 2 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Also in this issue

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2
Staff Movements	2
News from Tenancy	3
Family Law Information Session	4
Editors Bits including and farewell	4

New Family Law Service

Sussex Street Community Law Service Inc has joined with Community Law Centres and Family Relationship Centres throughout Western Australia to provide new services at the Family Relationship Centres.

These new services include weekly advice clinics, telephone advice and community legal education to both staff and clients. Sussex Street will be providing the services at both the Perth and Midland Family Relationship Centres.

These services will be delivered in conjunction with other metropolitan Community Legal Centres of Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre, Fremantle Community Legal Centre, Southern Communities Advocacy Legal and Education Service and the Gosnells Community Legal Centre on a roster system.

Prue Hawkins, the solicitor, who had been working part-time in the Disability Discrimination Unit (DDU) has been employed to deliver the services for Sussex Street. Prior to working in the DDU Prue was employed in a private law firm doing family and civil law.



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

“Leading disability organisations have partnered to form a project group which is compiling a shadow report on Australia’s implementation of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD). So introduces the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) website.

The extent to which the Australian Government has implemented the articles of CRPD is the main focus of the report. Currently the AFDO are conducting a survey of interested people and organisations on the experiences of persons with disabilities to assist in the preparation of the Shadow Report so that the views of persons with disability are represented to the United Nations as well as those of the Government.

The Shadow Report is expected to be released prior to October 2010 when the Government is due to report to the United Nations. In addition to the survey there is a workbook for organisations to complete and return. Both the survey and workbook can be found at <http://www.disabilityrightsnow.org.au/node/15> along with further information on the CRPD which Australia signed in March 2007 and ratified in July 2008.

More Secondees from Freehills

Sussex Street Community Law Service Inc continues to receive support from Freehills in many forms, including the wonderful support of the secondment program where solicitors attend the service on two week rotations.

The secondees undertake a range of tasks ranging from research into law and policy reform and community legal education matters, to casework including research on the matter, drafting documents and letters and working with the client to resolve their matter.

The service values this commitment from Freehills and thanks the secondees for their wonderful contribution .



Chanelle



Nichola



Marc



Nick



Olga

Staff Movements

Sussex Street has had some role changes in recent times. Karen Bird who has been the face of Sussex Street since March 2006 is training as a para-legal, and is working 2 days a week in the Tenancy unit. Zoé O’Neill who is our other Tenant Advocate is trying her hand in some different roles. She is currently working in the Disability Discrimination Unit and will then spend some time in family and civil law before returning to Tenancy.

Assistant Manager Denise Beer says she is pleased to be able to offer staff the opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge in other areas of the service. This makes for a more flexible and happier workplace.



NEWS FROM TENANCY

Jenny Cogan our Tenant Advocate has welcomed Karen Bird into Tenancy for a six month opportunity to hone her Para Legal skills in the role as part-time Tenant Advocate. Karen brings with her the experience and knowledge gained from working on front desk for three years. During that time Karen has gained a broad understanding of the issues faced by tenants and the legal aspects of the service.. Karen has her own caseload and has already resolved issues for clients.

The Tenancy Unit has been involved in the preparation of submissions to the Department and Government on a range of issues. We provided input to the Tenant Advocacy Service submission to Department of Housing encouraging them to reintroduce the third tier appeal process and met with the local MP to also raise the matter. A submission to Queensland Residential Tenancy Authority on the introduction of a National Data Base that is fairer and more transparent. Raised with the Department of Housing the outdated information on the internet in relation to the appeal process.

We held discussions with Department of Housing on the new housing intervention team in Cannington area, where we raised issues on the terms of reference and ways of working more effectively with Aboriginal elders and their extended families.



Jenny Cogan

The Tenant Advocate has also been busy providing a range of community legal education sessions. These have included presenting information on our services to a community forum at the Department of Housing offices in Cannington, attending Advocare to discuss our services and provide information on the Residential Tenancies Act and Homeswest policy, attendance at the Victoria Park Safety Committee to provide information on Sussex Street services in general and



Law Week Display

to discuss ways of working with the committee on issues involving difficult tenant issues. Presentation on services available at Sussex Street and how we can assist. We met with Ian Carter, a member of the federal government homelessness taskforce, to update him on the work of Sussex Street and how we are working to prevent eviction especially in the area of anti-social behaviour.

The Tenancy Unit mounted a display in the local library during Tenancy Week and participated in the Law Week display at the Park Shopping Centre which included providing information to the public.

Jenny Cogan has been with Sussex Street for two years. In addition to her work at Sussex Street Jenny has worked on the other side of the fence as a property manager for in a Real Estate Agent and in England as a Tenant Advocate. Her experiences have combined to make her knowledgeable in all areas of tenancy. She is a strong and passionate advocate for our clients.

Editors Bits

Farewells

Yikai Hoe has been on reception for the Night Legal Service since 2005. Yikai initially started with Sussex Street as a volunteer law student, where he then moved into casual employment both in the Night Legal Service and as relief reception on front desk as well. Yikai has made many friends at Sussex Street during that time. After



his graduation Yikai worked at Ernst and Young and still found time to do the Night Legal Service reception. We wish him well in the future as he moves into private practice in a law firm in Perth.

Odds and Sods

We were all saddened to hear that **Prue Hawkins** had a car accident in January which has resulted in her missing a minimum of 6 weeks off work due to a broken leg. The worst part of the accident though was that Prue missed going to the Big Day Out, especially given how difficult it was for her to get hold of tickets for the big event. Hurry back Prue. We all miss you.

Gloating time for **David Pugh** our solicitor in Welfare Rights: His son Duncan is represented Australia in the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in the 2 man Bobsled events. All the hard work paid off, congratulations to Duncan (and his proud parents) on his selection. It is not every day you get the chance to reach such milestones. Unfortunately the 2 man Bobsled team crashed putting end Duncan's participation.

Family Law Information Sessions

Sussex Street commenced Family Law Information Sessions in March. These sessions are approved and accredited by the Family Court. The attendees will receive a certificate approved by the Family Court for attending the session.

Sessions are held in the mornings and evening, upcoming dates in 2010 are

10 March	Children	10.00 - 11.00 am
24 March	Children	6.00 - 7.00 pm
	Property	7.00 - 8.00 am
14 April	Children	10.00-11.00 am
28 April	Children	6.00 - 7.00 pm
	Property	7.00 - 8.00 pm
12 May	Children	10.00 - 11.00 am
26 May	Children	6.00 - 7.00 pm
	Property	7.00 - 8.00 pm
16 June	Children	10.00 - 11.00 am
30 June	Children	6.00 - 7.00 pm
	Property	7.00 - 8.00 pm

Interested people can contact the office on 6253 9500 to make a booking.

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