

Homelessness & Human Rights in Victoria- Using Human Rights as an advocacy tool for ending homelessness- “doing rights” in casework, organisational change & law reform

16 November 2010

10.00am – 1.00pm, Karstens at CQ Conference Centre,
Level 3, 123 Queen St, Melbourne

AGENDA

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| 9.30 – 10.10am | Registration |
| 10.00- 10.10am | Welcome and acknowledgment of Country
<i>Carolyn Atkins, Deputy Director, VCOSS</i> |
| 10.10-10.55am | Introduction of Panel Members and Panel Presentations
– Achieving Individual Change
<i>James Farrell</i>
<i>Manager/Principal Lawyer, PILCH Homeless Persons’ Legal Clinic</i>
<i>Tiffany Overall</i>
<i>Advocacy and Human Rights Officer, Youthlaw</i>
(Biographies provided overleaf) |
| 10.55-11.35am | Panel Presentations – Achieving Organisational Change
<i>Jason Rostant</i>
<i>Manager, Community Engagement, Planning and Development,</i>
<i>Western Region Health</i>
<i>Giulia Bastoni, Consumer, Council to Homeless Persons</i>
(Biographies provided overleaf) |
| 11.35-11.55am | Panel Presentation – Achieving Law Reform
<i>Michelle Burrell</i>
<i>Chief Executive Officer, Council to Homeless Persons</i> |
| 11.55-12.15pm | Participant questions |
| 12.15-1.00pm | Thank you |
| 12.20-1.00pm | Lunch and close |



Panellists - Bios

James Farrell, Manager/Principal Lawyer, PILCH Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic

James Farrell is the Manager/Principal Lawyer of the PILCH Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic, a specialist legal service established in response to the great unmet need for targeted legal services for people experiencing homelessness. The Clinic offers free weekly legal services at 13 outreach locations that are accessed already by people who are homeless for basic needs (such as soup kitchens and crisis accommodation facilities) and social and family services. More information is available at www.pilch.org.au/hplc/.

James is a former corporate lawyer with a variety of experiences in community organisations, and holds undergraduate degrees in commerce and law (with honours), and postgraduate qualifications in law, legal practice and applied human rights.

Tiffany Overall, Advocacy and Human Rights Officer, Youthlaw

Tiffany Overall is the Advocacy and Human Rights Officer at Youthlaw, a specialist community legal centre in Victoria for young people under 25 years. Youthlaw works to achieve systemic responses to the legal issues facing young people, through casework, policy development, advocacy and preventative education programs, within a human rights and social justice framework.

Tiffany has worked in the community sector for 16 years as a legal and law reform advocate, including over 9 years in community legal centres.

Jason Rostant, Manager, Community Engagement, Planning & Development, Western Region Health

Jason Rostant graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work in 1994 and has worked in a variety of policy, education and direct service delivery roles in government and NGO settings. From 1994-96 he volunteered full time on the Tasmanian gay law reform campaign, before spending four years working in youth homelessness in Hobart and Sydney, and another two establishing Tasmania's first funded coming out support service. Between 2003-05 Jason was an advisor to the Australian Democrats Senate team on sexuality and gender issues, disability, and the occasional attorney-general and justice issues that especially interested him – most notably proposed changes to the SDA and DDA. In 2005 he moved to Melbourne, and following eight months as a drug and alcohol policy officer, moved to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission where he managed human rights education for the four years immediately following the Charter's enactment. In October 2010 Jason commenced in his current role as Manager Community Engagement, Planning and Development at the Western Region Health Centre



Michelle Burrell, Chief Executive Officer, Council to Homeless Persons

Ms Michelle Burrell was appointed as Council to Homeless Persons CEO in February 2010. She was previously Deputy Director of the Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS), the peak body representing NGOs in NSW.

Michelle managed the Victorian Government consultation on the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act* before becoming Manager, Community Law Reform at the Victorian Law Reform Commission.

Prior to joining CHP, Michelle was Senior Adviser, Strategic Projects at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission where she managed the research and policy arm of the Commission, specialising in issues of systemic discrimination.

Giulia Bastoni, Consumer

Since early adulthood I have been in and out of prison and mental health institutions due to drug addiction. As a result I experienced homelessness on numerous occasions. Having had a transformative experience in Christ, I am drug free and now work in a call centre. I am studying screenwriting at RMIT and have been a volunteer at the Homelessness Advocacy's Peer Education Support Program. I also participate on the Council to Homelessness Person's Policy Advisory Committee. I have a two bedroom apartment with the Ministry of Housing where I am able to have my grandchildren come to stay with me on weekends. I have been clean and free from offending behaviour for over six years.



Community sector survey

– Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

VCOSS is undertaking this survey as a follow-up to its 2008 report, *Using the Charter in Policy and Practice*. This report examined the changes that had been made by community sector organisations to incorporate the Charter - and human rights principles more broadly - into organisational policies, procedures or service delivery. It included substantial appendices providing examples from the organisations surveyed including a Project Plan, a Human Rights Committee's Terms of Reference, a Watching Brief, and examples of revised policies. The 2008 report is available on the VCOSS website: www.vcross.org.au

The intention of this survey is to document the further changes made by community sector organisations to incorporate the Charter into organisational policies, procedures and/or service delivery. The survey results will be compiled into a follow-up report to be published later in 2010.

BACKGROUND

It has been four years since the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (the Charter) was introduced, and it is due for review in 2011. The Charter includes many universal rights contained in international human rights treaties ratified by Australia and requires Government and public authorities to observe human rights when making laws and providing services.

VCOSS has been actively involved in the development and implementation of the Charter, from conducting consultations around its introduction to advocacy, training of community sector workers and advocates, education and publications and a report on the ways in which community sector organisations are using the Charter in policy and practice.

In order to ensure that the experiences of community sector organisations are included in the review, VCOSS is documenting community sector views and experiences of the Charter and human rights through four human rights forums and a survey. The findings from the survey and forums will be compiled in a final report to the Department of Justice in late 2010.

SURVEY

Please take the time to fill out the attached survey **by the end of November 2010** – your input is greatly appreciated!

If you would prefer to provide feedback verbally regarding your organisation's experience of the Charter and its impact on organisational policy, practice and/or service delivery, please contact Christiane Gurner, Human Rights Officer at VCOSS –

T: 03 9654 5050

E: christiane.gurner@vcross.org.au.

Thank you for your participation.

