

SPRINGVALE MONASH LEGAL SERVICE INC. - DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

SPRINGVALE MONASH LEGAL SERVICE INC. OVERVIEW

Springvale Monash Legal Service Inc. (SMLS) is an independent community legal service which provides free and accessible legal services to the community and undertakes community development (CD) and law reform (LR) activities to empower and support members of our community to use the law and legal system to protect and advance their rights.

SMLS operates from a community centre at 5 Osborne Avenue, Springvale and is the largest community legal centre in Victoria. It is staffed by clinically supervised later-year undergraduate law students of the Faculty who are enrolled in *Professional Practice*, and by volunteers and specialist case and policy workers. Students and volunteers are clinically supervised by qualified solicitors who have both conventional and honorary appointments in the Faculty.

SMLS receives ongoing funding and other support from:

- State and Federal governments through Victoria Legal Aid (VLA)
- Monash University Law Faculty
- City of Greater Dandenong

Project funding is also sought from government and other sources as the need arises.

SMLS is an independent body incorporated pursuant to the *Associations Incorporations Act 1981* as an incorporated association. Although we receive our funding through government sources, we are not connected in any way to the Public Service and are independently controlled by a Board of Directors.

SMLS is open from Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday 6.00pm to 7.30pm and Tuesday to Thursday 7.00 pm to 8.30 pm. There are nine client intake sessions a week, which provide free generalist legal assistance. For session times, see www.smls.com.au. SMLS also provides specialist legal services through our Child Support Legal Practitioners, Litigation Advocate, Migration Agent and Family Violence Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal Coordinator. In addition, we operate a sexual assault clinic which is staffed by 'Advanced PP' students and volunteers under supervision of a community legal practitioner.

SMLS WORKERS

SMLS consists of 21 paid staff: Director, Legal Practice Manager, 3 Professional Practice Supervisors, Civil Litigation Advocate, 2 Child Support Solicitors, Community Development Worker, Volunteer Program Coordinator, Family Violence Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) Coordinator, South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA) Supervisor, Migration Agent, Migration Worker Legal Assistant, Administration Manager, Finance Worker, IT Network Administrator, and 4 Administration Workers.

SMLS has between 24 and 27 Monash University Professional Practice and up to 12 Law Reform and Community Development students per trimester.

SMLS also has up to 50 volunteers who staff evening legal advice sessions, and the SECASA clinic.

SMLS VISION, VALUES AND MISSION

Vision:

- To create a just, fair and moral society through equal accessibility to the legal system for all members of the community.

Values:

- The empowerment and support of members of our community in order to enable them to use the law and the legal system to protect and advance their rights and broaden their awareness of their responsibilities.
- Developing the confidence, skills and ethical conduct of Monash University Law Faculty students through clinical legal education in a community environment.

Mission:

- To provide legal services to the socio-economically disadvantaged members of our community, predominantly from the City of Greater Dandenong region and its surrounds.

SMLS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELEVANT TO DISABILITY ACTION PLAN (DAP)

2.1 Access and Equity

2.2 Freedom from Harassment and Discrimination

2.5 Occupational Health and Safety

6.1 Equal Opportunity

6.2 Access and Equity in the Workplace

REASONS FOR CREATING A DAP

- SMLS is committed to having a Disability Action Plan to work towards a more inclusive and accessible workplace for staff, and service for clients.
- SMLS actively works towards being non-discriminatory in all areas.
- SMLS also recognises the need to be compliant with legislative requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

SMLS DAP OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

1. Building accessibility – All workers and clients able to operate within and access service without difficulty
2. Information and communication – Information provided in various, accessible formats
3. Service delivery – All workers are trained in and responsive to needs of people with disabilities, and resources available to meet these needs
4. Workplace equity – Workplace equity upheld, with dignity and respect enjoyed by everybody

SMLS DAP EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REPORTING

- SMLS will build DAP monitoring and evaluation into Policies and Procedures Manual (PPM) and CLSP Plan 2008-2011.
- SMLS will report on progress of DAP in 6 monthly CLSP Plan 2008-2011 progress reports, Board progress reports and in staff meetings.

SMLS DAP COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

SMLS will publicise DAP on our website, in job advertisements and pamphlets and other promotional materials.

Objective 1:

BUILDING ACCESIBILITY

Improve SMLS' physical accessibility to ensure that all workers and clients are able to operate within and access the service without difficulty.

Issue	Action to Overcome or Remove Issue	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Responsible Position(s)
SMLS building is owned by the City of Greater Dandenong and all changes must go through them.	Consult with City of Greater Dandenong with a view to eliminate access barriers to the building for people with disabilities.	6 – 24 months	Time required to negotiate with City of Greater Dandenong and Council approved Architects	Director
SMLS requires more information on building accessibility for people with disabilities.	Ensure meetings/ workshops are held in spaces that provide disability access for people with disabilities.	On going	Incorporate into planning of the workshops and seminars.	LPM/Supervisors/CD Worker and/or Admin Manager

Objective 2:

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

To ensure written and verbal information is provided in various, accessible formats.

Issue	Actions to Overcome or Remove Issue	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Responsible Position(s)
Availability of information in alternative formats.	Ensure that information can be made available in alternate formats on request.	On going	Consultation with Vision Australia, Victorian Deaf Society (VicDeaf)	Legal Supervisor
	Investigate resources available to provide information in alternative formats.	On going		Legal Supervisor
	Investigate options for making SMLS website accessible, and implement if resources available.	Every 6 months	Consultation with Vision Australia. "Bobby" approved website – international agreement	IT Network Administrator
	Website to be designed/updated to be compliant with disability access recommended guidelines.	Every 6 months/ Implement where possible		IT Network Administrator
CLE/CD workshops only presented in verbal English (with interpreters for other CALD participants).	Provide workshops in accessible manner using assistive technology.	On going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VITS/VicDeaf Budget. • Audio/Visual presentation of seminar/activities 	Legal Practice Manager/Supervisors /Community Development Worker
	Improve access to seminar and community education activities.	On going	Translation of pamphlets	Legal Practice Manager/Supervisors /Community Development Worker

Objective 3:

SERVICE DELIVERY

To ensure all workers are trained in and responsive to the needs of people with disabilities, and that resources are available to meet these needs.

Issue	Actions to Overcome or Remove Issue	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Responsible Positions(s)
Disability awareness training	Identify appropriate training opportunities.	On going	SMLS Training Budget. CGD training available to SMLS.	Line Managers
	Encourage staff and volunteers to attend training within available resources.	On going	Training budget; Staff time	Line Managers
Policy Manual to incorporate DAP	SMLS DAP to be incorporated into SMLS Strategic Work Plan	December 2009		Admin Manager