

Kristen Hilton

Director, Civil Justice, Access and Equity
Victoria Legal Aid
350 Queen Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

Cc: Stan Winford, Chair, Mental Health Legal Centre

11 February 2013

Mental Health Community Legal Centre

Dear Kristen,

I refer to our telephone conversation of 7th February in which you advised of a decision by the Victoria Legal Aid Board not to renew the service agreement of the Mental Health Legal Centre (MHLC), post 30 June 2013.

We acknowledge VLA's significant concerns around the past governance of the MHLC but note that a new Board was appointed in November 2012 and they are working to put in place a strong governance and administrative structure in order to ensure continued quality representation, advice and advocacy is provided for people living with a mental illness in Victoria. We also acknowledge the work of VLA staff in assisting the centre renew its governance arrangements and note our disappointment that VLA has not allowed time for these new arrangements to take effect.

In the longer term, we expect the Federation's Strategic Plan, and in particular our initiatives around accreditation and workforce development, will help to ensure consistent, quality CLC services and management.

We urge VLA to re-consider your decision to cut funding for the Mental Health Legal Centre. The defunding of this independent community legal centre dedicated to helping people living with a mental illness makes little sense given the growing need for advice and representation that will flow from the State Government's mental health reform agenda. Reversing this decision would ensure the complementary CLC and legal aid service delivery continues to be provided to these most vulnerable members of the community.

Level 3
225 Bourke Street
Melbourne
Victoria 3000

Tel: 03-9652 1500
Fax: 03-9654 5204
administration@fclc.org.au
www.communitylaw.org.au

Federation of
Community Legal Centres
(Victoria) Inc
Registration A0013713H
ABN 30 036 539 902

We would be happy to discuss this issue further with you and welcome an opportunity to meet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claudia Fatone', is centered on a light yellow rectangular background.

Claudia Fatone

Acting Executive Officer

Direct line (03) 9652 1504