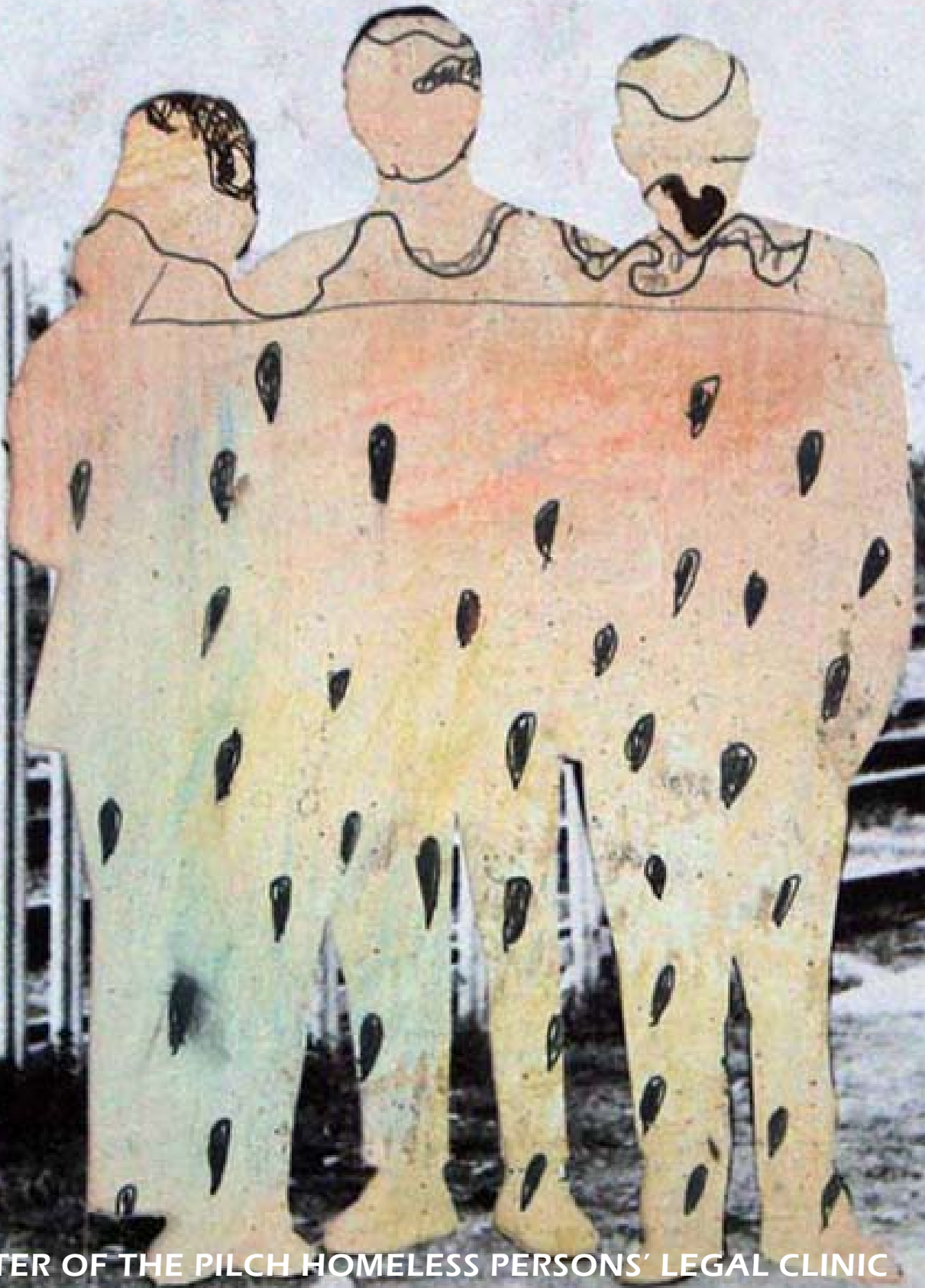


# STREET RIGHTS



NEWSLETTER OF THE PILCH HOMELESS PERSONS' LEGAL CLINIC  
**EDITION 41** AUGUST 2008

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# We Need Big Bucks - and the Government is Up For It

That is the message heard from the panellists at Melbourne Citymission's 2008 Homelessness breakfast, held on Thursday 7 August.

The panel was comprised of Richard Wynne (Victorian Minister for Housing and Local Government), Brendan O'Connor (Federal Minister for Employment and Participation), Deb Tsobaris (CEO – Council for Homeless Persons), Linda Rubinstein (Pro Bono Director, Holding Redlich) and Claire Nyblom (General Manager - Youth and Homelessness, Melbourne Citymission).

The tone of the morning was optimistic, and all panel members acknowledged the commitment that the Rudd Government has made to fixing the homelessness crisis.

The consensus was that there is a desperate need for significant investment in public and social housing. After 10 years of virtually no investment in this area, the community sector is looking for a multi billion dollar funding injection to meet the shortfall of housing, especially given that we are experiencing the tightest rental market on record.

The government is responding, we were told. It is committed to reducing homelessness in a significant way by 2020.

A target of halving homelessness by 2020 was put forward by the community sector. Whether or not this target makes it into the federal Government's White Paper to be released later this year remains to be seen.

As well as the shortfall in housing options, the panellists' discussion also focused on employment services and job opportunities for people experiencing homelessness. Job services, they said, need to be a lot more flexible to assist people whose homelessness makes finding and maintaining employment a difficult

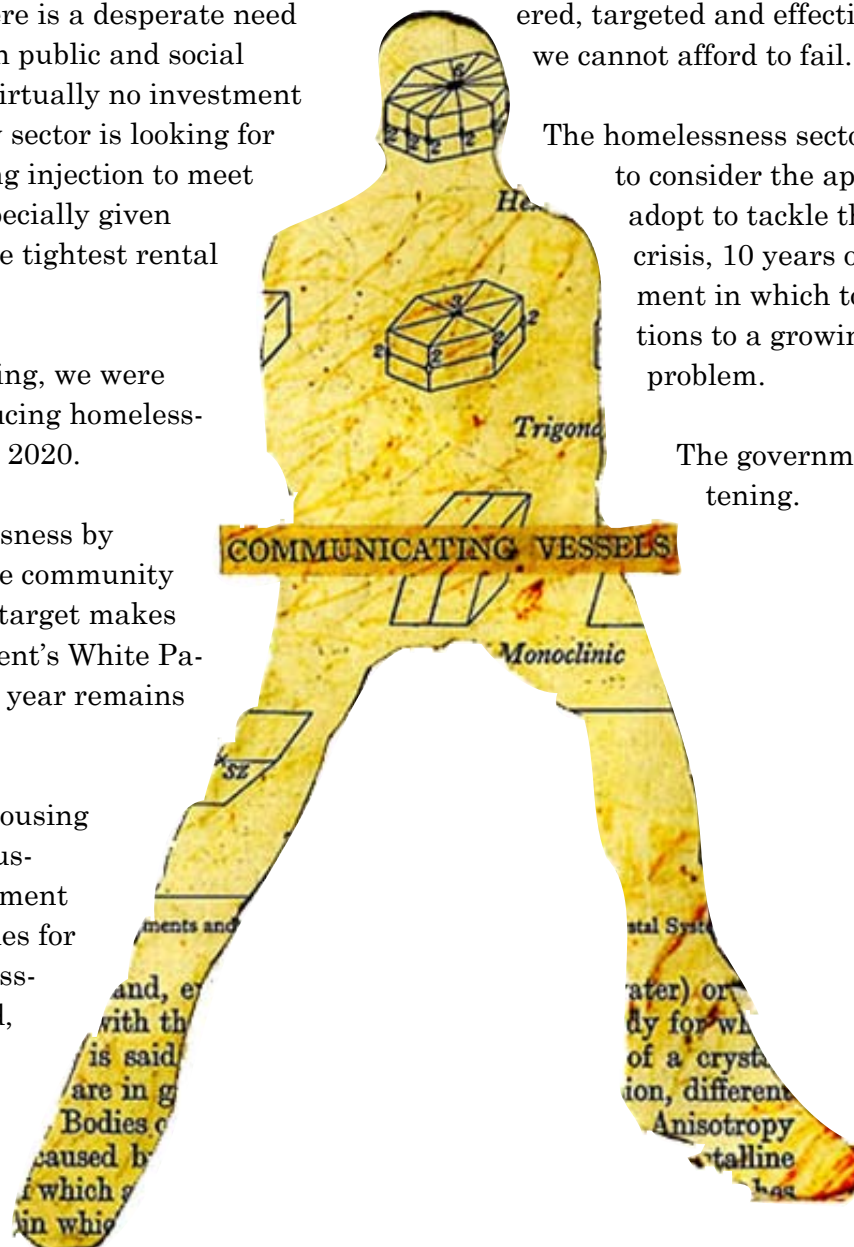
task. We also need to invest in long term employment opportunities. A short term contract for a person experiencing homelessness can be worse than no opportunity at all, as it sends a message of failure to people who may in fact have performed very well during their contract term.

The panel quoted the statement that Australia is a world leader in pilot programs; however they pointed out that it is time to cement some of those programs, so as to provide stability to the homelessness sector. Their message was that we need programs that continue past next year's budget, that extend beyond the next election or the next political cycle. We need programs that provide real and lasting solutions.

Finally, the panel discussed at length the need for a new approach to homelessness which is considered, targeted and effective – as was said, we cannot afford to fail.

The homelessness sector has had 10 years to consider the approach we should adopt to tackle the homelessness crisis, 10 years of minimal investment in which to dream up solutions to a growing and pervasive problem.

The government says it is listening.



# What are My Rights? Proof of Identity

To access Centrelink and other social or community services you will need to prove who you are. To prove your identity these services will generally require you to produce a number of different documents. You will often need to provide one form of photo identification.

The following identification documents are generally accepted (often in combination):

- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Immigration documents
- Drivers licence
- Bank cards (credit or debit)
- Health cards (health care card/ Medicare card)
- Utility bills (gas, electricity, water bills)

If you have lost, had stolen or do not have some of the above identification (for example, you do not have a car or have not traveled overseas recently) then you may find it difficult to prove who you are for the purposes of accessing Centrelink and other services.

## Centrelink

If you are having difficulty proving your identity at Centrelink you should ask to speak to a POI Officer and explain your situation to them. Centrelink has an alternative process available for people having difficulty meeting the proof of identity requirements.

If you are unable to meet the proof of identity requirements Centrelink should provide you with the form 'Questions for Persons with Insufficient POI'. This form contains questions that should only be able

to be answered by you. Centrelink may accept this form as alternative proof of identity, combined with some other documentation that proves your identity. However, you will still be required to obtain and provide them with further proof of identity documentation. The amount of time someone has to provide documentation before their payments are reviewed depends on the reason they accessed the alternative proof of identity process.

## Medicare

If you cannot meet the proof of identity requirements to obtain a Medicare card, Medicare may accept a letter from either:

- A social worker
- Minister of Religion/Captain in the Salvation Army
- Member of the Legal Profession
- Police Officer

The letter of support should verify your identity and be provided on letterhead. It should also indicate the length of time that the writer has known you. Medicare may grant you a Medicare card based on the above letter of support.

## Birth Certificate

If you make an application to obtain a copy of your birth certificate, you will need to provide 3 forms of identification. The proof of identification process for obtaining a copy birth certificate is relatively inflexible and an application for a copy birth certificate costs approximately \$26.

If you have difficulty meeting the proof of identity requirements when

## Q&A

Kristy Cappellotto  
DLA Phillips Fox



### What inspires you to volunteer as a lawyer at HPLC?

I volunteer at the Koonung Clinic because of my special interest in mental health, after my own experience with mental illness in my family.

### What do you do when you're not being a lawyer?

When I'm not being a lawyer, I'm watching Boston Legal wishing I worked with Denny Crane. When I'm not watching Boston Legal, I enjoy cake.

applying for a copy birth certificate, you may wish to discuss with a lawyer drafting a statutory declaration which sets out why it is difficult for you to provide all the required documentation and why you are who you say you are. This statutory declaration, along with other documents, should assist.

If you require further assistance, contact:

Caroline Adler, HPLC Manager/  
Principal Lawyer or Amy Barry-  
Macaulay, HPLC Lawyer on 1800  
606 313.

# The CAG Chronicle August 2008

## A rant with a rave review

I was recently given the opportunity to speak to a group of young lawyers as part of their HPLC induction training. I chose to speak on the right to participate.

As I walked into the law firm where the training was being held, my breath was taken away and the view of Melbourne from the 50th floor was absolutely spectacular. We then made our way into the auditorium and after some general introductions I was the first cab off the rank. As I collected my thoughts, I looked down to see 100 faces staring back at me in anticipation and I realized that this opportunity and interaction was what the right to participate was all about.

The right to participate encompasses many aspects; most importantly, it is about giving marginalized and disadvantaged members of the community a voice and empowering them to speak up. It is also about breaking down barriers within the community so that their voices are heard and acted upon.

After I had given my speech, a young lawyer approached me, introduced himself and asked if he could quote me. I was flattered and pleased that someone had listened and heard what I had to say.

Being able to engage in public speaking with the CAG not only provides me with a good opportunity to improve my public speaking skills, but such positive feedback instills in me self-confidence and self-esteem. It also clearly shows that the audience gets a lot out of it too.

- Diarmuid Shaw

## HPLC good news story

### Proof of ID

An HPLC client has been sleeping on the streets for more than four years and has no contact with his family. Major flooding in 2004 swept away many of his possessions and left him without any forms of official identification. HPLC lawyers John Fogarty and Dan Perkins successfully applied to the Department of Births, Deaths and Marriages to re-issue the client's Certificate of Birth. HPLC also acted on behalf of the client in his dealings with Medicare and the State and Federal Electoral Commissions. After many years of being unable to prove his identity, our client proudly voted in the 2007 Federal election. The HPLC is now helping the client to get photo ID.

\* Names have been changed

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214 Nicholson Street  
Footscray 3011  
Mon: 10:30am - 1:00pm  
Footscray train station - Tram 82 (Droop St)

Ozanam House  
179 Flemington Rd  
North Melbourne 3051  
Tues: 10:00am - 12:00pm  
Flemington Bridge train station  
Trams 55, 59, 68 (Flemington Rd)

Urban Seed (Credo Café)  
174 Collins St, Melbourne 3000  
(Approach via Baptist Pl, off Little Collins)  
Tues: 12:00pm - 1:00pm

Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation  
9 Roden St,  
West Melbourne 3003  
Tues: 1:00pm - 2:30pm  
North Melbourne train station - Tram 57  
(Victoria St)

Salvation Army Life Centre  
69 Bourke Street  
Melbourne 3000  
Tues: 12:30pm - 2:00pm

The Lazarus Centre  
203 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne 3000  
By appointment - call 9639 8510

St Peter's Eastern Hill  
15 Gisborne Street  
East Melbourne 3002  
Wed: 7:30am - 9:00am  
Parliament train station - Trams 24, 42, 109  
(Victoria Pde)

Hanover Southbank  
52 Haig St, Southbank 3205  
Wed: 1:15pm - 3:00pm  
Spencer Street train station - Tram 112  
(Clarendon St)

HomeGround Housing  
1A/68 Oxford Street  
Collingwood 3066  
Thurs: 12:00pm - 2:00pm  
Collingwood train station - Tram 86 (Smith St)

VACRO  
116 Hardware Street  
Melbourne 3000  
Thurs: 1.00 - 3.00pm  
Melbourne central station - Tram 19, 57 and  
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Koonung Mental Health Clinic  
Friday 1pm - 3pm  
Level 1, 43 Carrington Rd  
Box Hill 3128  
Ph: (03) 9843 5800

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Level 1, 550 Lonsdale st.  
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(03) 9225 6684 or 1800 606 313  
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