

Media Release

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\$2.6 million awarded for access to justice programs

The Victorian Legal Services Board has awarded \$2.6 million in grants to nine community support programs in the Board's 2014 Major Grants round.

The funding will be used to improve access to justice for people in vulnerable situations across metropolitan and regional areas of Victoria.

Board Chairperson, Fiona Bennett, said most of the programs funded involved a relatively new model of service delivery where community legal services were integrated with local health service providers.

'Legal and health issues often arise simultaneously, especially for people experiencing disadvantage such as financial stress, family violence, homelessness or the impacts of substance abuse', Ms Bennett said.

The Board will fund eight legal-health alliances across the state to provide services to vulnerable people including new mothers, young people, older Victorians and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Each alliance will be funded for between two to three years.

'These new services will make available much needed legal assistance to clients in a convenient, safe and timely manner,' Ms Bennett said.

Another grant was awarded to the Federation of Community Legal Services for a one-year program to help families bereaved by family violence-related deaths. This program will assist families to access legal and other assistance throughout the duration of the coronial process.

'The Board is very pleased to have the opportunity to support such innovative programs which will help address the unmet legal needs of people in crisis situations,' Ms Bennett said.

Since 2007 the Board has awarded over \$26 million for programs to address gaps in legal services and legal education in Victoria. All grants are approved by the Victorian Attorney-General on the recommendation of the Board.

Further details of the programs which shared in the annual Major Grants round are available from the Board's website <http://www.lsb.vic.gov.au/grants/>

The Victorian Legal Services Board is the peak regulator of the legal profession in Victoria. The Grants Program is funded through the Public Purpose Fund, which is administered by the Board.

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