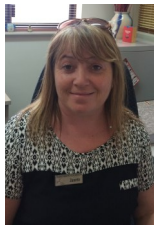


February 2016

Pilbara Community Legal Service E-News

Welcome to our Pilbara Community Legal Service E-News for February 2016.

PCLS would like to welcome Lynn Hart to the team who is our new Financial Counsellor. Lynn commence with us on 29 February 2016 and will be working Monday to Tuesday in our Karratha office and Wednesday to Friday in our Roebourne office



On 18th March we will be saying goodbye to Janette Tallon our Domestic Violence worker- Karratha office. Janette is leaving us to move back East. Janette will be very much missed. We wish her all the best for the future.

Many clients present with tenancy issues, when it is too late. Read page 2 to see how our tenancy advocates can assist you and how to prevent legal action from being taken against you in regard to your tenancy.

If you are interested in learning more about financial issues, domestic violence issues, tenancy issues or legal issues contact our office and let us know. PCLS is committed to educating the people of the Pilbara . See page 5 for information on our Hedland financial counselling workshop.

Have you been turned away for a legal issue because of "conflict of interest" and don't understand what that actually means? See page 5 for an explanation so you have a better understanding.

Pilbara Community Legal Service is a not for profit Government funded agency managed by a Board of Management and supported by a CEO and administrative staff. PCLS has four office locations, Karratha, Roebourne, South Hedland and Newman, however our services are delivered throughout the Pilbara region to isolated communities which include: Talka Warra, Yandiyarra, Marble Bar, Nullagine and Jigalong with occasional visits to Onslow, Tom Price and Paraburdoo.

Our goal is:

To make sure that cost or access isn't a barrier to people in the Pilbara receiving the advice they need.

We assist in the areas of:

Financial counselling— provide financial service information, budgeting, advocacy and support services for the purposes of assisting individuals who are in financial difficulty due to circumstances such as debt, over-commitment, unemployment, sickness or family breakdown.

Tenancy— provide tenancy advocacy, education and support services to tenants facing difficulties maintaining their tenancy. We assist and support people who are experiencing homelessness and ensure they are linked with mainstream services.

Legal— provide free education to the community as well as legal advice, primarily in the areas of Family Law, Criminal Injuries Compensation, Wills and Deceased Estates (we do not provide criminal law advice).

Domestic Violence- Provide support and advocacy for victims of domestic violence/ at risk clients, promoting safety planning to help ensure client wellbeing whilst helping to resolve crisis. DV assists with access to other related services such as legal advice, accommodation, health, income support and financial counselling.

To find out more about our service:

- Visit our website: www.pcls.net.au
- Drop by to make an appointment at one of our four offices.
- 8am – 4pm weekdays.



See our Tenancy Advocate Before its too Late!



Pilbara
Community Legal
Service's Tenancy



Advocates Flor and Sue assist private and public housing tenants in the Pilbara region with different housing issues. The past few months have shown a large number of tenants receiving breach notices for non-payment of rent.



When a tenant receives a breach notice immediate contact should be made with one of our tenancy advocates at one of PCLS' office to discuss options. Our tenancy advocates assist tenants to organise payment plans or make negotiations with Real Estates Agents or Housing Authority's Officers to stop further legal action. Tenants are seeking assistance close to the date termination notices expire or a few days before their court case. There is not much our advocates can do to secure your housing at that point.

When renting a property tenants have the option to pay their rent weekly or fortnightly, with a majority of tenants choosing to pay weekly. Tenants must take note that when using online banking to pay for their rent, it can take 2-3 business days to show that

payment has been made. Tenants need to make payments a few days before the due date to avoid receiving a breach notice for being behind with their rent. If tenants choose to have automatic withdrawals taken out of their bank account or Centrelink account it is their responsibilities to ensure the right amount has been taken out to avoid being in rental arrears.

Rent is not the only reason a tenant can receive a breach notice. If water consumption has not been paid for a period of time tenants can be issued with a breach notice. It is best for tenants to pay their water bills as soon as they are received. Tenants in a Housing Authority property that have payment plan arrangements for their water bills, need to ensure they are checking to make sure their fortnightly payment arrangements match the amount of their water bill they are charged every 2 months.

Causing damages to a property and failing to report damages or failing to maintain property standards can result in a breach notice. It is the tenants responsibility to report any damages or broken items in order for the to be rectified. If tenants do not report damages or broken items to the lessor and it looks like it could have been

caused by the tenant, then legal action can be taken. Tenants should always treat their property like it is their own.

Tenants in a Housing Authority property who have a vacated debt or tenant liability, need to arrange to make payments each fortnight. Paying off even a small amount shows that the tenant is taking responsibility to pay off the debt even if it may take some time to do so. If the tenant does not show any indication of making payments, Housing Authority will issue the tenant with a breach notice. Once the breach notice is received, as part of Housing Authority Policies and Procedures, tenants must pay half of the debt upfront and then arrange a payment plan to clear the breach and avoid any further legal action.



Tenants in private rental or Housing Authority rental who are having any issues should come in and see or call our tenancy advocates at our Hedland or Karratha office. There is always something we can do to assist tenants to make sure their housing is secure.

Come and see us before its too late!

Anglicare Networking Morning Tea



Anglicare WA is a not for profit community service organisation who support people, families and communities with relationship issues, financial problems, and housing difficulties. To better assist their clients, Anglicare hosted a networking morning tea for organisations around the Pilbara to attend to learn more about each other and see how they can put their resources together for better client outcomes.

Members from organisations such as Salvation Army, Population Health, Mission Australia and many more attended the event. Pilbara Community Legal Service had our electronic archivist Courtney attend the event.



The event began by everyone walking around and introducing themselves and informing others of what their organisation does. There were some nibbles as well as tea and coffee for all attendees to enjoy.

Once all the guests had arrived the

Karratha Anglicare team gave a presentation describing who they are and the different services that they offer here in Karratha. It was interesting to see how their services work collaboratively with PCLS. These include:

General Counselling: There is a minimum fee of \$30 but this varies depending on the clients' financial capacity. There is a limit of 10 sessions and it varies depending on the clients' issues.

Domestic Violence: Assists victims of domestic violence and children from 6 years and older only. There is no fee for this service and no limit on sessions. The working hours for the domestic violence worker Maria is Monday to Friday, 8:00am– 3:00pm.

Family Dispute Resolution (FDR): Provides mediation to help people who have separated from their partner and are in need of assistance to arrange parenting plans. There is a fee of \$30 per hour (for mediation only). Working hours for Lynne who is the mediator is Monday to Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm.

Victim Support Service & Child Witness Service: Free and confidential service that can assist anyone who is victim of crime. Can be assisted with support in

court and able to keep track of and inform victims if the perpetrator/s are being released or relocated. Robyn is the provider of the service and is located at the Karratha Court House. Robyn's working hours are Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 4:00pm. Robyn can also assist clients located in Roebourne, Wickham, Tom Price and Paraburdoo.



If you are needing assistance with any of these issues, you can contact Anglicare Karratha on **9143 1880** or stop by their office for more information. They are located at the Pam Buchanan Family Centre, 6/51 Gardugarli Drive Baynton West WA 6714

Hardship Utility Grants (HUGS) Troubles

The Hardship Utility Grant Scheme (HUGS) is a State Government scheme that provides financial assistance to help people in financial hardship to pay their electricity bills so their supply is not disconnected.



Until recently, Financial Counsellors across the state were funded to assist with assessing clients presenting with difficulty to pay their power account to see if they were eligible for HUGS. The HUGS application form was then explained to the client, completed and submitted on line.

Contact would be made with the service provider on the client's behalf to discuss payment arrangements. The Financial Counsellor would look at the client's financial position and assist them to work out a suitable payment plan to address their arrears. Possible future consumption tips would be recommended to the client and their daily consumption would be reviewed and discussed with them so they were aware of the daily cost of the electricity they were using and how to economise on it.

Financial Counsellors are no longer directly involved with HUGS applications. Clients are now required to negotiate directly with the power supplier. This has affected clients with high power accounts. Many are reticent for one reason or another to telephone the Utilities provider direct to explain their situation and negotiate a HUGS application and arrange a payment plan. Some people who lack the knowledge and skills to budget their money are in danger now of arranging a payment plan that they are unable to adhere to.

Clients who used to come in to PCLS for assistance are now advising us that having to contact Horizon Power themselves is quite confusing. Clients struggle to understand the questions they are being asked such as what is their statement of financial position. The reasons for this is that many of our clients have limited skills for literacy and numeracy.

Not only does this new procedure put financial stress on the client, but also, there are a number of clients now who are unfortunately having their power disconnected because they simply do not understand the process. When their power is disconnected, clients are then having to pay large amounts of money to address the arrears. The

majority of the clients presenting with these matters are low income earners who are recipients of Centrelink benefits. This means they are unable to access a large amount of money to pay towards their account because in doing so, it affects the other payments they need to make with their fortnightly allowance such as rent, food and daily living essentials.

Power Saving Tips

1. Unplug your cords– even when turned off electricity is brought to the power outlet where appliances are plugged in.
2. Switch to eco-friendly lightbulbs– this saves electricity and money while still giving as much lights as other light bulbs.
3. Turn off lights and fans when leaving the room– even if you'll be back in a few minutes. This could save you about \$7 a month.
4. Use a power board. A power board can have multiple appliances plugged in at one time. When you turn it off you turn it off you switch off all the other appliances.
5. If you have a dishwasher, use economy cycle for everyday dishes. Only turn on the dishwasher when it has a full load. This also helps save water.
6. Clean your air conditioner so it doesn't use as much energy to run. Turn off your aircon overnight and when you're not home.
7. Set your fridge temperature to 4-5 degrees and your freezer temperature between -15 and -18 degrees.

Money Management Workshop



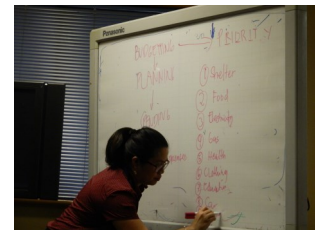
Pilbara Community Legal Service is all about empowering the people of the Pilbara to manage their lives effectively. Part of completing this vision is by education people around the Pilbara on different issues that effect every day lives. These include housing issues, domestic violence issues, legal issues, migrant issues and financial counselling issues.

Our South Hedland financial counsellor- Jayne Jarito held a workshop to provide

training on money management for the clients of Wirraka Maya Health Service in South Hedland. There were 8 attendees on the day and each person was given a basic tool kit. This included a calculator, budget sheets and booklets from moneysmart.gov.au.



The workshop was for a duration of two-and-a-half-hours. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and participate to gain a better understanding of how to better manage their money.



If you are interested or know someone who is interested in any type of community education, please contact one of our offices to discuss further.

Conflicts of Interest

Sometimes we are unable to assist clients with an issue due to a conflict of interest. When we explain this to a client they do not always understand what this means.

A conflict of interest occurs when a person's personal interests conflict with their responsibility to act in the best interest of the organisations.

Personal interest can include direct interests as well as those of family, friends or other organisations a person may be involved with or have an

interest in.

It also includes potential conflict between staff, volunteers and third parties working with another organisation.

A conflict of interest may be actual, potential or perceived and may be financial or non-financial.

Essentially a conflict of interest may arise if its possible that a person will make a decision based on, or affected by, personal influences.

The need to prevent actual and perceived conflicts of interest applies to the Board, CEO and staff– as well as contractors and other third parties.



"What conflict of interest?! I work here in my spare time."

Article courtesy of Com Management weekly update (24th February 2016)

THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN... LIFE CHANGES...

Karratha

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Karratha

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(Lotteries House)

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Newman

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4/46 Iron Ore Parade

(Newman House)

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The material displayed in this document does not constitute legal advice and is intended for information only. If you have a legal problem, you should see a lawyer. Pilbara Community Legal Service Inc believes that the information contained here is accurate, however does not accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

International Women's Day Luncheon



Be Empowered by Awareness

Be Equipped by Knowledge

Be Encouraged by Connection



3 Minute Topics Including:

- Financial Counselling
- Relationship Mentoring
- Domestic Violence
- Will Preparation
- Cancer Awareness
- Tenancy Advocacy
- Education
- Health & Well Being
- Advocacy for Women & Girls

*Keynote Speaker: Josie Alec — Traditional Owner
"Resilience & The Stolen Generation"*

When: Saturday 5th March 2016

Time: 10:00am - 2:00pm

Where: Welcome Lotteries House

Morse Court, Karratha

Cost: Gold Coin Donation

*Please RSVP by email to suzannepilpot@gmail.com
or text mobile 0427 332 832 by 3rd March 2016
for catering purposes*



North West Shelf Project



a global voice for women

Federation of the South West Pacific

Soroptimist International



Karratha & Districts Inc.