



# County Court of Victoria Information Sheet: Obtaining Legal Advice and Assistance

## About the County Court Registry

The County Court's Registry is the official record keeper of pleadings and other documents that are filed in relation to a case. In Melbourne, the Registry is located on the ground floor of the County Court. The Registry's counter service operates from 9:00am to 4:00pm and the telephone service is available from 8:45am to 5:00pm on (03) 8636 6570. Both counter and telephone services are open Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.

Please refer to the 'Circuits' page for contact details for the Court's circuit locations.

This sheet provides information on some of Victoria's legal agencies, with the intention of assisting self-represented litigants find the right organisation to help them with their legal matter/s.

## Victoria Legal Aid

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) is a state-wide organisation that assists people with their legal problems. It focuses on helping and protecting the rights of socially and economically disadvantaged Victorians. VLA has offices in most major metropolitan and country regions. It also funds private lawyers to provide legal services to the public. VLA can assist in areas of criminal law, family law and some civil law matters. Their free legal services include:

- Information over the phone
- A public law library
- Publications and workshops
- Legal advice
- Lawyers on duty at many courts and tribunals.

Visit the VLA website: [www.legalaid.vic.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au) and view their eligibility criteria, or call (03) 9269 0234 or 1300 792 387 (for country callers) to obtain free legal advice from a VLA officer.

**The County Court does not have a duty solicitor and therefore you will not be able to obtain legal assistance on the morning of your hearing.**

## PILCH

PILCH (Public Interest Law Clearing House) is an independent, not for profit organisation committed to furthering public interest, improving access to justice and protecting human rights. PILCH acts as a facilitator or go-between for pro bono legal assistance between the community and the private legal profession. Its main role is to receive, assess and refer requests for pro bono legal assistance. PILCH aims to work creatively to match clients with lawyers willing to give their services without charge. PILCH coordinates the delivery of pro bono legal services through:

- The Referral Scheme
- The Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic

- PILCH Connect - a specialist service for community organisations
- The Seniors Rights Legal Clinic

You can obtain more information about PILCH by calling (03) 8636 4400

### **The Victorian Bar Duty Barristers Scheme**

This Pro Bono Scheme was established by the Victorian Bar to provide legal advice and representation to people in Victoria in need of legal and financial help, who cannot obtain appropriate assistance from another source. Around 400 members of the Victorian Bar participate in the Scheme.

The types of assistance usually available are:

- Preliminary advice as to the prospects of the case
- Preparation of court documents
- Representation at a hearing

Applicants seeking assistance should first telephone the administrators of the PILCH Scheme to discuss their matter (03) 8636 4400.

For more information please visit:

<https://www.vicbar.com.au/public/community/pro-bono-scheme>

### **Community Legal Services**

Community legal centres (CLCS) are independent community organisations that provide free legal services to the public. They focus on helping clients who face economic and social disadvantage and who are ineligible for legal aid and cannot afford a private lawyer. CLCS can provide legal information, initial advice and in some cases ongoing assistance.

For more information go to:

<https://www.fclc.org.au/>

### **Private Lawyers**

Private lawyers can provide you with legal advice and representation. Fees may vary depending on the law firm. Choosing a lawyer can be a daunting task but the Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) Legal Referral Service can help. The LIV provides referrals to member solicitors throughout Victoria, practising in the relevant area of law. To obtain a referral or to find out more about the Legal Referral Service please contact the LIV on (T) 03 9607 9311 or email: [referrals@liv.asn.au](mailto:referrals@liv.asn.au).

Please note that the Law Institute of Victoria Legal Referral Service does not provide legal advice. You must obtain a referral to a member solicitor.

*Information included in this information sheet is of a general nature and does not constitute legal advice. It should not be relied upon for such purposes. Litigants are encouraged to obtain legal advice prior to taking any step in the legal process. The County Court of Victoria does not accept any liability for loss or damage incurred as a result of reliance placed upon the content of this information sheet.*