

Bushfire Legal Response

May 2009

Case Studies

“My husband left me and the kids after the fires, saying this was the ‘last straw’. Now he’s refusing to have any contact with us and I’m really struggling with the bills.”

“I think my neighbour’s fire -damaged tree could come down and damage my shed but the neighbour hasn’t returned to the property since the fires.”

“I was evacuated from my place during the fires and missed a letter about payment of a debt. Now I’ve missed the final date and they want to take legal action.”

This fact sheet provides information to those assisting bushfire affected residents to access assistance and advice about legal issues.

What is a legal issue?

Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) offers **free legal assistance** to residents in the Eastern Region. Following the recent bushfires, those affected can seek free legal advice and assistance through ECLC in a number of ways.

Many legal issues may not be obvious right away. They might emerge over the coming months and **people don’t always realise something is a ‘legal issue’**.

The bushfires have created legal issues in many areas, including the following:

- Insurance
- Family law/separation
- Family violence
- Neighbours/fencing/trees
- Debt or financial issues
- Tenancy/leases
- Loss of documents
- Water/power/telephone disputes
- Wills and estate issues
- Personal injury
- Employment issues
- Coronial matters
- Royal Commission

If you or someone you are assisting is unsure whether something is a ‘legal issue’ call ECLC anyway! Make the most of the free service.

What help is available?

If you are assisting people with legal issues you can refer them in a number of ways:

- **Help them call ECLC on 1300 797 088 for legal advice or referral (or give them the details so they can call later).**
- **Help them make an appointment with a lawyer at Yarra Glen Recovery Centre by calling ECLC.**
- **Invite them to attend the Yarra Glen Recovery Centre as a drop-in client (Appointments preferred).**

You might also consider attending a legal appointment with someone as a support person (with that person’s consent).

ECLC staff Denise and Amy are also working with the community on legal education and other projects. We’re happy to hear your suggestions and feedback.

Useful Contacts

Eastern Community Legal Centre

Suite B, Town Hall Hub
27 Bank Street
Box Hill VIC 3128
Ph: 9285 4822
www.eclc.org.au

Suite B, 6 Floriston Road
Boronia, VIC 3155
Ph: 9762 6235
1300 797 088

Victoria Legal Aid

23 Ringwood Street
Ringwood VIC 3134
Ph: (03) 9259 5444
www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Bushfire Legal Help

Ph: 1800 113 432
www.bushfirelegalhelp.org.au