

Employment Rights Service set to be Axed

Peninsula Community Legal Centre is alarmed that Jobwatch, Victoria's only free specialist employment legal service, is facing closure on 30 June 2011, unless ongoing funding can be secured. This vital service promotes safe and fair workplaces for Victorian workers and the closure of Jobwatch would leave many already disadvantaged Victorians at risk of workplace exploitation.

On 17 March 2011, the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Richard Dalla-Riva advised Jobwatch that it is unlikely to receive funding from the Department of Business and Innovation after 30 June 2011.

Helen Constas, CEO of Peninsula CLC says, "Jobwatch, like Peninsula Community Legal Centre, has provided a crucial service to Victorians for more than 30 years. Jobwatch has enabled access to just outcomes for the most disadvantaged Victorian workers who cannot afford private legal assistance and are unable to obtain assistance anywhere else.

"Jobwatch is the only free specialist employment legal service of its kind in Victoria. There are organizations such as Fair Work Australia, the Fair Work Ombudsman and Work Safe Victoria, which provide the community with general legal information on relevant workplace matters, however, these services do not provide the same level of information, advice and representation in their services as Jobwatch. We understand that Victoria Legal Aid generally does not provide legal representation in employment matters and refers many people directly to Jobwatch for assistance."

Jobwatch's telephone information service takes around 11,000 calls each year. 55% of these are referred from Fair Work Australia and the Fair Work Ombudsman. The unmet demand for the service is around 65%.

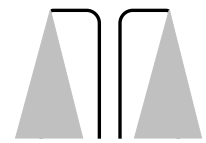
"Jobwatch provides a unique and critical service to Victorians. Around 350 people have sought advice from Peninsula CLC in relation to employment matters in the past two years alone, with many of these being referred to Jobwatch for a more specialized service. If Jobwatch is forced to close Peninsula CLC would be heavily impacted with increased demands for assistance in complex employment issues."

Peninsula CLC urges the Minister to rethink funding arrangements prior to the release of the budget in early May to ensure adequate funding for Jobwatch and all community legal services in Victoria.

For more information about free legal services, contact Peninsula Community Legal Centre on 9783 3600 or visit www.pclc.org.au.
ENDS.

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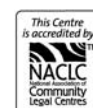
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since 1977*





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