Media Release

*Free Legal Service Celebrates*

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Peninsula Community Legal Centre was honoured to have its new Head Office officially opened today by the Hon. Nicola Roxon, Attorney-General. The event was also a celebration of the Centre’s 35th anniversary and was attended by many distinguished guests and supporters of the Centre, and sponsored by the Centre’s pro bono partner, Russell Kennedy Pty Ltd.

The Centre began as Frankston North Legal Service, founded in 1977 following a public meeting in Frankston North to address concerns about the lack of, and need for, free legal services. With the support of Frankston City Council and local lawyer and community volunteers, a part-time advice and referral service was established.

Today, Peninsula Community Legal Centre is one of the largest community legal centres in Australia, assisting thousands of clients each year with free legal advice and ongoing assistance, as well as undertaking community legal education and law reform activities. In 2011, the Centre was named *Legal Organisation of the Year* at the prestigious Law Institute of Victoria President’s Awards.

Free legal services are targeted to assist disadvantaged clients access help on most legal issues, accessible by telephone or in person at the Centre’s Head Office, branches in Bentleigh, Cranbourne, Frankston North and Rosebud, visiting outreach services in Chelsea and Hastings and duty lawyer services at Frankston Magistrates’ Court and Dandenong Family Law Courts. The Centre operates specialist programs in Family Law, Family Violence and Child Support, as well as advocacy for vulnerable and disadvantaged tenants and consumers.

At the event, Chief Executive Officer, Helen Constas, said:

“We estimate that, over the course of the Centre’s history, it has provided more than 100,000 free legal advices. Around eighty percent of the Centre’s clients have no or low income – less than $26,000 a year – and could not afford to pay for legal assistance.”

Ms Constas praised staff and volunteers of the Centre and acknowledged the vital financial and pro bono support of the Centre. Certificates of Appreciation recognising 35 years of support were presented to: City of Frankston, Meier Denison Guymer, White Cleland and Elaine Pierson.

Ms Constas described the relocation of the Centre’s Head Office to 441 Nepean Highway, Frankston, as “the realisation of a long-held dream of many” and said:

“I am delighted that the Centre now has premises that promote client dignity and privacy, as well as affording a safe and pleasant working environment for volunteers and staff.”

Ms Constas acknowledged the many supporters of the Centre who provided financial and in-kind support to make the relocation possible, including: Australian and Victorian Attorney-General’s Departments, Victoria Legal Aid, Frankston City Council, Russell Kennedy, Slater & Gordon Lawyers, Clayton Utz, Oak Tree Property Holdings, Commercial Property Services, Simon White, Concept Office Interiors, Klein Business Furniture, Finrea, Telstra, Telephone Technologies, Ricoh, Rainer Feldgen The Good Guys Frankston, Quad Security, Andersons Removal & Storage, LF Sign Group, Dave-IT.com, Space Rescue, Jaleigh Blinds, Zodiac Electrical and Pinewood Cleaning Services.

Ms Constas said:

“Whilst we are rightly proud of the high volume and high quality services we provide, we are acutely aware of the continuing and unmet needs for free legal services in our community, and it is our mission to keep striving to advance justice in our community.”

For more information about free legal services, please call (03) 9783 3600 or visit [www.pclc.org.au](http://www.pclc.org.au).

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PENINSULA COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE INC.