

# Media Release

## Deadlines for Parenting Issues at Christmas – Think ahead!

As 2013 draws to a close, Peninsula Community Legal Centre is urging those involved in parenting matters to ensure they come to an agreement about where their children will be staying during Christmas. This time of year sees the Courts being inundated with applications relating to children to accommodate a change in one of the parents' circumstances at Christmas.

Where no arrangements have been made, many parents leave it until this time of year to bring an application for parenting orders which deal with the challenging school holiday and Christmas period.

Principal lawyer, Victoria Mullings, says

“Christmas can be a particularly difficult time for separated families, especially if separated parents are not able to communicate and agree about Christmas. We encourage parents to discuss this time of year and come to an agreement well in advance of the Christmas period. If necessary, parents should look at mediation services to assist them to reach a compromise. Applying to Court to make a decision for them about arrangements for the children should be the last resort”.

The Family Law Act makes the children's best interests the priority in family law matters, which includes considering the benefit to the children of having a meaningful relationship with both parents and so by implication, ensuring they have the opportunity of enjoying Christmas and other special occasions with both parents at least once every two years. The proviso of course is always that the children are protected from harm.

“Because there are so many Court applications by parents regarding Christmas arrangements, some Courts employ extra staff during late November and December to help manage the extra case load. And deadlines are imposed for filing urgent applications in relation to Christmas arrangements for children. If an application is filed after the deadline has passed, the Court is unlikely to be in a position to make a decision in that particular matter in time for Christmas”.

When parents leave it too late, unavoidably, the children are shuttled between warring parents and Christmas becomes a difficult time for them. We strongly encourage parents to resolve their parenting issues before Christmas through mediation and by communication and cooperation in a civil manner, so that their children are able to enjoy a stress free and happy Christmas.

For more information about free legal services, please call (03) 9570 8455 or visit [www.pclc.org.au](http://www.pclc.org.au).

END.  
31 October 2013

CONTACT:  
Saskia Rijfkogel  
Policy & Education Lawyer  
PENINSULA COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE INC.



Peninsula Community  
Legal Centre Inc

Registered No. A8T  
ABN 23 591 244 622

**Head Office**  
441 Nepean Highway  
Frankston Vic 3199

t 03 9783 3600  
1800 064 784  
f 03 9770 5200  
dx 19953 Frankston  
e [pclc@pclc.org.au](mailto:pclc@pclc.org.au)  
[www.pclc.org.au](http://www.pclc.org.au)

**Bentleigh Branch**  
82 Brady Road  
Bentleigh East Vic 3165  
t 03 9570 8455

**Cranbourne Branch**  
Bella Centre, Suite 12  
33-39 High Street  
Cranbourne Vic 3977  
t 03 5995 3722

**Pines Branch**  
2A Candlebark Crescent  
Frankston North Vic 3200  
t 03 9786 6980

**Rosebud Branch**  
1375 Point Nepean Road  
Rosebud Vic 3939  
t 03 5981 2422

**We gratefully acknowledge  
the financial assistance of:**

- Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department
- Department of Justice (Vic)
- Consumer Affairs Victoria
- Victoria Legal Aid
- City of Casey
- City of Glen Eira
- City of Kingston
- Frankston City Council
- Mornington Peninsula Shire

**Donations over \$2.00  
are tax deductible**

*Service to the  
Community  
since 1977*

