

Just Yarra

NEIGHBOURHOOD
JUSTICE CENTRE

Neighbourhood Justice Centre | news, services and legal assistance in one friendly community justice newsletter | 2016 V.1



We are helping you — for free!

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre is opening a free legal assistance service for Yarra residents.

Our Legal Help Service will give Yarra folk professionally supported help with legal issues including divorce proceedings, wills, fines, repairs and compensation claims.

While many legal issues don't require us to 'lawyer up', even the simplest legal document can end in a legal maze with hidden traps.

The problem is, hiring a lawyer to help with divorce papers or damage claims can be prohibitively expensive. No wonder many people opt to muddle through as best they can.

Our new Legal Help Service will change all that. It's designed to help people through the justice system as quickly and painlessly as possible.

The service will comprise senior lawyers and other justice-related professionals who will oversee teams of university law students who will work with clients.

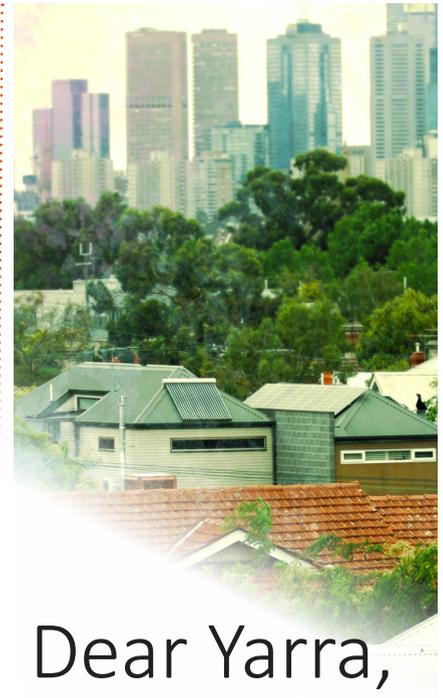
Social welfare and financial counselling students, managed by NJC counsellors, will also assist clients to prepare supporting documents and reports.

Professional help seldom comes cheap. But in Yarra, it'll soon come free.

To date, partners include La Trobe University, RMIT, Australian Catholic University, Financial and Consumer Rights Council, and local legal services.

NJC Legal Help Service opens March 2016 as a 12-month pilot project.

Register your interest in this service.
E: njc@courts.vic.gov.au
or call 9948 8777.



Dear Yarra,

Come inside. Say hello.

Inside the lovely Art Deco building near the corner of Wellington and Johnston Streets in Collingwood a group of people are quietly changing lives.

And whether you realise it or not, one of those lives is yours.

Did you know that you live in the only place in Australia that is home to a community justice centre?

The work we do is complex, demanding and takes time, but the rewards ripple across Yarra. Whether or not you've been inside the centre, what we do, we do for you.

We've taken the liberty of sending your this humble publication because you never know, one day we may do you a neighbourly turn.

So consider this less a newsletter, and more a love letter to you, the people of Yarra.

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Collingwood has a long history as a hub for some of the best and worst graffiti in Melbourne. But how do we foster the good stuff and minimise the bad? Simple! Hand a group of highly talented street artists a can of spray paint and stand back.

Street artists Rone, Adnate, Mayonaise, Guido Van Helton, and street art veteran, Askew, worked with Melbourne's award-winning art company Juddy Roller on a stunning piece of art for the walls of the Collingwood power substation.

Citipower, the City of Yarra, and the NJC commissioned the work.

Maree Foelz, NJC Crime Prevention Officer, says the commission is a creative way to rid our streets of illegal graffiti.

"Graffiti, especially tagging, gives the perception that our streets are seedy and dangerous.

"When Juddy Roller proposed bringing five of the best artists to Collingwood,

we saw the perfect way to reduce illegal graffiti, while adding to the artistic vitality of Yarra," Ms Foelz said.

Shaun Hossack, Creative Director Juddy Roller, says the street art community holds highly talented street artists in such esteem most taggers don't vandalise their work.

"A collaboration of this kind is so rare that street artists will protect it," says Mr Hossack.

The NJC also supports Juddy Roller's youth-at-risk program.

Juddy Roller takes kids who are in trouble with the law for vandalism, but who otherwise love the art form, and turns their passion for art into professional skills. The kids learn how to draft work, liaise with clients, work in teams, and know right from wrong.

That's the (spray) can-do spirit we love.

Visit the corner of Easey and Wellington Streets, Collingwood.



Talk your way out of it

Are you arguing with your neighbour about a broken fence or having a really bad time with a work colleague or someone at your club? Don't get mad. Don't get even. Get a mediator.

We love meeting Yarra residents, but we don't want to see our neighbours in court. Unfortunately, even minor disputes can get out of hand, and before you know it, life is miserable, wallets are emptied, and the police are knocking on doors.

If this is ringing a bell, ring us instead.

Mediation is a fast, fair and cost-effective way to resolve a range of problems.

Mediators do not take sides or decide who's at fault. Instead, the process lets everyone tell their side of the story and find mutually acceptable solutions.

Even if you leave the mediation session thinking the other party is wrong, your issue will be resolved quickly and fairly.

A session typically takes 3-4 hours and is free, confidential and voluntary.

Call NJC on 9948 8777.



Next time you're passing by the Collingwood Housing Estate, send out a quiet 'good luck!' to the resident kids you see playing in their garden. Why?

Because you're looking at tomorrow's leaders, healers, helpers and creators.

Kids from Collingwood and Fitzroy Cubbies and LiveWires playgroups joined Melbourne artists and educators, Minna Lappalainen, Caroline Packham and Danielle Karalus to make video projections that captured the visions the kids have for their futures.

Ms Packham said the children's ambitions were inspiring.

"We asked them big questions about their futures. They want to be artists, inventors, teachers and doctors, and they showed a huge desire to make their communities more caring and colourful," said Ms Packham.

The artists beamed projections of the art on the walls of the Collingwood estate and, judging by the decibel levels, the kids loved it.

Got a great project for kids? Maybe we can help. Call 9948 8777.

From the ground, up.

Around the world, criminal justice systems and communities are using Restorative Justice to repair the harm people suffer as a result of offending behaviour. Restorative Justice includes victim-offender mediation and group conferencing, and it's used by courts at various stages of the justice process, from pre-sentencing through to post-sentencing and release. An alternative to 'blame and sanction' justice, Restorative Justice brings together those affected by crime and conflict to talk things through. It's not used in every matter, and victims are never compelled to participate, but from New Zealand to the USA, Canada, the UK, South America, Europe (and now Yarra), it's healing lives.



Often called a legal 'one-stop-shop', the NJC is more akin to a legal teaching hospital (make it better, teach others to make it better).

And we're also legal explorers — improving the justice system through innovation and experimentation, and pushing into new frontiers.

In a nutshell, we bring law, treatment and support services and community justice practices together to resolve both offending behaviour and the underlying problems that lead to offending.

Lawyers and our Magistrate apply fair and reasonable justice, while our treatment agencies get to the root causes that contribute to people offending in the first place.

Working alongside the NJC legal and treatment teams, our Crime Prevention & Community Justice team is helping neighbourhoods prevent and recover from the harms caused by crime.

And behind the scenes, our Innovation and Education teams are improving the justice system more broadly.

Soft hearts, hard heads

Ok, you want to know if we're soft on crime?

No, we are not. Have no doubt, our court sends people to jail.

Our court also expects everyone who comes before it to take responsibility for their actions.

Nearly everyone before our court has lived with complex traumas such as acquired brain injury, abuse, mental health diseases, poverty, and drug addiction. And many have done so since childhood or their early teens.

But as Chief Justice of Australia, Robert French, reminds us, a judicial process that isn't aware of the reasons *why* people offend isn't much chop.

And that's why we bring the appropriate laws and appropriate care and support to bear on each case and for each person — we protect the community, by helping individuals become good and proper citizens.

Statistics say it's true

Does our model of community justice work? The Australian Institute of Criminology thinks so.

In its independent report, the AIC identified we have a staggering **25% lower rate of reoffending** than any other Magistrates' Court district.

And while the breach rate of Community Corrections Order in Victoria is 60%, **ours is 23%**.

Victoria Police attributes our joint programs deterring kids from making terrible decisions for achieving record lows in youth offending.

But to be honest? We don't reach these milestones alone.

We partner with an eclectic range of Yarra people to generate social change,

NJC Magistrates' Court operates as:

- (most not all) Criminal matters
- Children's Court (Criminal Division)
- Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal
- Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal
- Intervention Orders

Teams working alongside the court:

- 20 independent treatment agencies
- Crime Prevention & Community Justice
- Justice Innovation
- Justice Education

which is why we count traders, council, police, schools, social and faith-based groups among our friends.

Like you, we want to live in a community where kids ride to school safely, business thrives, and everyone gives a helping hand to making Yarra the most liveable place in the 'world's most liveable city'.

If you've got a passion for social change and a great idea, talk to us.

We're looking forward to meeting you.

Kerry Walker, Director.



No drama, really

TV court dramas are riveting, but in reality there are better ways to get dramatic results.

People before our court sit at the bar table with their lawyers, and our Magistrate encourages citizens to speak to him directly and participate in their hearing. We believe citizens should have more involvement in their hearings.

Oh, and we only have one Magistrate. As such, our court has a deeper understanding of the lives and conditions that our clients come from. And there's also no hiding when you come back to face the same magistrate who knows your history, your circumstances, and the promises you made to reform.

This is one reason our reoffending rates are lower than other jurisdictions.



Streets of desire

Smith Street. Once rakish, now chic, the street is changing so fast it needs its own time zone.

Do you remember 'old' Smith Street? Dishevelled, frayed around the edges and bohemian, sometimes threatening, always accommodating. Even as recently as 2003 living legend Bob Dylan himself could don an old beanie and slouch around the street without raising eyebrows. As *The Age* reported at the time, "from folk music legends to heroin addicts, Smith Street draws people in".

But all that's changing, and while Dylan would still meld into the street's ambience, it's a fair bet he would barely recognise the street today.

From London's Shoreditch to LA's Skid Row, gentrification is transforming traditional and traditionally poor neighbourhoods into fashionable urban enclaves. Even, Dylan's raggedy birthplace, Duluth, is "ripe for hipsterfication" as one social media wag put it, and Collingwood is part of this international trend.

But if gentrification breathes new life into dilapidated 'hoods and urban

renewal is a good thing, why is the word uttered through gritted teeth?

The very worst aspects of gentrification, say its critics, seriously disadvantage the low-income, and usually long-term residents of increasingly desirable neighbourhoods. Newly arrived 'money' papers over their histories, and rising housing and living costs disrupt and displace complex social networks.

And if gentrification makes life tough for the old shopkeepers, butchers, bakers and artists, how tough does life get for people with even longer and deeper ties to place?

It's an important question for Smith Street, the epicentre of Melbourne's urban gentrification, because it's home to one group of people whose ties to the place stretch back further than memory and whose future depends on neighbourhood life.

Family ties

Under Smith Street's bitumen and stylish eateries is the land of the Wurundjeri people, and to this day the Koori community meet family and friends, trade news, and socialise on and around the street. As Archie Roach

said, the street is "where I learned my history...because all the old fellas, they knew more about me than I did".

As with histories echoed around Australia, colonial Melbourne cut both ancient ties to the land and contemporary ties to the streetscape, and racially related tensions have cast a shadow over the street for decades.

For many years, some traders have complained that some members of the Aboriginal community acted egregiously, and police said they wasted time dealing with disorderly and criminal behaviour.

Conversely, the self-named Parkies, and the Aboriginal people who meet family and friends on Smith Street, justifiably argued they had every right to gather in a public place, and pointed to a history of dispossession, disconnections from family and community, structural exclusion, racism, substance abuse, endemic poverty, and other disasters.

As one Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Worker told the NJC in 2012, "my family and I often come to Smith Street...We are often targeted as troublemakers because we are dark skinned."

Indeed, some of the Parkies are part of the Stolen Generation, a fact at once little known and utterly harrowing.

Bob Dylan, so it seems, was more welcome on the street than the land's traditional custodians.

As talking and listening unearthed old wounds and broken histories, an alliance formed.

In recent years however, the shadow has lifted, and in large part it's because a handful of people reached out to each other, and did so in remarkable and life changing ways.

Rhythm and blues

If you were lucky to get along to the inaugural Smith Street Dreaming music festival in 2013, you played a part in lifting that shadow.

Featuring Aboriginal musicians and actors, including the inimitable Archie Roach, and rascalion Jack Charles, the festival celebrates Indigenous connections to Smith Street, and the wider Yarra community's collective stewardship of Collingwood.

The festival is the brainchild of the Smith Street Working Group, a team consisting of Elders, police, local traders, local government, service agencies, and the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC). Its genesis is worth celebrating in its own right.

Such a long journey

In 2012, NJC's Crime Prevention team took the first steps on a long journey to resolve long-standing problems. Over many months they held raw and honest conversations with local Kooris, police, traders, and others on street corners and in boardrooms. And as talking and

listening unearthed old wounds and painful histories, an alliance formed.

Kerry Walker, NJC Director, explained, "We brought everyone to the table to help Smith Street transition through gentrification without displacing people who've every right to be here, as well as to protect our heritage, and ensure economic activity thrives".

What no one foreshadowed was how, within months of forming, this nascent alliance would embark on an untried and wholly unpredicted test of friendship and reconciliation — they'd host an Indigenous music festival. And they'd hold it on the one place that signified the greatest hope: the corner of Smith and Stanley Streets, a long-standing meeting place for Aboriginal people.

Streets ahead

In 2013, an enthusiastic crowd braved Melbourne's July weather to enjoy the inaugural Smith Street Dreaming. Warming his hands by the fire pit, local resident, Alex R. said it made him "think differently about the direction Smith Street is taking".

And he made a good point. Long after the music faded out, the essence of the festival is reverberating across Collingwood.

Di Harris, former Smith Street trader and founding member of the Smith Street Working Group, said she got involved to make Smith Street a better place. "I was told, 'you'll never change things; it's been the same for forty years', and I said 'you just watch us'".

"Through the Working Group we joined people together in relationships that mean something. People brought their best heart and best efforts to the table to make a difference out there.

"I put my time and resources into the group because when we peel back the layers of hurt and fractured relations we see decent people."

Tracey, a Parkie, said the festival helped relationships on Smith Street enormously. "The shop people wave to us now. The festival showed our people in a good way; we're not just hopeless people with problems."

There are so many answers whirling around that great things happen when people are connected.

Take the show on the road

Many of the problems that beset life on Smith Street are happening around Yarra, and one street in particular springs to mind.

Richmond's Victoria Street has a changing and bustling personality, but it's no stranger to social disparities, harmful behaviour and long-standing tensions, which is why the NJC is working with traders, residents, police and Council to dispel Richmond's shadows.

Di Harris encourages Victoria Street's traders to join the NJC. "We brought people from different cultures and countries to one table, and I believe other areas having troubles can achieve what we've done. There are so many answers whirling around that great things happen when people are connected."

On a cold Saturday afternoon in July last year, Archie Roach stilled the crowd when he quietly pointed out that "a good strong family, a good strong community becomes your shelter. Communities should look out for each other".

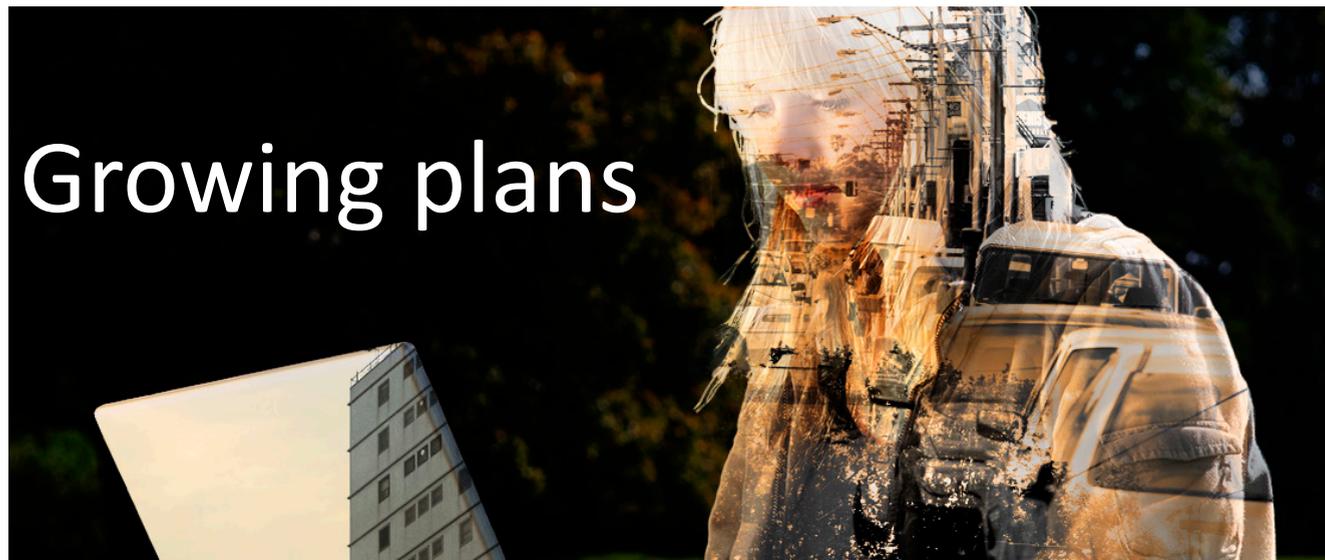
Hear, hear. And here, here.



Songs of Praise

Smith Street Working Group won the Australian Institute of Criminology's prestigious 2015 Crime & Violence Prevention Award and the City of Yarra 2014 Community Event of the Year.

Growing plans



What do Yarra teenagers think about life on our streets?

More than 600 Year 6 and Year 8 students from 16 Yarra schools participated in an extensive survey to provide a local snapshot of behaviours and factors known to impact on the healthy development of children and adolescents.

Conducted last year, survey findings are a key part of Communities That Care (CTC), a whole-of-community program improving the health and well-being of children and young people in Yarra.

Led by Yarra Council, CTC is coordinated by 20 Yarra organisations including

schools, the Department of Human Services, Victoria Police, and the NJC.

NJC Client Services Manager, Dr Cameron Wallace, says CTC is all about positive youth development.

“It sounds odd to describe ‘youth’ as a vulnerability but young people are inherently exposed to harm by the very nature of their age.

“Taking a ‘prevention is better than cure’ approach is far better than scrambling to cure problems after they’ve happened,” says Dr Wallace.

The NJC strongly supports giving young people a say in shaping their futures,

which is why we’re chuffed to be part of the CTC program.

Worldwide some 800 communities use the CTC program, and Yarra joins 17 communities in Australia, including Mornington Peninsula, Myrtleford, Knox, Geelong, Cardinia, Warrnambool, East Gippsland and Bendigo.

Royal Melbourne Hospital, conducted the youth survey and provided the alliance with the data.

For more information or to join CTC contact Bella Laidlaw, City of Yarra bella.laidlaw@yarracity.vic.gov.au www.communitiesthatcare.org.au



Oh brother, where art thou?

When ‘good men’ stand by and let violence against women happen, can we still call ourselves good men?

Most blokes have never, nor will ever, raise a hand against women, but are we entitled to a ‘get out of jail free’ card simply because we’re not the ‘bad guys’?

Australian men have a long and proud tradition of mateship, but let’s face it, mateship has a dark side. Worse still, this dark side is not only excused, it’s normalised — boys will be boys, and girls shouldn’t provoke us.

It isn’t easy being the bloke who speaks out against our pervasively sexist culture. But are we seriously putting our own sense of discomfort ahead of a woman’s right to live in

peace? Indeed, a woman’s right to even live?

When we look the other way we’re telling women it is their responsibility to turn the other cheek. And that’s why violence against women isn’t a women’s issue. It’s ours. It’s a men’s issue.

As blokes working at the coalface of justice, we take violence against women very seriously. And the White Ribbon Day oath-taking gives us a chance to sign our name to our pledge to shed light on the dark side of mateship.

Mates look out for each other.

But we call each other out too. We made our promises for women. We keep our word as friends.



It's a comforting thought that every computer you own, borrow or use is an escape route from family violence.

In an Australian first, our centre has created an online family violence intervention application process (FVIO Online).

Anyone living in Yarra aged 18 years and over can now apply for a Family Violence Intervention Order where and

when it suits their safety needs the best — apply at home, work, a friend's house, even at a public library.

Up to now, FVIO applications have required applicants to wade through a confusing hard copy application.

But women (the majority of applicants are women) are already traumatised, so why make things more difficult by plonking 12 pages of legal waffle in front of them?

Unlike the hard copy application, FVIO Online is password protected and applicants can only reset the password by coming to the NJC in person. In this way, the application protects their information.

The form can be saved for 30 days, giving applicants time and space to complete it when it suits them.

It also includes a checklist of the behaviours the law classifies as family violence to give applicants a greater understanding of the risks they face.

And applicants can quit the form rapidly using a quick exit button that opens a generic Google search page. Importantly, FVIO Online flags high-risk

applications so our court moves swiftly to assist people in immediate danger.

And with helpful explanations and definitions the form is simple and clear.

Our online intervention form doesn't replace the paper version, and we encourage applicants to choose the method that works best for them.

And remember, the police are always on hand to take out an intervention application on behalf of anyone experiencing family violence.

In a digital society that gives us the power to book flights, buy pizza, and visit the North Pole from the comfort of our living rooms, fleeing violence should be a simple and safe process.

The State Government awarded us \$365,000 from its Public Service Sector Innovation Fund to roll out the form to additional Magistrates' Courts in Victoria.

Find the form at:

www.njcforms.courts.vic.gov.au

If you are in immediate danger, call 000.



Courting Yarra's arty visionaries!

Bet you didn't know there's another art gallery in Yarra!

Twice a year, Yarra's professional artists and talented amateurs turn our centre into an art gallery. Our long-running art project is loved by staff and artists alike and our latest exhibition, *Urban Campfires*, doesn't disappoint.

Charming, quirky, and thoughtful as the art is, the gems are the stories behind each piece.

Three ducks greet visitors to the NJC like merry, cardie-wearing concierges. This work, *Duck and Weave*, is borne of an unlikely collaboration between men with acquired brain injuries and a group of Yarra grandmothers.

A group of men dealing with acquired brain injury carved three huge wooden ducks as part of a woodwork program run by the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre. They gave the ducks to Holden Street Neighbourhood House where grandmothers did some old-fashioned yarn-bombing to clothe the ducks in

dapper outfits. As one NJC client said, "the ducks cheer me up. Which is good because it's been a rough day."

Dolls In Arms, created by accomplished seamstress Aileen Kerr, is a sisterhood of impeccably crafted dolls. Poignantly, the dolls keep vigil over the women experiencing domestic violence who wait in our court's secure rooms.

Kiddies from Yarra's housing estates prove dreams are made of sparkles, and new arrivals to Australia who now call Yarra home, explore ideas of new beginnings and freedom.

Our art program has a serious side. Art diffuses the tensions that typically suffocate courts. And because our centre is used by a cross-section of the Yarra community, there's nothing lovelier than big dollops of colour to brighten up our day.

Do you tingle with creativity?

Email: njc@courts.vic.gov.au for details.



Winging it in court

Yarra residents attending court will soon have reason to thank the aviation industry for making their court attendance fly by.

Courts are like international airports but without all that handy flight information. People race about looking for the right courtroom or spend hours sitting around wondering when they'll be called.

That's why we're developing Australia's first court user messaging system.

Soon Yarra residents attending our court will have information about their cases at their fingertips.

When you arrive at our court, Registry will link you to your lawyer, court staff, and anyone involved in your case via your phone or tablet. You can also register before you get here.

Using (witty name) MyCase, legal teams will send their clients messages so they know who to talk to, what to bring, and where to be as their hearing progresses.

But why the need? People often wait for hours to go before a court, and we think that courts need to manage citizens' time in this often tense and scary world much better.

Using MyCase, the court will let citizens know if they've time to grab a bite to eat, organise childcare, or call the boss to arrange more time off without fear that the one time you leave the reception area, is the one time you'll be called into court.

MyCase was inspired by a trip to Bali. When looking at the departures board at the airport, our Innovation Manager realised that the aviation sector had much to teach courts about managing people. By the time her flight was called, MyCase was airborne.

MyCase is voluntary. NJC will pilot MyCase throughout 2016.

Reduce the heat

Are you feeling the heat of financial problems this summer?

If you or someone you know needs financial advice to cool things down, our in-house financial advisers will provide you with financial advice and planning.

Home but not alone

If you're living in one of Yarra's public housing estates, and you're behind in your rent so badly that Housing (DHHS) is asking VCAT for permission to evict you, talk to us today.

Ok, so things aren't great and Housing is taking you to VCAT.

Your hearing will be heard at the NJC, so no matter who tells you otherwise, you should attend your hearing.

Turning up gives you a chance to explain what's going on, and helps VCAT make a fully informed decision. And we know from experience that people who attend their hearing get better outcomes.

You don't need a lawyer, but we recommend you get one. Come in one hour before your hearing and we'll sort you out with legal help.

We also encourage you to talk to our Launch Housing worker.

Either our lawyers or Launch Housing will advise you about the best steps to take, negotiate with Housing, and represent you at your VCAT hearing.

Even if it hasn't got as far as a VCAT hearing, if you're in a sticky spot with rent or any other housing issue, talk to us immediately.

For more, call 9948 877 or drop in.

Stay in touch!

For more information, news and highlights email njc@courts.vic.gov.au

Address: 241 Wellington Street, Collingwood.

Hours: Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm

Wurundjeri Acknowledgment

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre acknowledges the Wurundjeri as the Traditional Owners of this country. We pay tribute to Elders past and present.



Field of dreams

Awesome kids across Yarra are part of the amazing Collingwood All Stars soccer program (CASP), a Victoria Police-NJC initiative.

Kids come from all walks of life, and on one big level playing field they team up and kick some serious goals.

The program has been running every Monday evening during school term for about nine years and in that time we've watched kids grow from little tacklers to highly skilled players.

But as they say in the classics, it's not about winning, it's about how you play the game. For CASP kids that means teamwork, fun, exercise, and inclusion.

Are you the parent of a child between 8-18 years who bends it like Beckham? Places are highly sought after, but we'll wiggle over and make room for one more.

Team supporters

Did you know that your neighbourhood safety means so much to us that we have a team looking out for you?

Our Crime Prevention & Community Justice team works with groups across Yarra who, like you, want to live safely and harmoniously.

No problem is too big or small, and if we can't help you directly, we'll do our best to find someone who can.

If you're part of a community group and have a crime or safety issue drop in or call us on 9948 8777.