

Wyndham Legal Service Inc.

**Submission to Growth Areas Authority – East Werribee Employment Precinct (December 2012)**

**The Wyndham Legal Service (WLS)**

The WLS is a community based legal service which provides free, accessible and equitable legal services to people who live, work or study in the Wyndham area, including: Werribee, Hoppers Crossing, Wyndham Vale, Little River, Tarneit, Truganina, Werribee South, Point Cook, Balliang and Williams Landing. WLS targets its services to reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community. WLS provides a range of legal services including legal information, advice and casework, community legal education, law reform, advocacy and community projects. WLS aims to empower our client base to understand their rights and also voice their concerns directly to law and policy makers.

This submission is based on the casework of WLS staff along with the findings of a recent research project funded by the Legal Services Board and in partnership with Deakin University, 'Bringing Justice to Isolated Suburbs – Finding a Solution'.

**Summary of our concerns**

As Wyndham experiences unprecedented growth, making it the fastest growing municipality in Australia, there is a major challenge to ensure that residents, especially those living in the new growth areas are able to access basic services and access to justice. 'Access to justice infrastructure' has failed to keep up with this growth, resulting in patchy access to legal services and wider justice services.

In addition, family violence remains one of Wyndham's major health and safety issues and it is important to ensure that all residents, particularly those who are living in remote areas of Wyndham, isolated by unsatisfactory public transport services, are able to access justice. Considering thousands of refugees and other vulnerable or low income groups are being settled in these new growth areas, there is even more of a need to make sure that access to justice is obtainable.

Being the sole community legal service provider in Wyndham, we are very concerned about how accessible legal services and access to justice are to people living in Wyndham. Our concern is further compounded by the lack of public transportation running between those outer suburbs and the inner city of Wyndham.

**Submission**

As State Government is in the process of designing the East Werribee Employment Precinct, it is critical that consideration must also be given to the design of a new "Justice Precinct" located in close vicinity to the existing Victoria Police Station.

We submit that a broader definition of access to justice needs to be adopted by State Government, and as a result the design of a “justice precinct” must encompass more than an expanded court complex and Department of Justice. A “justice precinct” must also include the appropriate legal, health and welfare support services. A “justice precinct” located in East Werribee must also consider access to justice more broadly for residents living in the more isolated suburbs of Wyndham.

The WLS would be pleased to discuss these issues in greater depth or provide further detail upon request.

Sincerely,

**Shorna Moore**

**Solicitor**

Wyndham Legal Service Inc.

[shorna@wyndhamls.org.au](mailto:shorna@wyndhamls.org.au)