




Delivering Client Oriented Services as part of a  
Local Coordinated Services Delivery Response

Presented by Bevan Warner  
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Photo credits Glenburn Community, Department of Justice  
Reviewed by Victoria Legal Aid

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Black Saturday - affected areas across Victoria



Map showing affected areas across Victoria for Black Saturday. Locations marked include: HORSHAM, BENDIGO, MYRTLEFORD, REDESDALE, HEATHCOTE, COLERAINE, KILMORE, MURRINDONG, DARGO, WANDONG, TAGGERTY, MARYSVILLE, KINGLAKE, HEALESVILLE, BUNYIP, TEARALGON, and CHURCHILL.

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Local legal coordinators across Victoria



Map showing local legal coordinators across Victoria. Locations marked include: EAGLEHAWK, MYRTLEFORD, YEA, WALLAN, ALEXANDRA, KINGLAKE / WHITELESEA, HEALESVILLE / VARRA GLEN, ARTHURS CREEK / ST ANDREWS, DIAMOND CREEK, and TEARALGON.

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**Black Saturday 7 February 2009**

- 78 communities across Victoria affected
- 173 people lost their lives
- 400,000 hectares of forest burnt
- 2,030 houses, 3,500+ structures in total and damaged thousands more
- 7,562 people, many of whom sought temporary accommodation
- Estimated cost of the disaster- 4.4 billion




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**Help with the maze of legal complexities**

- Bushfire Legal Help – the consortium established





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## Principles of partnership

- based on the principle of continuity of care, working alongside human and social services
- legal staff were supporting victims to solve very practical legal issues not complex litigation work. E.g. identification documents
- streamlining of referral pathways and ensuring the information provided is simple and helpful.
- a rapid and user-friendly response to meet the challenge of these unique circumstances

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## Services provided

- set up a free 1800 Hotline
- triage legal clinics at bushfire relief centres
- developed a comprehensive website
- authored over 35 fact sheets related topics
- established an Insurance Unit at Victoria Legal Aid
- facilitated pro bono legal referrals
- ran community legal education and media campaigns
- promote direct participation of people affected by the bushfires in the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

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## Assistance provided to

- 2,165 enquiries, and provided ongoing legal assistance and resources to more than 800 Victorians affected by the bushfires
- 800 advice sessions at relief centres and community legal centres



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**Factors in the success of the partnership**

- strong, single entity for the delivery of services – a ‘one-stop’ shop model
- quickly mobilise existing resources, knowledge, skills and expertise among the partners between their service models
- effective and open communication



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**Lessons were learnt – future planning**

- the provision of legal assistance services in the event of a natural disaster
- emergency response services, state and national governments should consider the development of innovative, collaborative models of service delivery
- the legal assistance sector needs to be proactive in recognising and identifying the broad range of longer-term legal problems



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What has happened since the report was launched?

- Report tabled at the Victorian Bushfire Recovery Authorities meeting
- State and Commonwealth emergency response management departments have acknowledged the report
- Discussions with local emergency management response planning authorities
- Scoping a national framework for the coordination of legal services delivery in emergency management response (The National Probono Law Centre and The Vic Bar)
- Despite BLH liaising and influencing the Royal Commission, it is interesting to note that there is no specific recommendation for provision of legal services as a part of emergency response following a natural disaster in the report.
- Thank you.



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### Challenges

- Hoping welfare agencies view legal services in a practical and positive light
- Hoping legal service providers 'open up' to other professions and disciplines that unite to assist people with every day problems.

Thank you.



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