



Two important events and an inspiring Mother's Day tale

At Northern CLC, we've been hard at work preparing some special events for the community and the service providers who support them. As part of our community legal education program, we'll be hosting two forums in May.

One is about empowering women with the tools for financial independence. The other is about improving collaboration with youth educators to more comprehensively address young people's experience of life problems with legal solutions. Check out the stories below to see how you can book your *free* tickets!

And with Mother's Day just around the corner, we figure it's the perfect time to share one of our feel-good client success stories about a new mum, who was excited to return to work but soon ran up against the same kinds of re-integration challenges that frustrate so many.

No spoilers, but the moral of the story is that even seemingly insurmountable workplace conflicts can be solved with simple legal support. Inspiring *and* informative? Sounds like an award-winner to us!

Finally, we're proud to announce that our submission to the Victorian Law Reform Commission is now signed, sealed, and delivered.

The VLRC is examining how children and young adults experience the process of family violence intervention orders. Needless to say, we have some strong recommendations about how this system can be improved — which you can read about below.



Community forum to empower women with financial independence

The women of Mitchell Shire will soon have the opportunity to attend a community forum to learn about the tools they can access to promote their financial independence.

The Economic Justice Forum: Women's Financial Independence & Equality is a free event to raise awareness of the resources available to women who are navigating the financial impacts of relationship breakdown and economic abuse.

"NCLC has seen too many clients not pursue their legal rights and financial entitlements post relationship separation. This is often due to fear, confusion, and inaccessibility: free legal assistance is limited, and the family law system is complex and overwhelming," says Senior Lawyer Emma Henderson.

"Furthermore, coercive control does not end when a woman leaves a relationship—it continues as financial abuse, often dragging women through

exhausting and damaging legal processes that can leave them homeless once the immediate crisis has passed.”

Hosted by Northern Community Legal Centre, the catered event is open to both community members and service providers. It will feature guest speakers from Northern CLC, The Orange Door, The SEED Project, Good Sheppard, Nexus Primary Health and other key services.

Attendees will have access to direct support through the Financial Security Resource Hub, which will connect them with information, services, and pathways toward long-term financial stability.

“This is about providing a space for women and service providers to come together for open and empowering conversations about financial independence, legal rights, and the supports available after separation and abuse,” explains Northern CLC CEO Jenni Smith.

“Together, with the support of local services and community voices, we aim to create a future where every woman has the knowledge, power, and legal support to achieve lasting financial independence and safety.”

There are still tickets available, but seating is limited so get in quick to reserve your spot!

Event details

Free lunch provided!

Date: Tuesday, 13 May

Time: 12:30 PM to 3:00 PM

Location: Greater Beveridge Community Centre

Tickets available via Eventbrite: [Economic Justice Forum Tickets](#)

**Supporting educators to address the legal
needs of young people**

For our second community event this month, we'll be heading to Law Week to host a forum for youth educators to raise awareness of the importance of addressing young people's experience of common legal problems.

The forum will build the capacity of educators, community legal services, and community organisations, to work together in addressing young people's experience of legal problems — empowering them to act early on their rights, before legal issues escalate into bigger life problems.

At Northern CLC, we recognise that legal problems — such as family violence, fines and debt, employment issues, being a victim of crime, or dealing with police — can have significant long-term impacts upon mental health, education, future employment, as well as future contact with the criminal justice system.

However, with early access to free legal assistance, and legal education to prevent issues occurring in the first place, these future impacts can be prevented.

Event details

Free lunch provided

Date: Thursday, 22 May

Time: 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM

Location: 71–81 Pearcedale Parade Broadmeadows, VIC, 3047

Tickets available via Eventbrite: [Empowering Youth Educators Workshop tickets](#)

Farah's story: the challenges of returning to work following parental leave — and

the legal solutions to make your work life easier

Perhaps nothing elucidates the impact of our work at Northern CLC better than our client stories. Here's one such story, arising from our employment law practice at the Working Women's Centre.

Farah returned to work after a period of parental leave. During her first shift back, she asked her boss if she could take a break so she could express milk for her baby. Farah's employer refused, claiming this break would mean that Farah would have to cancel some of her client appointments.

Farah did not know what to do as she could not continue working without expressing milk. Farah made an appointment with Northern CLC and spoke to a lawyer from the Working Women's Centre.

Northern CLC assisted Farah to make a formal request for a Flexible Working Arrangement, as Farah was entitled to do under the Fair Work Act 2009 because she was the carer of a young child.

The law required Farah's employer to discuss the request with Farah, to try to reach agreement and to respond to Farah's request within 21 days. Farah's employer could only refuse the request if they had reasonable business grounds to refuse.

After receiving the written request, Farah's employer discussed with Farah different ways that they could schedule her appointments to enable Farah to take a break to express milk. The employer and Farah agreed to an arrangement that worked for both of them, and Farah was able to return to work.

The Working Women's Centre Victoria helps women and non-binary people facing legal problems at work anywhere in Victoria, including regional and remote areas. It is a non-government consortium made up of four community legal centres: South-East Monash Legal Service, Women's Legal Service Victoria, WEstjustice, and Northern Community Legal Centre.

To contact the Working Women's Centre call 1800 992 842 (1800 WWC VIC) Mon-Fri between 9am-3pm.

Or call Northern CLC on (03) 9310 4376

www.wwcvic.org.au



Credit: Stephen Mabbs via Unsplash

The importance of giving young people a voice when living with family violence

In April, we made a submission to the Victorian Law Reform Commission project called “Examining Aspects of Family Violence Intervention Orders for Children and Young Adults”.

Our submission stressed that young people must be given a voice when orders are being made by the court to protect them from experiencing family violence. And we outlined the reforms required to ensure that happens.

Currently, some young people lose the protection of a family violence intervention order (FVIO) applied for by their parent when they turn 18, resulting in significant trauma and distress when they are required to initiate their own independent application and provide evidence to the court.

This process is unnecessary and should be simplified and streamlined, particularly when the court has already received significant evidence from the parent that the young person is at risk.

Family violence is already traumatic. We cannot support a system that only compounds this trauma by granting young people no access to participation in decisions that profoundly affect their lives.

At Northern CLC we commonly see situations where a young person under the age of 18 has conflicting views relating to their safety needs yet has no avenue for participation in FVIO proceedings in which they are being listed as a protected person.

We recognise that there is a fine balance between ensuring that young people have a voice — for example, where they don’t want to be included on an order — while still ensuring that their safety needs are protected. For this reason, we have recommended that an Independent Children’s Consultant is made available within specialist family violence courts, including our local court at Broadmeadows.

This will enable young people to access support and information. The Independent Children’s Consultant can further gather evidence regarding the safety needs of the young person and conduct individual risk assessments so that they can make recommendations to the court about the young person’s need for protection.

While this is just the start of an extensive consultation process being conducted by the Victorian Law Reform Commission, Northern CLC is

encouraged to see the spotlight finally shining upon the needs and rights of young people.

What's coming up at NCLC?

New resource for women's financial security

In tandem with our upcoming Economic Justice Forum, we'll be publishing a new information resource on our website for women interested in finding out more about what legal entitlements are available to them after relationship separation.

Watch this space!

Northern Community Legal Centre acknowledges and respects the traditional custodians whose lands we are fortunate to live and work on. We pay our respects to all Elders past, present and future.

Northern Community Legal Centre

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06/03/2025

