

Media release

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Funding for legal assistance for people with mental ill-health

The Attorney General the Hon Martin Pakula MP has announced a \$430,000 funding commitment from the Victorian Legal Services Board (VLSB) for the growth of Mind Australia Limited's 'Justice in Mind' program, which helps individuals with their legal problems.

The program was established in 2017 as a pilot project between Mind and WEstjustice, a community organisation providing free legal assistance and financial counselling in Melbourne's western suburbs. It delivers one-on-one legal assistance to people using Mind services and several other Melbourne legal centres have since joined the project, establishing similar legal advice models.

"Since we established Justice in Mind together with Mind last year, we have supported over 25 individuals to address a range of complex and often distressing legal problems, often with life changing consequences. Clients experiencing homelessness, living with unsustainable levels of debt, or experiencing consumer law problems have been provided with the expert legal advice and casework that they need to take back control of their lives," says WEstjustice CEO Denis Nelthorpe.

The grant, one of the largest awarded this year by the VLSB, will be delivered over 2.5 years. It will fund the development of an innovative program of systemic rights-based advocacy, coalition building, policy development, and legal education across the community sector.

"Managing legal problems can be difficult for anyone but mental health challenges can make it even harder for people to seek legal help or navigate complex legal and bureaucratic systems," says Mind CEO Robyn Hunter.

"We are delighted that the Victorian Legal Services Board has recognised the unique value of Justice in Mind. With their support, Justice in Mind can now support more people across our services in their recovery journey, and help us to develop pragmatic policy solutions to improve health, social, and economic outcomes for the large community that we serve in Victoria."

For more information about Justice in Mind please contact John Foley, Mind Manager Policy and Campaigns, Research and Advocacy, at john.foley@mindaustralia.org.au