

27 March 2020

## **Social Security Rights Victoria - Service Continuity Update**

Social Security Rights Victoria (SSRV) is an independent, statewide community legal centre that specialises in social security related law, policy and administration.

SSRV will continue to offer legal information, advice, casework and representation services in relation to Centrelink matters and financial counselling services to vulnerable Victorians, and those who support them, during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

**Services will be provided primarily by telephone, with new numbers and arrangements in place.** Existing clients, partners and stakeholders may be able to communicate with SSRV staff via email and video conferencing.

Demand for legal help could mean that callers will not be able to get straight through to SSRV advisors. Calls will be returned as quickly as possible. The call display will indicate a blocked or private number.

### **General Advice Line – T: 0419 793 652** Rural Callers - 1800 094 164

SSRV's telephone advice line for the general public will extend operating hours to 9.30am-12.30pm Monday to Thursday.

The General Advice Line service provides free and independent advice to callers in relation to rights, obligations and options when Centrelink has made a decision they disagree with.

### **Worker Help Line – T: 0429 450 346**

The Worker Help Line will continue to operate between 9.00am-5.00pm, Monday to Thursday.

This is a free information and secondary consultation service for social, community, disability and health workers (including financial counsellors and community lawyers) who are assisting clients in relation to Centrelink matters.

### **Administration Line – T: 03 9481 0299**

The Administration Line can be called for all other matters and to get in touch with specific SSRV staff members or projects. People seeking legal information and advice will be referred back to the above numbers.

### **Legal Casework and Representation Services**

SSRV will continue to provide legal services and representation to existing and new clients.

As SSRV has limited resources we must prioritise the provision of more intensive assistance. The guidelines we use to make decisions are available on the SSRV website – [www.ssrv.org.au](http://www.ssrv.org.au)

## **Financial Counselling Services**

Financial counselling services are offered as a component of the Integrated Services Project. These services will continue to be offered to SSRV clients. External referrals are not accepted for this service.

## **Community Legal Education and Training for Professionals**

SSRV will not be providing in-person education and training services for the moment. We are very happy to speak to other workers and organisations about areas of interest, and we will be exploring alternate means of delivering information, training and resources.

SSRV has already received a number of requests for up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 arrangements and Centrelink. Where possible, we will begin to upload relevant resources and links to the SSRV website [www.ssrv.org.au](http://www.ssrv.org.au) . We will also use the website to promote training, activities and policy work.

## **Policy and Advocacy**

SSRV is working with partners and stakeholders to highlight and address the impacts that government Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic measures are having on people who are currently receiving pensions and benefits, and the tens of thousands of Victorians who are engaging with the social security system due to loss of employment and income. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss relevant matters.

## **Projects**

SSRV will continue to progress all current projects, including:

- Integrated Services Project (in partnership with Financial Counselling Victoria)
- Intersection between Family Violence and Centrelink Project
- Disability Support Pension Help Project.

We will maintain communication with project partners and funders regarding project activity and any changes that may be required given current circumstances.

## **Contacting SSRV**

From Monday 30 March 2020, all SSRV staff will be working from home. Communications and services will be provided remotely. Staff can be contacted via their email addresses. Phone messages and emails to the general email address will be forwarded.

SSRV's usual opening hours are Monday – Thursday, 9.00am to 5.00pm.

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Worker Help Line T: 0429 450 346

Administration Line 03 9481 0299

Email [info@ssrv.org.au](mailto:info@ssrv.org.au)

