

For Release Wednesday 12 August, 2020

INNOVATIVE NEW CHATBOT & ONLINE RESOURCE SETS TO TACKLE DISABILITY SUPPORT HURDLES & TRAUMA

Social Security Rights Victoria launch interactive digital portal, custom-built to help Victorians successfully access Disability Support Pension payments

"When I finished using DSP Help, I started crying. The same, drip-fed information that I gathered over my two year process applying and reapplying for the DSP, I got in just 10 minutes." — Kylie

Visit dsphelp.org.au

MELBOURNE Wednesday 12 August, 2020 Social Security Rights Victoria (SSRV) today announced the launch of *DSP Help*, a free online resource created to help Victorians overcome the challenges involved in successfully applying for the Disability Support Pension (DSP). Further aiding applicants, the platform features an innovative new tool in the *Medical Evidence Bot*.

Made in partnership with design consultancy Paper Giant, and funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner's grants program, *DSP Help* breaks down complicated and overwhelming Centrelink language and instruction, providing accessible information for people to make better DSP applications and appeal unfavourable decisions.

Built on in-depth Paper Giant research with DSP clients themselves, support workers and legal experts, the interactive *Medical Evidence Bot* directly assists people in preparing the required evidence crucial for their application.

An income support payment provided through Centrelink, the DSP exists for individuals unable to work due to a permanent illness, injury, or disability. Tightened conditions over recent years have made it more difficult to access, yet the DSP is something all eligible Australians have a right to. The assessment process can feel opaque and arbitrary, with applicants coming up against obstructive stereotypes of what a work-impacting disability is.

For many, whether successful or not, the process can be a stressful, and time-consuming experience - with the DSP payment rate below the minimum wage, and below the rate currently offered by the Jobseeker payment.

Obtaining the DSP largely depends on the quality of supporting medical evidence. Alongside requirements for age, residency, and income and assets tests, medical conditions must be assessed as fully diagnosed, fully treated, and fully stabilised (confusing terms with specific legal meanings), and be rated through a points-system under *Impairment Tables*.

Medical practitioners themselves are often unaware of the detail of these tables, or even that they exist. The prevailing issue for eligible people is failing to apply successfully because they haven't understood what is required, or have been unable to gather the required medical evidence.

DSP Help collates the most important information from a range of sources, highlighting key problem areas in applications - with the *Medical Evidence Bot* going a step further, helping people prepare a personalised Evidence Kit for their doctor.

SSRV is a specialist, state-wide community legal centre. For over 30 years the service has been providing expert legal advice and assistance to Victorians in relation to Social Security law and how it is administered by Centrelink.

Gillian Wilks, SSRV Director, said *"In recent years there has been significant demand for help in relation to DSP matters, with many people struggling on Jobseeker (previously Newstart) payments and conditions while trying to meet DSP requirements. We anticipate that the DSP Help website and bot tool will empower those who may be able to apply themselves or with the aid of a carer or support worker, allowing SSRV to focus more of its resources on vulnerable Victorians and more complex legal matters."*

Wendy Fox, Paper Giant Creative Lead, said, *"With DSP Help, we used a design approach that included people with lived experience of applying for the payment - because people in that situation so rarely get included in the way that government services are designed. This process led to the creation of a range of concepts following the theme of 'a digital support worker' that we then prototyped. Ultimately, we landed on a two-fold solution - a new content website and chatbot aimed at providing the information and tools needed to create a successful DSP application."*

DSP Help is supported by \$400,000 funding from the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner under the Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program.

VLSB CEO and Commissioner, Fiona McLeay said, *"We are delighted to support the development of this new resource that will, along with the work of Social Security Rights Victoria, help people with a disability apply for the Disability Support Pension with greater ease and clarity. DSPHelp was funded by the Board's Designing Justice Differently grants round to encourage new ways of thinking and the use of human-centred design and technology to improve access to justice."*

Visit DSP Help dsphelp.org.au

Individuals can contact SSRV using the General Advice Line on 0419 793 652. If you are a support worker assisting a client with a DSP issue, you can contact SSRV using the Worker Help Line. The Worker Help Line is available on 0429 450 346. DSP Help is not part of Centrelink, Services Australia, or any government department or agency.

For more information please contact Gillian Wilks, SSRV Director gillian@ssrv.org.au or Dermott Williams, Community Lawyer dermott@ssrv.org.au



SOCIAL SECURITY RIGHTS VICTORIA

SSRV is a community legal centre that provides free legal services in relation to Social Security and Centrelink matters to people across Victoria. SSRV is a state-wide community legal centre, providing free legal services to disadvantaged and vulnerable Victorians and those who support them.

PAPER GIANT

Based on four pillars of Research, Design, Strategy and Capability, Paper Giant collaborates with a range of public and private organisations to better their communities, helping to understand and solve complex problems through ethnographic research and design communication. Striving for a more inclusive, sustainable, fair and just society, Paper Giant's transdisciplinary practitioners advocate for justice, ethics and agency through human-centred design that connects people, involving them in the process.