



MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
General
Minister for Citizenship
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SELF-HELP GUIDE GETS LAW WEEK UNDERWAY

A new website will make it easier for people who want to represent themselves to go to court without the cost of a lawyer, NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos said today.

The new site, LawAssist, is being launched as part of events to kick off Law Week 2010: Law and Justice in Your Community.

“Events held across NSW during Law Week are aimed at opening up the justice system to the community and making it accessible and understandable,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

“It is fitting that we kick this off with a new website that helps people represent themselves,” he said.

Mr Hatzistergos said the NSW Government’s LawAssist website will provide simple and practical advice about laws that affect people’s everyday lives.

It will provide step-by-step advice on resolving issues like debt, motor accidents, and apprehended violence orders.

“For people who want to represent themselves, the prospect of resolving a matter through the court without a lawyer is daunting.”

“This site will provide easy to follow information starting with what form to use, through to what to do and say if you end up in court in front of a magistrate or judge,” he said.

Mr Hatzistergos said legal topics listed on the site are based on the most frequent requests received by the Government’s free telephone legal information and advice service, LawAccess.

“Credit and debt problems make up 10 per cent of LawAccess’ queries, so our new site is starting with comprehensive guides to debt issues – whether someone owes you money, or claims you owe them money.”

Mr Hatzistergos also said there are also plans to expand the site to cover such topics as apprehended domestic violence orders, motor vehicle accidents and neighbourhood disputes.

“What is unique about this site is that there are step-by-step guides that show people what they need to do; for example there is an interactive guide on how to start the small claims process.”

The website address for Law Assist is: www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au/lawassist If you need further advice or need to be referred to a lawyer please call LawAccess on 1300 888 529.

Information about LawAssist will be distributed at Law Week 2010 events being held throughout NSW

As part of Law week 2010 a number of events, seminars and workshops will be held across NSW that will highlight legal options and support services available to people. As part of these events community members will have a unique opportunity to get free information and advice about the law.

Some of these Law Week events include:

- An open air Legal Expo at Martin Place, Sydney on Monday May 17 that will enable members of the community to obtain face-to-face legal advice and information from a range of legal service providers including the NSW Trustee and Guardian, Legal Aid NSW, Local and District Courts, JP's and other organisations including the Motor Accidents Authority and the ACCC;
- A *Walk for Justice* sponsored by the Public Interest Clearing House (PILCH) to raise awareness about the importance of free access to justice and pro bono work in the legal community;
- Mock-trial exercises and debates for school students;
- A Law Week Legal Services Roadshow organised by the NSW Department of Justice and Attorney General in partnership with Legal Aid NSW and other local service providers, that will visit Albury, Wagga Wagga, Narrandera, Leeton and Griffith to help people access legal information;
- Open Days at local courthouses, as well as seminars and forums at various local libraries covering support for victims of domestic violence, drink-driving, making a Will, the roles of the courts and of the coroner and other topics such as neighbourhood disputes, legal aid, family law, property issues and immigration.

Law Week events will be taking place across NSW and Australia from 17-22 May.

For more information about Law Week 2010 and what is happening in your area, please visit www.lawweek.com.au