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# Community Law Australia



## MEDIA ALERT

Friday 9 November 2012

### **Protected space for family violence victims at Ringwood Magistrates court should go national: CLA**

#### **Media Opportunity**

**Launch of Protected Persons Space with Hon Robert Clark, Attorney General and Chief Magistrate Ian Gray** Family Violence advocate Christine – who has used the space and can talk about the intimidation of using the Courts is also available for interview

**10.30am – 11:30am Friday, 9 November 2012**

**Ringwood Magistrates Court, 39 Ringwood st, Ringwood**

Community Law Australia today urged State and Federal governments to increase their response family violence matters by increasing community legal assistance to vulnerable women and children, and to take up an initiative being launched today at Ringwood Magistrates court nationally.

The Ringwood Magistrates court, in conjunction with Eastern Community Legal Centre and other agencies, is today launching a safe space, or separate waiting area, for women and children who face intimidation and reliving trauma through the court process.

The project, called Protected Persons Space, responds to vulnerable court users who have felt intimidated and in some cases re-traumatised by having to share the waiting area with the abusive person whom their intervention order was sought against.

Community Law Australia spokesperson Hugh de Kretser welcomed the initiative and said that it was imperative that Australia had the right framework to respond to family violence legal matters.

“When women seek help from the legal system, it is vital that they receive an appropriate response.

“Safe areas such as these are already in place in certain courts in NSW, but ought to be part of the response to family violence across the country.

“We have best practice family violence prevention legislation in Victoria, but that needs to be matched with proper resourcing of community lawyers to meet the surge in demand, as well as proper resourcing for courts and non legal support services.

“It can be extremely stressful for women to take steps to obtain an intervention order. Separate, safe waiting areas are an important step in reducing that stress, avoiding further trauma and providing an appropriate justice system response to family violence.

“With proper resourcing, we can increase protection and reduce the risks of intervention order breaches. The tragic case of Sargun Ragi and others highlight how imperative it is that the system works properly to protect women facing violence.

- Family violence is the most common issue community legal centres help Victorians with.
- Demand for family violence prevention legal services has soared, with services increasing 70 per cent over the past five years.

- Last financial year, community lawyers in Victoria delivered over 18,000 family violence related legal information, advice and casework services.
- These services helped vulnerable women and children obtain legal protection from family violence and linked them in with legal and non legal help on related issues like family law, crimes compensation, debt and housing.

“The legal system is complex and difficult to navigate. We need to ensure that vulnerable women and children are given the very best set of tools to ensure they are safe and their rights are protected.

“This tool kit should involve safe waiting areas for vulnerable court users, and increased access to free legal help for those that need it most,” said Mr de Kretser.

**For more information or to arrange an interview with Mr de Kretser or family violence advocate Christine, please contact media officer Anaya Latter on 0432 121 636.**  
[www.communitylawaustralia.org.au](http://www.communitylawaustralia.org.au)