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# Media Release

## Victorian Legal Aid Launch Migration Assistance Scheme

12 November 2002

Victorian Legal Aid is to officially launch its Migration Duty Solicitor scheme this Wednesday.

The Federal Magistrates Service will host the launch on Wednesday 13 November 2002, commencing at 4.30pm, level 12, 305 William St Melbourne.

The scheme is designed to provide free advice to unrepresented litigants who are entering migration-related proceedings in the Federal Magistrates Court and the Federal Court in Melbourne.

Since 1 July 2002, the Federal Magistrates Court has received 396 applications relating to migration, compared with 182 received between October 2001, when the court first received jurisdiction, and June 2002.

Chief Federal Magistrate Diana Bryant said, "With the number of migration-related matters and the number of self-represented litigants increasing at a rapid rate, it is pleasing to see the introduction of such a scheme".

"The Federal Magistrates Court is proud to work with Victorian Legal Aid to establish a service that provides accessible, preliminary advice about the judicial review process".

"The solicitors can advise those who do not have an arguable case, and assist those who do to draft their documents in a way which will allow mentions points to be clearly understood" Chief Federal Magistrate Bryant added.

Victoria Legal Aid Managing Director Tony Parsons said "This is an important program to provide some of the most disadvantaged in the community with access to justice and legal remedies".

The scheme involves two legal aid solicitors being on duty at the Court on the days of migration list callovers and directions hearings, conducted approximately once a month. They can provide advice to the litigant about their prospects of success in the court as well as other options to litigation. This initial discussion may lead to further assistance through the provision of a grant to pursue legal representation.

The scheme has been operating since July and although it is currently being undertaken as a six-month pilot program, it's success so far should ensure its continuation.

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***Please advise in advance if you anticipate attending the launch.***