

Ms Kerin Leonard
Project Manager, Access to Justice Review
Department of Justice and Regulation
Level 24, 121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

BY EMAIL

Dear Ms Leonard,

Self-Representation Service – County and Supreme Courts of Victoria

The Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) understands that in response to the Access to Justice Review, Justice Connect will submit a proposal to establish a Self-Representation Service (SRS) in the County and Supreme Courts of Victoria. The LIV believes that an SRS in these Courts would facilitate access to justice and improve efficiency in those jurisdictions. The LIV endorses the Justice Connect proposal.

Self-representation services

The LIV has previously made submissions to the Department of Justice and Regulation (the Department) expressing its support for the SRS model. The SRS model has been proven to be of exceptional assistance to the judiciary, court users and self-represented litigants in all courts that currently employ this service.

Evaluations of the self-representation services delivered by Justice Connect in the federal courts, QPILCH in the Queensland courts and tribunals, and JusticeNet in the Supreme Court of South Australia, unequivocally demonstrate the benefits that are derived from this service delivery model.

In our submission to the Department dated 1 March 2016, the LIV recommended that a government funded SRS be expanded to the Supreme and County Courts of Victoria in consultation with the courts, Justice Connect, the LIV and the Victorian Bar. The LIV is pleased to be able to endorse a proposal that has been developed by Justice Connect with input from the Victorian courts. The LIV understands that Justice Connect is continuing to consult with the Supreme and County Courts of Victoria as well as the profession on this matter.

Justice Connect proposal

The Justice Connect SRS Proposal recommends that funding be sought from the Department to scope and pilot an SRS in the County and Supreme Courts. The LIV endorses this recommendation.

Like the services that are already being delivered, a properly funded SRS in the Victorian courts has the potential to provide positive outcomes for disadvantaged clients and improve the efficiency in which self-represented matters move through the courts, alleviating strain on court resources. The

economic argument for investment in the legal assistance sector is set out in the LIV's submission to the Access to Review. The LIV urges the Department consider this proposal in light of the potential return on investment and the positive impact it will have on access to justice for Victorians.

If you wish to discuss the LIV's endorsement of the Justice Connect proposal further, please contact me or Andrew Tabone on 9607 9385 or atabone@liv.asn.au.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nerida Wallace", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nerida Wallace
Chief Executive Officer
Law Institute of Victoria

Cc: Ms Tina Turner, Director, Referral Service, Justice Connect