



# FUNDS IN COURT NEWSLETTER

SUPREME COURT  
VICTORIA



*To give a better understanding of the Senior Master's Office*

**FEBRUARY 2009**

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### Did you know?

*Over the next twelve months, the Client Liaison Officers are trying to catch up with people they have never visited, or have not seen for awhile. So, don't be surprised if you get a call from one of our CLOs to arrange an appointment to come and see you!*

Editor:  
**Michael Karabogias**  
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**Carol Anderson**

## Beneficiaries' Focus Group By Lee Archer

The first ever Beneficiaries' Focus Group forum was held on 5 December 2008. A group of twelve beneficiaries met to discuss the way in which the Senior Master's Office goes about its business, and to hear ways that the SMO can improve services to beneficiaries.

Most of the participants had funds with the Court for many years and had a lot to say about how we operate. The forum was facilitated by Sarah from Groupworks, who ably lead the group through some, often very difficult, discussions. For instance, one of the issues raised was that the SMO does not recognise when people's skills improved allowing them to take on additional responsibility. As a result, the SMO has

undertaken a project for 2009 to develop policies to help beneficiaries improve their skills and take more responsibility, such as payment of utility bills.

### Who's Frank?

Another concern raised was that the SMO statements provided are not easily understood by people without a financial background. Some beneficiaries questioned the reference to "the bloke Frank" who always appears on their statements, but whom people have never met. Frank, of course, is a franking dividend from the shares. The SMO has undertaken to improve statements so they make sense for everyone.

On a more positive note, the beneficiaries felt that the SMO always looked out for them and would do its best for them in very difficult circumstances. They liked the fact that

their money was safe and that it was invested wisely. They also said that they were greeted warmly and felt comfortable talking to staff.

### Where to from here?

One of the most important things that arose from the day was that the opportunity to give feedback should be provided regularly. The SMO has resolved to have a consultation session at least once a year. Therefore, each and every beneficiary is encouraged to come along to the next session, which will be advertised in the mid-year newsletter.

The full outcomes of the day should be on the SMO website shortly. If you have any questions please contact Lee Archer, Principal Client Liaison Officer. And we look forward to seeing you and Frank next time!

## Who's Who — Legal Officers

By Susan May

Eight Legal Officers [LOs] and three Legal Assistants assist the Senior Master with a variety of work within the SMO.

The Legal Section, which is managed by Monica Linehan, Solicitor to the Senior Master, reports directly to the Senior Master.

The SMO's Legal Officers come from a variety of professional backgrounds. LOs previously have worked in private practice, business, trustee organisations, the public sector and the courts.

LOs possess a variety of legal expertise and interests, including wills and estates, legal costs, building contracts, personal injury, medical negligence, social security and consumer credit.

Three Legal Assistants are also an integral part of the Legal Section. Carol Anderson, Stephanie Newnham and Vicky Le are responsible for

providing administrative support to the Legal Section, particularly for the payment in and payment out of funds in Court, as well as generally "keeping the lawyers in line".

Subject always to the Senior Master's instructions, the Legal Section may assist the Senior Master, Trust Officers and beneficiaries with:

- Preparation and interpretation of orders of the Court.
- Issues with Centrelink, the Office of Housing, the Child Support Agency and TAC.
- Construction of new homes and

modifications to existing properties.

- The assessment of legal costs.
- Investigation of debts and consumer credit contracts.
- Property related problems.

The Legal Section also:

- Checks and receipts all payments into Court: in the 2007-2008 financial year 696 payments totalling over \$124 million were paid into Court.
- Arranges payment out of funds specifically held until a beneficiary turns 18
- Checks account payments
- Negotiates the payment of solicitors' costs.

*LOs previously have worked in private practice, business, other trustee organisations, the public sector and the courts.*



LR Back: Stephen Mundy, Michael Karabogias

Middle: Susan May, Naz Mancini, Tim West

Front: Vicky Le, Monica Linehan, Kathy Rundle

Inset from top: Edmund Gale, Stephanie Newnham, Carol Anderson

## A Beneficiary's Story

By Steven Watts



I am a Victorian athlete and my name is Steven Watts.

I have been involved in table tennis for nearly 5 years. I started playing at a local club that was walking distance from home and soon realised how much I loved the sport. I have been lucky enough to hold the National Singles and National Doubles titles since 2006. I am now working with a coach, Joe Gerada, with a goal to qualifying for the 2012 Paralympics in London.

I have cerebral palsy and it is not always easy to participate in

mainstream society. When I was born, the doctors told my parents that I would not achieve anything in my life. I have worked hard and proven them wrong.

I first won the School Victorian Championships in 2005 but honestly did not know for what I was playing. I just played game after game after game. After eight games, people came and congratulated me and then my photo was taken with some official looking guy. I apparently had just won the Championships. My mum and I got back in the car and soon realized what had happened. We shouted with delight.

Since then, my mum has helped me get to the different games and competitions.

One of my earlier competitions, after the Victorian Championships, was in Sydney. My grandparents took me to

Sydney for this because my mum was away. The Senior Master's Office assisted with the finances. Here I won the National Championships in two classes, playing doubles with Rory Carroll and Casey Geffke.

*"When I was born, the doctors told my parents that I would not achieve anything in my life. I have worked hard and proven them wrong."*

My first International World Championships were in France in 2005; since then I have been to Hong Kong, Darwin, Adelaide, Lismore and Japan. I have won 17 medals and 4 trophies for various competitions.

Early last year I was invited to a meeting where I was presented with an amazing trophy. I had been named the 2007 Table Tennis Australia Male Athlete with a Disability Player of the Year! It is an amazing honour and a beautiful trophy.

I have had a lot of opportunities presented to me in the last seventeen years; doctors have wanted to research my abilities and people have been interested in helping me succeed with my chosen sport. The Senior Master's Office has always been behind me for any additional support and I understand its role in my life.

I am committed to succeeding in what I chose to do and, even though my disability presents me with certain obstacles, I do the very best that I can.



### New Phone & Fax Numbers

You can now contact us either by phone (if calling from a fixed landline\*) or fax for the cost of a local call on:

Tel: 1300 039 390

Fax: 1300 039 388



## Your Questions

### What happens when a TO leaves?

By Graeme Morris

In the last Newsletter I mentioned that there had been three staff departures after a relatively long period of little or no staff turnover. Two of the departures were Trust Officers [TO]. In this Newsletter I thought I might advise what happens in the small number of instances where we have vacancies and who is selected to fill those vacancies.

Whilst the vacant positions are advertised, applications received and interviews undertaken, it is often word of mouth that first brings the potential applicants to our notice. As most of our Trust Officers came from trustee organisations, our staff usually know of others who may be suitable for the position.

This has been the case in filling the positions previously held by Michael Nazaretian and Fadil Osman. Ally Stuart was the successful applicant for Michael's position and Scott

Reddaway replaced Fadil. Both officers had gained valuable trust experience at trustee organisations after completing their university studies. Both have fitted in well and are getting to know the people in their caseload.

Often when a position is vacant on a short term basis we have a Relieving TO take over. This could be for a matter of days or weeks; we have two specialist trust officers who work in this capacity. They are Cheryl Thwaites and Luisa Lipsia. Cheryl also came from a trustee organisation whilst Luisa came from a different section of the SMO.

The role of relieving requires special skills as the relievers will not have the background detail that the regular trust officer has and, therefore, they must

quickly adapt to the day to day workload and deal with questions on matters that they have not previously handled. In addition, the relieving TOs need to be skilled communicators with both their fellow team members and those who contact the SMO.

### Did you know? We have 3 new CLOs!



Mick Hurstfield, Glenn Jordan, Emma Pinn

**In the next edition:**  
**A CLO's Excellent Adventure**  
*We had so much to tell you this edition we had to hold this story for next time!*

## We need your suggestions

*The Funds in Court Newsletter welcomes your suggestions. What kind of information would you like to see in future editions? Do you have a story to share? Is there a procedure you would like explained. Send your suggestions or contributions to:*

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