

Family Separation Services Guide

for the Barwon South West Region
2014 edition



This guide is produced by
the Barwon South West Family Law Pathways Network



Australian Government



Family Law
PATHWAYS
NETWORK

BARWON
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This guide has been designed to provide information to assist families who have separated or are separating. The guide includes information about support services and outlines when it would be appropriate to contact each service. The guide will assist professionals supporting families to navigate the various pathways available after separation.

It should be noted that this guide provides introductory material and should not be substituted for actual advice. Families are encouraged to make contact with the service to receive information particular to their circumstances.

ABOUT THE FAMILY LAW PATHWAYS NETWORK

The Barwon South West Family Law Pathways Network is funded by the Australian Government through the Attorney General's Department. Membership is open to any organisation or individual that provides services to separating families. The Network is inclusive and belongs to its members. The Network is auspiced by OzChild, who is the funds holder and appoints a project officer to facilitate the Network.

The Network aims to improve the collaboration and coordination between organisations operating in the family law system in order to help separating and separated families obtain appropriate services.

The network holds regular network events throughout the region including information sharing sessions, court services, forums, training events and conferences, and produces a bi-monthly e-bulletin.

If you would like to receive more information about the network or to be placed on the e-bulletin mailing list please contact the Project Officer via email:

vicpathwaysbarwonsouthwest@ozchild.org.au



COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT



Separation is one of the most emotionally traumatic processes a person can go through in their lives. We all need someone to talk to at some stage of our life and it's often good if they are outside our situation. Counseling is generally the first port of call. You can have consultations by telephone or face to face. A counselor will listen to you in a supportive and non-judgmental way and offer some suggestions in ways of dealing with your particular situation.

Counseling and mediation services are often vital to resolving disputes following separation. If you are having trouble dealing with the trauma of separation, it is advisable that you contact your nearest counseling service and book an appointment.

The following services provide counseling and support to families and individuals in relation to family separation, contact details for private practitioners and generalist counselors in your area can be found in your Yellow Pages directory under Counseling :-

Service	Phone	Website
Lifeworks - Geelong	5222 3172	www.lifeworks.com.au
Centacare – Warrnambool, Hamilton, Portland	5559 3000	www.centacareballarat.org.au
CatholicCare - Geelong	5221 7055	www.ccam.org.au/Contact-Us/Contact-Details/Geelong-McKillop-Street.aspx
OzChild – Warrnambool, Hamilton, Portland and Camperdown	1300 361 680	www.ozchild.org.au
Bethany Community Care Supporting Children After Separation Program Family Relationship Counseling	5278 8122 5278 8122	www.bethany.org.au/page.cfm?pagelid=344
Colac Area Health	5232 5140	http://www.swarh2.com.au/cah/content/Generalist-Counselling
Lifeline	13 11 14	www.lifeline.org.au
MensLine Australia	1300 789 978	www.menslineaus.org.au
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800	www.kidshelp.com.au
Family Relationship Advice Line	1800 050 321	www.familyrelationships.gov.au
Parentline – Victoria	132 289	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/parentline/

FAMILY DISPUTE RESOLUTION (MEDIATION)

Most parents who have separated reach their own verbal agreements about which parent their child will live and spend time with. It is not necessary to have a formal agreement in most situations, but if the parties feel that they require something in writing then they have two options:-

Parenting Plans

A parenting plan can take any form, but to be recognized by a court it must be in writing, dated and signed by both Parents. A parenting plan, whether or not it is dated and signed, is not legally enforceable. However, if Parents go to court and a Parenting Plan exists, the Magistrate or Judge will be required to consider the terms of the most recent Parenting Plan when making a Parenting Order. A Parenting Order as made by the court is legally enforceable.

Various mediation services help draft parenting plans after an agreement is reached. Agreements between Parents need to be made free from any threat, duress or coercion.

Consent Orders

Court Orders can be made by consent by filing an application with the Family Law Court. A Consent Orders Kit (Do it yourself kit) can be obtained at www.familylawcourts.gov.au. The kit contains the required forms and instructions. A Lawyer can also assist Parents to write up their Consent Order, which is then filed with either the Federal Magistrates Court or the Family Law Court. Once approved by the court, a Consent Order is legally enforceable.

Sometimes reaching an agreement about children or property can be difficult following separation. If there are difficulties discussing issues with between former partners, Family Dispute Resolution (mediation) may be of assistance.

Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) is a process in which a trained and independent Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner (FDRP) assists separated families to discuss issues in relation to children, property and other matters. The FDRP (mediator) helps the parties to explore and negotiate their options in an effort to reach a mutual and lasting agreement. Family Dispute Resolution is often less expensive, less time consuming and not as confrontational as going to Court.

Family Dispute Resolution has become an established part of the family law system and it is now mandatory for separated parents to attempt FDR before seeking court orders in relation to their children. Certain exceptions may apply, e.g. where there has been family violence or child abuse. Please consult with your nearest Family Relationship Centre or Lawyer for further information.



Family Dispute Resolution providers for children's matters:-

Service	Phone	Website
Family Relationship Centre Geelong Warrnambool	1300 656 043 1300 661 790	www.familyrelationships.gov.au
CatholicCare - Geelong	5221 7055	www.ccam.org.au/Contact-Us/Contact-Details/Geelong-McKillop-Street.aspx
Centacare - Warrnambool	5559 3000	www.centacareballarat.org.au
OzChild – Warrnambool, Portland, Hamilton	1300 361 680	www.ozchild.org.au
Lifeworks - Geelong	5222 3172	www.lifeworks.com.au
Victoria Legal Aid - Roundtable Dispute Management Warrnambool Geelong	1800 677 402 1800 196 200 1800 651 022	www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/get-legal-services-and-advice/roundtable-dispute-management-rdm
Family Relationship Advice Line	1800 050 321	www.familyrelationships.gov.au

CHILD SUPPORT

Every parent is responsible for financially supporting their children whether they live with the other parent or not. The key components of the child support formula include both parents income, the costs of raising children of different ages and the contribution a parent makes towards the costs through direct care.

A child support agreement offers parents a flexible way of arranging child support. You can ask the Child Support Agency (CSA) to accept your agreement and collect and transfer the payments for you, or you can make private arrangements. There are some conditions that must be met before CSA can accept a child support agreement and parties must always seek legal advice before reaching any agreement for lump sum Child Support. For more information about specific circumstances contact the Child Support Agency. If legal advice is required contact the Child Support Legal Aid Service or talk with a family lawyer.

Service	Phone	Website
Child Support Agency	131 272	www.csa.gov.au
Child Support Legal Service V	1800 677 402	www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/childsupportadvice
Barwon Community Legal Service – Specialist Child Support Service	1300 430 599	www.barwoncls.org.au

PROPERTY

Following separation, it is necessary for the property that has been accumulated jointly to be divided between the parties. If there is any significant property, it is essential that each party obtain legal advice. Knowing your entitlement and rights is essential to enable an agreement to be reached. Parents may need financial counseling, superannuation advice, advice from their accountant, Real Estate Agent or Property Valuator.

If parties can reach an agreement on their own about the distribution of the property it will save them time, money and distress. It is important to ensure that legal advice is obtained and full disclosure of all assets is given prior to reaching any agreement. The parties are advised to file an agreement with the Court; this can be done by completing a Consent Orders Kit available at www.familylawcourts.gov.au. It is advisable to engage a lawyer to draft the Consent Orders if there is significant property.

Property arrangements can be negotiated through the Family Dispute Resolution Process or with the support of a solicitor through the legal process. The following services provide Family Dispute Mediation for Property Matters.

Service	Website	Phone
Lifeworks - Geelong	5222 3172	www.lifeworks.com.au
Centacare - Warrnambool, Hamilton, Portland	5559 3000	www.centacareballarat.org.au
CatholicCare - Geelong	5221 7055	www.ccam.org.au/Contact-Us/Contact-Details/Geelong-McKillop-Street.aspx

LEGAL ADVICE

All separated parties should consider getting legal advice to help understand their rights, responsibilities and options. Even where court action is unlikely, legal advice can still play an important role in helping parties understand their legal rights and responsibilities as Parents.

Legal representation is provided by a range of legal organisations and private practitioners. All parties should be able to obtain some preliminary legal assistance free or at minimal cost, with ongoing representation being dependent upon the nature of the case and the circumstances of the parties.

Some private law firms will offer a 30 minute free session and will also be able to provide legal advice for payment of their professional time, check options when first contacting. The local family lawyers are listed in the Yellow Pages section of your phone book under "Solicitors". The websites of the state Law Societies can also refer you to a Family Law Solicitor, www.legalreferrals.liv.asn.au phone 9607 9550 in Victoria.

There are legal services that offer free legal advice in person or over the phone. See below for contact details:-

Service	Phone	Website
Barwon Community Legal Service	1300 430 599	www.barwoncls.org.au
Victoria Legal Aid	1800 677 402	www.legalaid.vic.gov.au
Geelong Office	1800 196 200	
Warrnambool Office	1800 651 022	
Emma House Domestic Violence Legal Service South West Region	55611934	
Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service	5562 5755	www.fvpls.org.au
Family Law Hotline	1800 050 321	www.FamilyLawCourt.com.au
Women's Legal Service VIC	1800 133 302	http://www.womenslegal.org.au/
Aboriginal Legal Service VIC	1800 064 865	http://vals.org.au/services/family-law



GOING TO COURT

Going to court should always be a last resort but if it is absolutely necessary then obtaining legal advice is essential. Contact your nearest legal service or private solicitor to arrange an appointment. The following websites have some useful information about going to Court.

Service	Phone	Website
Family Law Courts	1300 352 000	www.familylawcourts.gov.au
Federal Magistrates Court	1300 352 000	www.fmc.gov.au
Court Network (support service)	1800 681 614	www.courtnetwork.com.au
Local courts: Geelong Warrnambool Colac Hamilton Portland	5225 3333 5564 1111 5234 3400 5572 2288 5523 6143	http://www.magistratescourt.vic.gov.au/

CHILD WELFARE

Welfare concerns about children can include child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, truancy, exposure to danger, lack of nutrition, and others. If you have a belief that a child's welfare is at risk, then you must notify the child protection authority in your State. Please see a list of contacts below who may be able to assist you if you have concerns about the welfare of a child.

Service	Phone	Website
Department of Human Services Child Protection Crises Line (VIC) – 24 hours Local offices: Geelong Colac Warrnambool Hamilton Portland	131 278 5226 4540 5231 4350 5561 9444 5551 3299 5523 9999	www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Child FIRST (VIC) Barwon Child FIRST – Geelong South West Child FIRST – Warrnambool Colac/Otway/Corangamite Child FIRST	1800 705 211 1300 551 948 1300 543 779 5232 5500	www.dhs.vic.gov.au/.../reports-publications/child-first-information www.bethany.org.au/page.cfm?pageId=320 www.brophyweb.org.au/node/52 www.swarh2.com.au/cah/content/Child-FIRST
Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800	www.kidshelp.com.au



PARENTING

Separation or divorce does not normally end involvement and responsibility as a parent. Children need the continuing affection and support of both parents. This will require cooperation with a former partner which may not always be easy.

Programs are available to enable parents to reflect on their experiences and gather information in a supportive environment. Programs assist parents to understand the impact of separation on themselves and their children and to deal with the issues of building working relationships between parents so that the focus is on the best interests of the children. Parents can also access information on child development, (ages and stages) and healthy child behavior.

The Children's Contact Services provide a safe, neutral and child friendly environment for changeovers and supervised contact visits so that children are not exposed to ongoing parental conflict.

Service	Phone	Website
Post Separation Parenting Programs OzChild – Warrnambool FRC – Geelong Centacare – Warrnambool CatholicCare – Geelong Bethany - Geelong	1300 361 680 1300 661 790 5559 3000 5221 7055 5278 8122	www.ozchild.org.au www.centacareballarat.org.au www.ccam.org.au/Contact-Us/Contact-Details/Geelong-McKillop-Street.aspx www.bethany.org.au
Parenting Orders Program Geelong FRC	1300 661 790	
Children's Contact Service OzChild – Warrnambool Bethany - Geelong	1300 361 680 5278 8122	www.ozchild.org.au www.bethany.org.au
LifeWorks	5222 3172	www.lifeworks.com.au
Parentline – Victoria	132 289	http://www.education.vic.gov.au
Parenting Programs Centacare – Warrnambool Hamilton, Portland City of Warrnambool Bethany – Geelong City of Greater Geelong	5559 3000 5559 4747 5278 8122 5272 4817	www.centacareballarat.org.au www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au www.bethany.org.au www.geelongaustralia.com.au

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

If there has been a recent incident of violence then the Police should be contacted first. If a person is in fear of violence then they should contact their nearest legal service for legal advice. Support and counseling options are also available.



Service	Phone	Website
Victoria Police:		www.police.vic.gov.au
Emergency number	000	
Geelong	5225 3100	
Colac	5231 5599	
Hamilton	5572 1999	
Portland	5523 1999	
Warrnambool	5560 1333	
Women's Refuge & Support		
Emma House – Western District	5561 1934	
Zena Women's Services - Geelong	5224 2903	www.zena.org.au
CASA – Centre Against Sexual Assault		
Warrnambool	5564 4144	www.casa.org.au/swcasa
Barwon	5222 4802	www.casa.org.au/barwon/
AH Sexual Assault Crisis Line	1800 806 292	
Bethany - Specialist Family Violence Services	5278 8122	www.bethany.org.au
Colac Area Health Family Violence Women's counselor	5232 5140	http://www.swarh2.com.au/cah/content/Family-ViolenceWomen's-Counselor
Domestic Violence Helpline Telephone counseling 24hrs, 7 days a week	1800 800 098	
National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counseling Line	1800 737 732 (1800 RESPECT)	www.1800respect.org.au
Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria	1800 015 188	www.wdvcs.org.au
Mensline Australia 24hours a day 7 days a week	1300 78 99 78	www.menslineaus.org.au

SEA Change – Anger management for Women		http://www.lifeworks.com.au/shop/item/sea-change---anger-management-for-women
Life Works Geelong	5222 3172	
Men Behavioral Change Program		
South West – BFYS	5561 8888	www.brophyweb.org.au
Geelong – Bethany	5278 8122	www.bethany.org.au
Colac - CAH	5232 5100	www.swarh2.com.au/cah

HELP WITH MONEY



Many people experiencing separation find themselves in financial difficulty and often need a little money to help them get back on their feet. There are some support services that can help with donations as well as government departments that can issue urgent grants, loans and advanced benefit payments.

Service	Phone	Website
Centrelink (Family Assistance Office)	136 150	https://my.gov.au/
Financial Counseling – Warrnambool, Hamilton, Camperdown & Portland Geelong	1300 009 723 5278 8122	www.bethany.org.au
Colac - CAH	5232 5140	http://www.swarh2.com.au/cah/content/Financial-Counselling
Emergency relief- Geelong	5222 3293	www.ucg.unitingcare.org.au/
Warrnambool, Hamilton, Portland	1300 361 680	www.ozchild.org.au
Food Bank Geelong Food Relief Centre Loaves and Fishes – Portland Com. House – Camperdown	5278 6588 5521 1057 5593 1403	
Raglan Pde Warrnambool (Agency pick up only)	0488 132 612	
Salvation Army Centre Warrnambool Hamilton Portland Geelong Colac	5561 6792 5572 1907 5523 3749 5223 2434 5231 1178	http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/en/find-help/community-and-family-support/

HELP WITH HOUSING



Following separation many people find themselves without a place to stay until they can arrange their own housing. If you find yourself in need of housing there are many organisations that can help. Crises accommodation is provided for persons and families who are in need of urgent temporary accommodation. Most of these organisations can also refer you to other services that provide longer term accommodation. Please see contact list below:-

Service	Phone	Website
Office of Housing Victoria Geelong Hamilton Colac Warrnambool Portland Housing Call Centre – 24hrs	5226 4540 5551 3299 5231 4350 5561 9444 5523 9999 13 11 72	www.housing.vic.gov.au
Barwon Housing & Homelessness Support Service - Geelong, Colac, Surf Coast	1800 825 955	
Bethany Community Support – Geelong	5278 8122	www.bethany.org.au
Brophy Family & Youth Services Support 15-25 age group	5561 8888	http://www.brophyweb.org.au/node/33
Barwon Youth – Transitional housing for Youth – Geelong Time for Youth - Youth Housing Support - Geelong	5221 4466 5223 2966	www.barwonyouth.org.au
SalvoConnect Belmont Warrnambool Portland Hamilton	5244 9500 5561 6844 5521 8134 5572 5822	http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/en/find-help/Homeless-emergency-accommodation/
Salvation Army Kardinia Network - Kardinia Women's Services	5241 9149	www.salvationarmy.org.au

Salvation Army – Men’s Support Program	5274 9550	www.salvationarmy.org.au
Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative – Geelong	5277 0766	www.wathaurong.org.au
Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative - Warrnambool	5564 3333	www.gunditjmara.org.au
Rural Housing Network	(03) 5722 8000	www.ruralhousing.com.au
Homeless Crisis Line	1800 825 955	
BCLS Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Program	1300 430 599	www.barwoncls.org.au

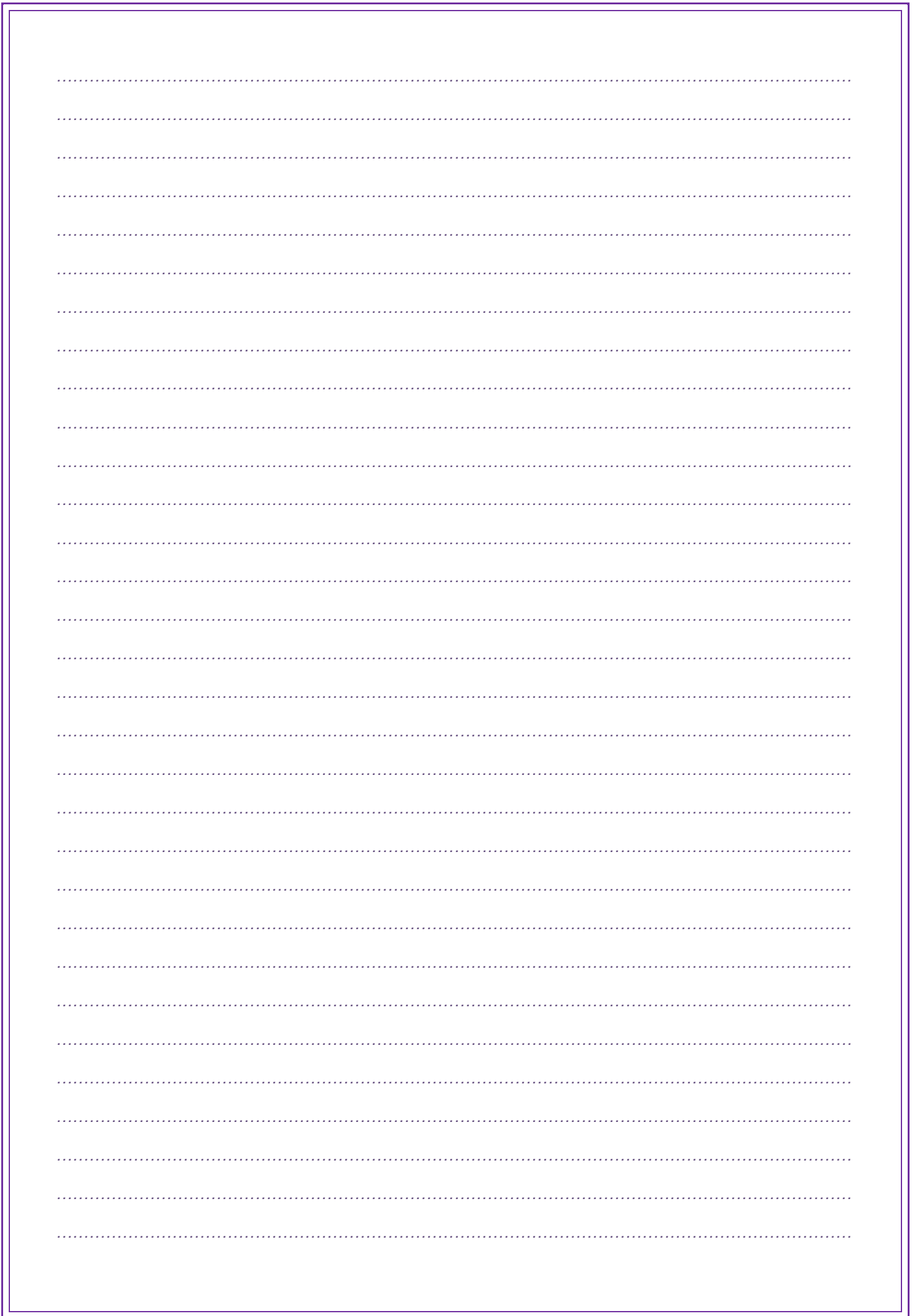
Service information can change and it is not possible to include information about all of the services you may require in this booklet, the following Help Lines and online links may assist you in identifying the services you require.

HELP LINES:

Lifeline 24 hour Crisis Line	13 11 14
Kids Helpline – 24 hour	1800 551 800
Youthline	13 11 14
Nurse on Call	1300 60 60 24
Maternal Child Health Line	13 22 29
Parent Line	13 22 89
Men’s Line Australia – 24 hour	1300 789 978
WIRE – Women’s Information Referral Exchange	1300 134 130
Counselling Online - 24 hr – Alcohol & Drug Counselling	1800 888 236
Gamblers Help - 24 hours	1800 858 858
Child Protection Crisis Line – 24 hour	13 12 78
DV Crisis Line	1800 015 188
Suicide Help Line – 24 hour	1300 651 251
Crisis Housing	1800 825 955
Family Drug Help	1300 660 068
Mental Health Advice Line	1300 280 737
Money Help - free helpline	1800 007 007
Beyondblue	1300 224 636
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault National Helpline	1800 200 526

ONLINE DIRECTORIES:

www.vflpnwiki.org.au (iRefer App)	http://www9.health.gov.au/ccsd
http://humanservicesdirectory.vic.gov.au/Home.aspx	http://www.vic.gov.au
http://www.serviceseeker.com.au	



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