



MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
Attorney General
Minister for Industrial Relations

Monday, August 24, 2009

NEW DVD TO HELP PEOPLE EXPERIENCING MORTGAGE STRESS

NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos and Federal Minister for Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law Chris Bowen have today launched a new DVD to assist homeowners facing mortgage stress.

Mr Hatzistergos said the DVD, *Mortgage Rescue*, explained the legal process and options available to people experiencing mortgage stress, in an easy to understand format.

“It is important that homeowners having trouble paying their mortgages seek advice about their options, sooner rather than later,” said Mr Hatzistergos.

“People who can’t afford to meet their regular payments can avoid having their homes repossessed if they understand their legal situation and act accordingly.”

He said LawAccess, a free NSW Government telephone service that provides legal advice, experienced a 30.3% increase in calls from people seeking assistance for credit and debt matters in the quarter ending March 2009, compared to the corresponding quarter in 2008.

The Credit and Debt Hotline, a service operated by the Consumer Credit Legal Centre, funded by NSW and Commonwealth, saw a 36% increase in calls in 2007, and a 104% increase in 2008. In 2009, calls have continued at levels similar to 2008.

Mr Bowen said the DVD would help homeowners, especially in Western Sydney, where the repossession of houses had been acute.

“It is inevitable that some people with mortgages, especially the recently unemployed, will experience difficulty meeting their regular repayments, as the economy continues to be impacted by the global recession,” Mr Bowen said.

“That’s why it is so important that people get good advice, and if need be, approach their lender to figure out a way of meeting their financial obligations.”

Mortgage Rescue will be available in public libraries across the State, and will be used to train community workers so that they understand the options available to consumers and can direct them to the appropriate services.

Homeowners who require immediate free legal advice on mortgage stress should call LawAccess on 1300 888 529 or the Credit and Debt Hotline on 1800 808 488.

The DVD is one of a number of initiatives targeting mortgage stress by Legal Aid NSW. The Mortgage Stress Handbook was launched in January and so far more than 11,500 copies have been distributed.

Mortgage Stress forums have also been held in locations including Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, Dapto, Rooty Hill, Gosford and Parramatta.