

# Law shift helps gays

CENTRELINK BENEFITS TO BECOME AVAILABLE

Same-sex couples living in the Greater Shepparton area are being encouraged to declare their relationship to Centrelink to ensure correct payments are received under changes to be introduced next month.

Goulburn Valley Pride President Damien Stevens said changes to the law meant that Centrelink would recognise same-sex relationships from July 1.

"Centrelink customers who are living in a same-sex de facto relationship will be recognised as partnered, and assessed in the same way as opposite-sex couples," Mr Stevens said.

Mr Stevens encouraged members of the homosexual community to come forward and register at Centrelink.

"This isn't as easy as it sounds for our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT)

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community members living in regional parts of Victoria, such as Shepparton," Mr Stevens said.

"Many GLBT people have been forced to hide their relationships for many years due to fear of homophobia, violence, loss of employment and other

forms of discrimination, especially older members of the GLBT community."

He said a free information session hosted by GV Pride on legislation changes affecting same-sex couples would be held next week.

The Same Sex Couples: Changes in the Legislation — The Impact on Individuals and Couples in the Community session will be run by local private client adviser David Guy and Centrelink representative Barbara Godden on Tuesday, June 9 from 7.30 pm.

The topics to be covered will include superannuation, partner and dependant benefits, estate planning opportunities, Centrelink entitlements and strategies and taxation consideration.

● For more details, phone Mr Stevens on 0418 511 562.

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