

NATIONAL PRO BONO RESOURCE CENTRE

Pro Bono News Issue 13: Volume 1/2005

Welcome to the first edition for 2005 of the eNewsletter of the National Pro Bono Resource Centre (NPBRC). The Centre is affiliated with the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales and is funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. Archived eNewsletters are available at www.nationalprobono.org.au/publications/index.html

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1 Welcome to 2005

With our first eNewsletter we wish to welcome our 630 subscribers to another year of pro bono news and events. Our plan is to keep publishing the eNewsletter on a two-monthly basis. We are always pleased to receive items both for the eNewsletter and the [Pro Bono Network](#) site. We are also pleased to receive feedback and suggestions for improvement of the [Centre's site](#) and the eNewsletter.

2 The Centre's future

Many of you have asked about the future of the Centre after June 2005 when the current 3-year funding agreement with the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department ends.

We have been busy convincing the Federal Government that the Centre should continue to be funded at current levels. In December 2004, we met with the Commonwealth Attorney-General and put our case. We also provided a detailed submission to the Attorney-General's Department who prepared a brief that went to the A-G early in the New Year. The brief has been noted by the A-G for the purposes of the 2005/2006 Federal budget process and the matter will be considered next month by the Expenditure Review Committee, a sub-committee of Cabinet. We hope to know the outcome by mid April.

3 A-G launches best practice sessions

The Attorney-General, the Hon. Philip Ruddock MP launched the Pro Bono Best Practice sessions (see below) on 11 February 2005 at a lunch of the Managing Partners Group of the Law Society of NSW.

Key points in his speech to the managing partners were:

- Pro bono is a symbol of a dynamic system and it is a practical expression of the legal profession's commitment to the delivery of justice;
- The value and extent of pro bono work should not be underestimated. Pro bono work is not something that goes on at the margins of the profession. It is integral to the work of legal practices of all types.
- The Centre's paper on Government lawyers and pro bono has been enthusiastically received by government agencies.
- Government does not see pro bono as a substitute for legal aid funding;
- Government does not want to overtake or bureaucratise the process of improving pro bono.

A [full copy of the A-G's speech notes is available](#) from the Centre's website.

The Centre's director, John Corker also spoke at the launch. Key points in his speech were:

- Effective coordination and referral of pro bono matters is essential at firm, State and national levels not only for the public but also to make the most of a limited resource. Victoria provides an efficient model for coordination of the pro bono referral schemes which is commended to NSW;
- Firms (large, medium and small) should be congratulated for the pro bono legal support they provide but capacity exists for more to be done and the burden should be shared more evenly across the whole profession;
- Structured pro bono practices have grown considerably since the first National Pro Bono Conference held in August 2000 and those with high degrees of organisation and a positive firm-wide culture are reaping the benefits;
- There is considerable diversity in the types of pro bono services being provided and firms can involve staff and their communities to find appropriate projects and activities that will suit the firm;
- Pro bono is good for business and is a good story for the profession and the Centre wants to make the most of every opportunity to tell it.

A [full copy of the Director's speech is available](#) from the Centre's website.

4 Best practice sessions, Sydney

The **Pro Bono Best Practice Sessions** are designed to assist firms (particularly mid-tier firms) to develop and enhance their pro bono practices. They were devised by the Centre with the support of pro bono coordinators and a number of firms who have agreed to host

the sessions. The sessions will be a mixture of seminars, workshops and discussions, all intended to provide practical assistance on operational and planning issues involved in managing a firm's pro bono practice.

They will be held on the first Wednesday of each month starting in March and continuing through until December 2005. [Details of all of the proposed sessions and venues are available here](#). The first two sessions (March and April) are:

Session 1: Developing pro bono policy/programs (seminar with Anne Cregan from BDW)

Where: Blake Dawson Waldron (Grosvenor Place, 225 George Street, Sydney)

When: Wednesday 2 March 5.30-7.30pm

Session 2: Working with Community Legal Centres (workshop with Julie Bishop from NACLC)

Where: Cutler Hughes Harris (Level 44, 2 Park Street, Sydney)

When: Wednesday 6 April, 5.30-7.30pm

RSVP to bookings@nationalprobono.org.au or call us on 02 9385 7381

5 The Walgett Family Law Affidavit Writing Pilot

In an outstanding turnout by private lawyers in Sydney this week, 75 solicitors from Sydney firms were treated at the Law Society of NSW to a presentation by Renee Adams, coordinator of the Indigenous Women's Program of Women's Legal Services NSW ('WLS'). Renee outlined the real need for legal assistance for Indigenous women whose circumstances can be so dire and emphasised the great contribution that pro bono lawyers can make.

The Walgett Pilot is a response to resolutions at several NACLC Annual Conferences calling for assistance in family law matters. It follows earlier meetings and training sessions conducted to address this need. The practical aspects of the pilot, which aims to provide affidavit drafting support for clients of the WLS, were again ably presented by Catherine Carney, Principal Solicitor, WLS and Gary Watts of Watts McCray, family law specialists based in Sydney and Parramatta.

Thanks are due to the Law Society for their admirable promotion and hosting of this event. For more information about the Pilot and future sessions please see: <http://www.lawsociety.com.au/page.asp?partID=16409> or contact John Truswell, Law Society Pro Bono Scheme Solicitor on (02) 9926 0379.

6 VLF Distinguished Pro Bono Service Awards

On 24 February 2005 at the Inaugural Institute of Legal Executives Conference, the Hon. Justice Bernard Teague presented 9 legal executives and paralegals with Victoria Law Foundation Distinguished Pro Bono Service Awards. The awards acknowledge dedicated and long-standing contributions by volunteers in their communities. These awards are not competitive but made solely on merit and achievement.

Awards went to:

Fiona Chapple, Baker & McKenzie for contributions to Baker & McKenzie's involvement with the Homeless Persons Legal Clinic.

Jack Damschke, Peninsula Community Legal Centre, for paralegal and management committee volunteer work at Peninsula CLC for over 10 years; paralegal coordinator at free legal advice sessions, supervising volunteers.

Judy Del Rio, Peninsula Community Legal Centre, for 25 years involvement with the Peninsula CLC including as a paralegal volunteer since 1994; long-standing assistance for Spanish-speaking members of the community to access the legal system; Management committee representative.

Lisa Grocott, Minter Ellison, for work with Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation and Ozanam House, administration and support of Minter Ellison pro bono program with Homeless Persons Legal Clinic.

Sarah Hudson, Peninsula Community Legal Centre, for paralegal volunteer work and as paralegal coordinator since 1998, including supervision of volunteers.

Catherine McGuire, Baker & McKenzie, for contributions to Baker & McKenzie's involvement with the Homeless Persons Legal Clinic, particularly coordination and administration of the program, new volunteer induction and liaison with clinic partners at the Salvation Army Life Centre.

Elaine Pierson, Peninsula Community Legal Centre as founder of, and 27 year involvement with, the Peninsula CLC, including work as a paralegal volunteer, administration volunteer, management committee representative, and past President

Conrad Smith, Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH), for volunteer work with PILCH, including administration and support of Victorian Bar and Law Institute of Victoria Legal Assistance Schemes.

Linda Taylor, Peninsula Community Legal Centre, as committed paralegal volunteer since 2001, leading other volunteers, inducting and mentoring them; paralegal coordinator.

7 Best Practice Manual – second edition

An updated and edited second edition of *The Australian Pro Bono Manual: a practice guide and resource kit for law firms* is currently being printed and can be ordered by [downloading the order form here](#). The Victoria Law Foundation, who have co-published the Manual with the Centre, have redesigned the Manual and the Centre has researched and updated the materials. Covering a range of issues associated with planning and developing pro bono programs and exploring procedures and practice issues, the Manual also contains precedents that can be used or adapted by firms undertaking pro bono programs. The [online version](#) of the Manual will soon be updated to match the new edition.

8 Papers from the 2nd National Pro Bono Conference

Bound copies of selected papers from the 2nd National Pro Bono Conference held in October 2003 will shortly be available from the Centre. Please contact info@nationalprobono.org.au if you would like to arrange for a copy to be mailed to you.

9 Migration law training

The Victorian Bar Legal Assistance Scheme is offering training in pro bono litigation with both a beginner/refresher course (Session 1) and a session for experienced practitioners (Session 2). The training is about 'increasing expertise, capacity building and the sharing of responsibility to provide access to the legal system, so that asylum seeker clients in particular, can pursue their legitimate legal rights'. Session 1 will be held on Thursday 3 March 2005 and Session 2 on Tuesday 8 March. Both will be 5.30-7.30pm at the Federal Court, Court No 1, Level 6, 305 William Street, Melbourne. RSVP by 1 March 2005 to Bernadette Segrave. Ph: (03) 9225 6680 or Email to administrator.vblas@vicbar.com.au.

10 Other newsbites

- Queensland CLC's Annual Conference (QAILS) will be held this year from March 16-18, again at Bribie Island. Details available from Youth Advocacy Centre, Woolloowin, QLD. Tel: (07) 3857 1155
- On 24 March 2004 from 9.30-10.30 am at the LAWASIA downunder conference 2005 being held on the Gold Coast, there will be a conference session titled, "Pro Bono Practice". The session speakers will be: Peter Rosengren, President of QPILCH and partner at Deacons in Brisbane; Mr. Mukul Rohatgi, former Additional Solicitor General of India; and David Hillard, National Pro Bono Coordinator, Clayton Utz. The session will be chaired by John Corker, Director, National Pro Bono Resource Centre.
- The call for Papers, Workshop and Event Proposals for the 2005 Annual NACLCL Conference has been made. The theme is: *Scaling New Heights: Community law in the 21st Century*. The conference will be held in Canberra from 9-12 October 2005.

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Please forward this newsletter to anyone else you think may be interested.

12 Centre contact details

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