



## NATIONAL PRO BONO RESOURCE CENTRE

6 September 2007

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### *Legal Volunteers vital to Community Legal Centre service delivery*

70% of Community Legal Centres (CLCs) surveyed by the National Pro Bono Resource Centre (**the Centre**) said that without pro bono assistance, key services such as advice clinics, complex casework and litigation, could not be delivered at current levels.

The Centre conducted a national survey of CLCs and their use of pro bono assistance in March to July this year. The Centre surveyed 93 CLCs which make up over 70% of the CLCs funded under the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Community Legal Service Program. The full report is due to be released at the National CLC Conference titled 'Justice in a Climate of Change', to be held in Brisbane from 9-12 September.

Director of the Centre, John Corker said, "just under 4000 volunteers, many of whom are lawyers, assisted CLCs last year. Much of this was individual volunteering but there has also been a growth in law firms providing secondee lawyers to CLCs for periods of up to a year at a time, even longer. Some firms have provided consecutive secondees to a CLC for many years. These lawyers contribute in an important way by providing access to justice both for many who are not eligible for legal aid and for non-profit organisations that assist the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized."

Other key findings from the survey report include:

- Some CLCs do not receive any pro bono assistance at all, and experience real difficulties getting the kind of help they need – particularly in the smaller States and Territories and in regional, rural and remote areas;
- The CLCs that spoke most highly of the pro bono assistance they receive have forged close relationships with pro bono lawyers and firms. Building such longer term relationships is important and should be encouraged;
- Pro bono culture, as demonstrated by services delivered through CLCs, is more developed on the eastern seaboard of Australia. Some jurisdictions (the ACT, Tasmania and the Northern Territory) receive very little assistance in some areas.

**The full report** can be obtained at [www.nationalprobono.org.au](http://www.nationalprobono.org.au)

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