

# **NATIONAL PRO BONO RESOURCE CENTRE**

## **Pro Bono News Issue 18: Volume 6/2005**

Welcome to the sixth 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 e-newsletters are available at [www.nationalprobono.org.au/publications/index.html](http://www.nationalprobono.org.au/publications/index.html)

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### **1 Centre's strategic plan 2005-2009**

After an extensive consultation process with community stakeholders and with input from our Advisory Council, the Centre's strategic plan for 2005-2009 was finalised at the end of September. One feature of the plan is a statement of values and principles relating to pro bono services:

- pro bono should operate to complement - and not be a substitute for - properly funded government legal services;
- the planning, design and provision of pro bono services should be determined by reference to the needs of socially and/or economically disadvantaged people;
- pro bono work should always be done to the same standards of attention, priority and professional performance as fee-paying work;
- pro bono practice is a voluntary activity;
- Government has a vital role in encouraging, supporting and facilitating pro bono initiatives.

A copy of the full plan is available from the Centre's website by [clicking here](#):

## **2. State and Territory financial support for the Centre**

On 4 November 2005 it was announced by the NSW Attorney-General's Department that Ministers from all States and Territories had agreed to provide long term funding for the National Pro Bono Resource Centre in the amount of an extra \$100,000 annually over the next four years. This additional funding complements the Commonwealth's core funding of the Centre of \$250,000 per annum for the next four years. The joint Commonwealth/State and Territory funding augurs well for the Centre's long term future. The media release is [available from the NSW Lawlink site](#).

## **3. Launch of CLC volunteers – new resource**

A new website that facilitates volunteering at Community Legal Centres (CLCs) across Australia was launched on Tuesday 11 October at the National Community Legal Centres Conference in Canberra.

Potential volunteers can go to [www.clcvolunteers.net.au](http://www.clcvolunteers.net.au) to find out which of the 214 listed CLCs are looking for volunteers at any point in time – and what skills are needed. A comprehensive 'what to expect as a volunteer' section on the website provides general information about volunteering at CLCs.

The site builds on earlier work done by the Monash and Latrobe University Law Students societies who created the [www.lawvolunteers.org.au](http://www.lawvolunteers.org.au) site for Victoria. CLCs can easily keep their details current by clicking on a link on the site through which an email is sent to the website administrator. The [clcvolunteers](#) website is a joint initiative of the Centre and the National Association of Community Legal Centres.

The site is being promoted to lawyers and law students throughout Australia.

## **4. NSW Court & Tribunal Fee Waiver Manual – new resource**

A NSW *Court and Tribunal Fee Waiver Manual* was officially launched by Her Honour Justice Ruth McColl AO on 12 October 2005 at the offices of Minter Ellison in Sydney. Written by Sarah Winter and published with the assistance of Minter Ellison, the Manual was produced by PILCH NSW as an access to justice resource for litigants and pro bono practitioners. Available in hard copy and CD ROM from PILCH, it details the procedures and circumstances in which a court or tribunal fee may be waived or postponed. The Manual covers 17 different NSW and Commonwealth courts and tribunals from the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to the NSW Supreme Court.

The Manual is available electronically from PIAC at [www.piac.asn.au](http://www.piac.asn.au) and from the Centre's website by [clicking here](#) - courtesy of PILCH NSW and Minter Ellison.

## **5. ALSANET - new resource**

The Australian Law Students Association (ALSA) has recently launched a new website called [ALSANET](#) which displays positions vacant for casual, part-time, full-time and voluntary legal work across Australia. The service is provided free of charge to potential employers, current law students and recent law graduates. Law students have put a lot of time and effort into getting the website up and running but, to work well, the resource needs law firm and law employment agency support.

Pro Bono coordinators are encouraged to get their firm's HR staff to [visit the ALSANET site](#) and complete the online forms to advertise any vacancies or positions, including summer clerkships, that may be of interest to law students.

## **6. Pro bono workshop in Victoria**

The Victorian Law Foundation's Annual Pro Bono Coordinators' Workshop was held from 17 to 19 October 2005 in Queenscliff, Victoria. The Conference addressed a range of issues from 'the secret life of pro bono coordinators' to issues of training and 'triple bottom line' reporting. Several [resolutions](#) were passed and a number of [recommendations](#) to the Victorian Government were developed. These were read to the group gathered for the closing session held at 1 Treasury Place in Melbourne where a number of senior partners from Melbourne based firms, pro bono coordinators and Victorian Attorney-General, the Hon Rob Hulls were present.

The Attorney-General delivered a speech, detailing changes for Victoria. He reassured the pro bono sector that Legal Aid and CLCs will always be the 'first line of defence in the fight for access to justice.' He praised the work of the Government Legal Services panel noting that the first reporting, in accordance with the 'pro bono' condition in the Legal Services Panel contract, indicated that 32 member firms had provided \$6.6million of services from 2002-2005.

He also announced that the Bracks government will rename the previously titled Pro Bono Secondment Scheme as the *Attorney-General's Community Law Partnerships Scheme* and responsibility for coordination of the scheme will move from Victorian Legal Aid to the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) who will be initially funded by the Victoria Law Foundation. The Attorney indicated that the newly named, more flexible scheme will explore and promote pro bono partnerships such as those demonstrated by Mallesons with Brimbank CLC; Wisewoulds and Springvale CLC and Maddocks and the Mental Health Legal Centre.

## **7. Pro Bono Partnership Awards**

The Justice Awards of the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales recognise contributions to improving access to justice in NSW, particularly for socially and economically disadvantaged people. There are 7 categories of awards which were this year presented by Sir Anthony Mason at a dinner at Parliament House on 6 October 2005. The National Pro Bono Resource Centre again sponsored the Pro Bono Partnership Award for law firms, community organisations and/or community legal centres that have developed an outstanding legal assistance relationship. Nominations for this year's pro bono partnership award included:

- Baker & Mackenzie and the Australian National Playwrights Centre
- Ebsworth & Ebsworth and the NSW Council for Intellectual Disability
- Freehills and Walgett Domestic Prevention Service
- Macedone Christie Willis and Enough is Enough
- Mallesons Stephen Jaques and the National Children's and Youth Law Centre
- Middletons and the Arts Law Centre of Australia
- Minter Ellison and WorkVentures
- The Public Trustee (NSW) and The Benevolent Society
- Otto Stichter & Associates and the Exodus Foundation

The Pro Bono Partnership award went to Mallesons Stephen Jaques and the National Children's and Youth Law Centre for their multi-dimensional and multi-layered

partnership. For more information about the awards, see the [Law and Justice Foundation of NSW website](#).

## 8. Non-legal assistance for community organisations

The Centre is sometimes asked by Community Legal Centres (CLCs) for help with things like designing Annual Reports, leaflets or other community legal education materials. Sometimes law firms can help with this, but there are other sources that may be able to assist:

**Volunteermatch** - matches up community organisations with volunteers providing services in accounting, web-design, IT, legal services, marketing support and the like. CLCs and other community organisations need to register with volunteermatch via their website and list their needs. For more information, see [http://www.volunteermatch.com.au/about\\_volunteer.shtml](http://www.volunteermatch.com.au/about_volunteer.shtml).

**goodcompany** - is a not-for-profit organisation that links professionals (working in graphic design, web design, IT, media/PR, fundraising etc) with community organisations in need of assistance. Every 8 weeks, goodcompany gathers the requests for assistance from their registered community organisations, and distributes them to their professional “members” via email. According to goodcompany, the members can then contact the community organisation to discuss how they can work together.

Community organisations need to register at <http://www.goodcompany.com.au>. You must have DGR status, and be in NSW or Victoria. goodcompany can also be contacted in Melbourne on (03) 9603 3533 or Sydney on (02) 9324 4297, or by email on [mail@goodcompany.com.au](mailto:mail@goodcompany.com.au).

## 9. Townsville Community Legal Service - 15 years

On Thursday 10 November 2005, Townsville Community Legal Service Inc. celebrated 15 years of Thursday evening pro bono advice and 10 years of clinical legal studies. It also celebrated other forms of volunteering practised at the centre. TCLS gave its volunteers the Thursday night off and instead invited them to dinner. The guests included volunteer lawyers, social workers, community welfare workers, students, administrative support workers and management committee members.

In a dinner speech, Principal Solicitor Bill Mitchell noted that the important role of volunteers had been recognised as one of the unique qualities of CLCs. He also noted that two lawyers of the lawyers present had volunteered continuously for almost fifteen years. Those volunteer lawyers (solicitors Don Armit and Peter Bevan) showed tremendous commitment to access to justice.

Bill also noted that the sorts of cases that the steering group used as a rationale for the new CLC (in 1990) were still the mainstay of the service: family law, credit and debt and consumer rights, tenancy, social security, discrimination. By calculating (roughly) the pro bono input, TCLS had received almost 2.5 million dollars in support since its first volunteer session. Volunteer lawyers and law students had contributed more than 1 million of that total amount. Volunteer lawyers had provided more than 13,000 advices since 1991.

The Queensland Attorney General was the after dinner speaker and certificates of appreciation were provided to thirty law firms and barristers chambers in recognition of their contribution. The centre also acknowledged the important role that law students play in providing a community service through clinical legal education

programs such as the one jointly offered by TCLS and James Cook University law School. Students had closed about 3000 files over the ten years of the program.

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

#### **11. Centre contact details**

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