

# Talking Successes and Challenges with Guy Donovan



HOLDING REDLICH

## What have been the most successful aspects of your firm's pro bono program?

I believe the most successful aspect of Holding Redlich's pro bono program is the manner in which it embodies the firm's commitment to social justice, community involvement and support of the arts. The firm has a long history of commitment to social justice and our philosophy is that we undertake pro bono activity because we believe it is the right thing to do. It is essentially viewed as a crucial element of fulfilling our professional responsibilities in our privileged position as legal practitioners.

As a consequence of this philosophy we have often taken on difficult and challenging cases on a pro bono basis which have led to significant social change, either through immediate successes or as a step along the path for future change. For instance, our work in acting on behalf of members of the Stolen Generations in the 1990s, although unsuccessful in court, was an important step in future acknowledgment of the trauma experienced by First Nations people. In more recent times, it was a privilege to be involved in a number of injunction applications before the Federal Court of Australia on behalf of refugees on Nauru. Along with a number of other firms and community organisations, this work led to the evacuation of all children from Nauru.

## What challenges does your firm face in managing your pro bono practice?

I often think of three elements when managing our pro bono practice. They are: providing legal assistance to the most vulnerable and those who need it most; finding work that is engaging and interesting for our lawyers; and finding work that fits within our expertise. I believe that marrying up these three elements leads to the undertaking of fulfilling pro bono work which has a significant social impact. However, finding the right balance of all three elements is not always straightforward.

As I think would be common with any commercial legal practice and the position that pro bono fills, it is a challenge to provide engaging and meaningful pro bono opportunities without overburdening lawyers who are running busy practices. It is important that lawyers are given the opportunity to have a healthy work/life balance when performing fee generating work and pro bono work. In this regard, I also note that over the last 10-20 years, many pro bono practices have substantially increased their output in terms of pro bono hours recorded. Accordingly, maintaining this growth continually may not be possible and I believe the challenge of directing finite pro bono resources efficiently and to assist the most vulnerable will become increasingly important. ■

### Guy Donovan

*Guy Donovan commenced at Holding Redlich as an articled clerk in 2005 and was admitted to legal practice in 2006. He then worked as a lawyer and senior associate in the firm's personal injury team. Between 2012 and 2016 Guy worked in the community legal sector at both Youthlaw and Justice Connect before returning to Holding Redlich as its National Pro Bono Manager.*

