

## MEDIA RELEASE

### PRO BONO ON TARGET BUT HOURS DOWN

The Eleventh Annual Performance Report on the Australian Pro Bono Target, released today, shows that 12,051 Australian lawyers provided a total of 414,843 hours of pro bono legal services in FY2018, 1.3% less than the 420,195 hours reported in FY 2017. This was despite the number of lawyers signed up to the Target increasing by 256 lawyers since 2017. The total hours equate to 230 lawyers working pro bono full-time for one year.<sup>1</sup>

Overall, Target signatories averaged slightly less than the Target level of 35 hours (34.97 hours) of pro bono work per lawyer per annum in FY2018, down from 35.7 hours per lawyer in FY2017. The large firms (those with 50 or more lawyers) averaged 34.91 hours per lawyer, down from 35.60 in 2017.

Eighteen large firms (out of 37) reported a result that was down on their last year's figure whilst seventeen of these firms reported an increase.

"The results this year are mixed and the reasons for the overall lower performance are complex. We are looking into these in consultation with the law firm pro bono coordinators", said John Corker, CEO of the Australian Pro Bono Centre.

"Looking at the results from the last few years, we seem to have reached a plateau. Increasing competition in the legal services market may be exerting a downward trend on available resources, but pro bono performance is about commitment. And hours are just part of the story. The process efficiencies involved and the client outcomes achieved continue to be impressive. Today, more than ever, it is vital that lawyers take a leading role in standing up for the rule of law, challenging injustice and helping the most disadvantaged individuals through pro bono legal service", he said.

Twenty-one of the 37 participating large firms reported results below the 35-hour target (up from 20 of 39 last year). "We urge firms that are persistently falling well short of the Target to review their programs against the Centre's [Best Practice Guide](#). And of course we are always happy to work with firms towards achieving improvements", said Corker.

Download the Eleventh Annual Target Performance Report [here](#) (8pp).

The Australian Pro Bono Centre expects to release its biennial survey report of law firms with more than 50 lawyers later this year. This will provide greater detail about issues in the sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the assumption of a 37.5 hour working week for 48 weeks in a year.

## **Background**

Target signatories sign a [Statement of Principles](#) and agree to make their best efforts to ensure that their firm's lawyers will undertake an average of a minimum of 35 hours of [pro bono legal services](#) each year.

The Australian Pro Bono Target was established in 2007. Signatories now represent 12,051 FTE legal professionals and include 24 of the 25 largest firms in Australia.

*For further information or comment please contact: John Corker Tel: 02 9385 7371 or 0402474628*