

The Australian Pro Bono Centre celebrates 20 years of operation

The Centre was fortunate to celebrate its 20th anniversary this year across multiple events and locations, with the support of our dedicated network.

Robert Reed OAM, Special Counsel, MinterEllison



On 31 August 2022, Corrs Chambers Westgarth hosted a convivial gathering of around 70 pro bono practitioners and supporters of the Centre at their Sydney office to celebrate the Centre's 20th anniversary. For many pro bono practitioners, it was the first face-to-face gathering in several years. It was also the first time the Centre's two staff in Adelaide met some of their Sydney colleagues.

From heads of legal to ProBono YoFo network members, everyone enjoyed lively conversation and excellent canapes. Some had to be persuaded to leave so the staff could go home!

After being welcomed by Corrs Chambers Westgarth's Sydney partner, James Abbott, former Justice of the High Court of Australia, the Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG gave his keynote address via video, acknowledging the importance of pro bono in providing access to justice and the upholding of human rights in the common law system. His Honour also noted the Centre's leadership in the development and increasing maturity of pro bono, led and supported by the Centre over



Centre team at Sydney celebration, L-R: Gloria Deng, Sally Embelton, Alice Rolls, Gabriela Christian-Hare, Sue Mahony, Ying Yi Lim.

the last 20 years. The Centre's past and present leaders including former CEO John Corker, current Chair Phillip Cornwell and CEO Gabriela Christian-Hare, spoke about the Centre's continuing relevance and ongoing contribution. The Centre's first Chair, Peter Stapleton, was also in attendance. From heads of legal to ProBono YoFo network members, everyone enjoyed lively conversation and excellent canapes. Some had to be persuaded to leave so the staff could go home! Thank you, Corrs, for hosting such a wonderful gathering.

Queensland pro bono community celebrates the Centre's 20th anniversary





Leanne Collingburn, Head of Pro Bono, HopgoodGanim Lawyers & Centre Board member

The pandemic made it difficult for interstate supporters to attend the Sydney celebration, so the Centre was fortunate that its strong Queensland support network, led by Board member HopgoodGanim's Leanne Collingburn and former Board member, MinterEllison's Robert Reed, arranged an event at MinterEllison's Brisbane office on 17 November 2022.

Ashurst's Trent Wallace gave a memorable Acknowledgment of Country before our host, MinterEllison Managing Partner Victoria Hepburn, welcomed around 50 guests including the Hon Mr Peter Russo MP, representing the Queensland Attorney-General, who in turn, spoke of the Centre's achievements in promoting pro bono over two decades. Leanne Collingburn praised the Centre's resources in supporting the establishment and operation of pro bono practices. The Centre's CEO, Gabriela Christian-Hare, acknowledged the support of the Queensland government through its funding and by including the National Pro Bono Target in its government panel requirements. Gabriela reflected on the Centre's legacy before outlining new initiatives under development such as the Global Pro Bono Hub for world-wide pro bono resources.

The Centre's Board member Leanne Collingburn praised the Centre's resources in supporting the establishment and operation of pro bono practices.



L-R Brian Briggs, Practice Group Leader - Military Compensation, Slater and Gordon, David Mackie, Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Hon Mr Peter Russo MP, Leanne Collingburn, Head of Pro Bono, HopgoodGanim Lawyers.

The Centre is humbled by the more than 5.5 million hours of pro bono legal work that has been contributed by our Target signatories since measurements began in 2007, and looks forward to the next 20 years.



The pro bono community celebrates the Centre's 20th anniversary in Sydney.

A number of community legal centres joined the celebration including Queensland's largest community legal centre, Caxton Legal Centre, represented by CEO Cybele Koning and Community Legal Centres Queensland's Director, Rosslyn Monro, mixing with pro bono coordinators from a range of firms. David

Mackie, Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General was also in attendance. There was plenty of opportunity for catching up with the pro bono community amidst spectacular Brisbane River views while enjoying the superb catering. Thank you MinterEllison.

The Centre has also celebrated its 20th anniversary and Australia's thriving pro bono sector through its publication on National Pro Bono Day - 17 May 2022 - of *'20 Years | 20 Stories of Change'*, a collection of stories compiled by the Centre illustrating the power of pro bono to transform lives. The Centre thanks the pro bono community for its wonderful submissions to that publication.

The Centre appreciates all the good wishes it has received and the events that supporters have hosted and attended to recognise its 20 years of growth. The Centre is humbled by the more than 5.5 million hours of pro bono legal work that has been contributed by our Target signatories since measurements began in 2007 and looks forward to the next 20 years. ■

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