

Pro Bono Projects: A One-Size Approach Does Not Fit All

By Cassandra Krylov

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Providing pro bono legal services is a key focus for Gadens and is a prominent pillar in our business strategy. As a firm, we aim to do the right thing and make an impact, and our strategies are focused on ensuring that we are taking positions on matters of social significance and are providing access to justice to those in need. Our extensive pro bono program focuses on providing advice, representation and assistance to people who would otherwise be without, as well as making legal education, research and law reform accessible within the community.

Each pro bono client or pro bono organisation that a firm partners with will have different needs, and require a different level of engagement and assistance. We have found it is important to approach pro bono partnerships with an open mind, and offer a wide array of assistance to our pro bono partners. This ensures that each individual client and organisation is receiving tailored pro bono legal assistance that meets their exact needs at a specific point in time, which in turn builds their capacity to meet the unique needs of their client group.

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legal clinics, accepting referral matters, providing training and upskilling sessions to our partners and assisting with publications and research tasks. Like many firms, we have key priority areas, and this guides the relationships and partnerships we form.

Here are some examples of Gadens' pro bono partnerships.

Arts Law

Arts Law is a not-for-profit, independent national community legal centre for the arts that provides free or low cost specialised legal advice, education and resources to Australian artists and arts organisations across all art forms, on a wide range of arts related legal and business matters.

Through their work, Arts Law aims to improve the range and quality of legal services and resources that are currently available to Australian artists, specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, as well as the organisations that they work with and are supported by.

Our relationship with Arts Law arose through one of my colleagues, Sharna White, who worked at Arts Law prior to joining Gadens and who now manages this pro bono relationship. We assist with Arts Law's Document Review Service, which requires our lawyers to review documentation and instructions provided by the client to Arts Law, providing phone advice to the client, before preparing a summary of the advice and sending this to Arts Law. We have lawyers assisting with this work at various levels and from different practice groups, which can range from licensing agreements to leases and employment agreements.

This project has been very successful and we are excited to now be expanding our involvement with Arts Law to participate in the Adopt a Lawyer and Outreach programs. Arts Law services an enormous geographic area and is able to identify and respond to systemic issues and themes impacting artists around Australia.

Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC)



IARC is a not-for-profit, specialist community legal centre providing free legal advice and assistance to people throughout New South Wales. IARC provides advice in relation to immigration and domestic violence, migrant worker exploitation, family reunion, refugee and humanitarian visas, citizenship and visa cancellations.

When the Taliban came into power in Afghanistan in August 2021, there was an increasing number of individuals living in Australia who were seeking assistance in obtaining refugee and

humanitarian visas for family members who were still living in Afghanistan. We assisted IARC by taking instructions from their clients to complete refugee and humanitarian visa applications and submitting these to the Department, in an attempt to secure visas for these family members.

We are now assisting IARC with providing free and confidential immigration assistance to women escaping domestic, family and sexual violence. This project will see our lawyers drafting applications for women seeking permanent residency in Australia where the relationship has broken down and there is family violence under the family violence provisions in the Migration Act.

This has involved providing our lawyers with training and support in both immigration and refugee law which, while challenging, has allowed our lawyers to expand their experience beyond their typical practice areas and provide assistance where it is needed most.

Moonee Valley Legal Service (MVLS)

Our pro bono partnership with MVLS is our longest standing pro bono partnership.



MVLS is a community legal centre located within the Ascot Vale public housing estate, and provides free legal advice, information, education, referrals and ongoing casework assistance to anyone who lives, works or studies within the City of Moonee Valley,

including public housing residents in Ascot Vale and Flemington.

We have provided various forms of pro bono legal assistance to MVLS over the years. This includes staffing a weekly public housing tenancy clinic, accepting referral matters in various areas of law and providing CPD training to MVLS's lawyers.

We have benefitted from working with and learning from a smaller community legal centre that is so in touch with and responsive to the needs of its local community at any given time.



Cassandra Krylov is a Senior Advisor in the Sustainability and Social Impact team at Gadens. Cassandra has a passion for social justice and ensuring that all those in need can access quality legal services. Building relationships and partnerships with community legal centres is a key focus of Cassandra's role, and she has established a number of Gadens' pro bono partnerships, including some of those referred to above.

Cassandra spends the remainder of her time working on various pro bono projects with our community legal centre partners, including how we can expand our relationship to assist as many individuals and organisations that we can as a firm. Cassandra also runs Gadens' corporate volunteering program, and is responsible for assisting with various community fundraising, reconciliation and sustainability initiatives.

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We also work with a number of other community legal centres and organisations on a range of projects. We are incredibly privileged and proud to have these partnerships at Gadens. ■

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