

- Consultations conducted in recent years by the NPBRC with barristers and solicitors, small and large firms have elicited considerable support for this initiative.

Frequently asked questions

Q. Is the Target compulsory?

A. No. It is a matter for individual lawyers and firms whether they choose to become signatories.

Q. Won't it lead to mandatory pro bono?

A. No. The Target is aspirational only. The NPBRC does not support mandatory pro bono in any way.

Q. Why at least 30 or 35 hours per year?

A. The NPBRC believes that this is an appropriate benchmark. Data collected by the NPBRC indicates that many lawyers already meet this target. It is around 45 minutes per week.

Q. Isn't this just for big firms?

A. No. The initiative is designed to lift the profile of pro bono work across the profession. According to available research data, most small firms should find it easy to meet the Target.

Many larger firms have increased their pro bono efforts significantly in the past five years. The Target aims to provide support for these firms but more importantly to strengthen pro bono efforts across the whole profession.

Q. What if I sign up and don't meet the Target?

A. The Target is aspirational only. There will be no adverse consequence for any lawyer or firm who does not meet the Target. The NPBRC will not publicize the name of any lawyer or firm who signs up and does not meet the Target in any particular year.

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All lawyers have an important role to play in facilitating access to justice. The NPBRC encourages you to support this initiative by becoming a Foundation Signatory.

To do so and for further information see www.nationalprobono.org.au/target or phone (02) 9385 7381.

The Centre receives financial assistance from the Commonwealth and State and Territory Attorney-General's Departments and is based in the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales.



THE NPBRC's ASPIRATIONAL PRO BONO TARGET

The National Pro Bono Resource Centre (NPBRC) is an independent, non-profit organisation established in 2002 that is committed to supporting and promoting pro bono legal services in Australia.

The NPBRC will announce a voluntary aspirational pro bono target ('the Target') for all lawyers, of at least either 30 or 35 hours per lawyer per year, to start on 1 January 2007 (final figure to be informed by 2006 national survey data).

The Target will enshrine a key ethical value of the legal profession - to provide pro bono legal services to low income, marginalised or disadvantaged people who would otherwise have no access to the legal system.

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What is the Target and how will it work?

- The Target will contain a clear definition of pro bono legal work, and the principles to be followed in undertaking this work ('the Principles').
- Lawyers and law firms will be invited to become Foundation Signatories (acknowledged as such for the life of the Target). Signatories will endorse the Principles and agree to advise the NPBRC annually whether they have met the Target in the previous year.
- Firms can meet the Target by averaging their total pro bono hours across the total number of lawyers in their firm.
- The NPBRC will report annually on the number of signatories and the number (but not the names) of lawyers and firms who have met the Target.
- The Principles will make explicit that pro bono work is not a substitute for properly government funded legal services.

Why have the Target?

- The principle aim of the Target is to raise the profile of the obligation to conduct pro bono work across the profession. It will do this by providing a benchmark for the conduct of pro bono work.
- This is in accordance with the objective of the NPBRC to promote the provision of pro bono work throughout the legal profession.
- The introduction of the Target will confirm the shared professional responsibility of lawyers to provide pro bono assistance.
- International experience has shown that aspirational targets have helped to significantly increase the volume of pro bono work performed, and have challenged lawyers to be more innovative in their approach to pro bono work.

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Who else supports the Target?

- In 1998, the Law Society of NSW's Access to Justice Task Force Report recommended establishing a voluntary "minimum pro bono commitment"
- In 1999 the Law Institute of Victoria resolved to encourage its members to dedicate one hour per week to pro bono work.
- In 2000, the Australian Law Reform Commission *Report No. 79 Managing Justice: A Review of the Federal Civil Justice System (2000)* recommended that legal professional associations urge their members to undertake pro bono work each year.
- In 2002, the Chesterman Review of the New South Wales Solicitors and Barristers Rules recommended that consideration be given to including an aspirational target of a prescribed number of pro bono hours within the Solicitor's Professional Conduct and Practice Rules.