



28 June 2010

MEDIA RELEASE

International Pro Bono Disbursement Assistance Fund launched

Legal professionals that provide international pro bono legal assistance may be able to recover some of the costs they incur in providing pro bono services in developing countries following the launch of an International Pro Bono Disbursement Assistance Fund (**Fund**) by the Attorney-General Robert McClelland today.

The Fund aims to encourage Australian law firms and barristers to provide free legal assistance in developing countries by providing them with financial assistance to help meet the costs of travel, accommodation and insurance.

Despite the overwhelming need for pro bono assistance in developing countries to improve access to justice, build capacity in legal systems, and promote knowledge of the rule of law and human rights, the costs associated with providing this assistance have, until now, been incredibly prohibitive.

The Fund appropriately recognises the valuable contribution that Australian lawyers make in strengthening the rule of law in developing countries by helping to offset the out-of-pocket expenses that they incur in providing pro bono legal assistance.

The Fund will be administered by the National Pro Bono Resource Centre (**Centre**) and funded through a one-off grant of \$100,000 by the Australian Government through the Grants to Australian Organisations Program of the Attorney-General's Department.

“The Centre is delighted to be involved in this initiative which will help reduce the financial barriers faced by law firms and barristers wanting to improve access to justice through pro bono legal work in developing countries” said Director of the Centre, John Corker.

From 1 July 2010, law firms and barristers may apply to the Centre for preliminary approval for the reimbursement of anticipated costs associated with pro bono legal work, or reimbursement when costs have been incurred. Reimbursement of costs incurred will not exceed \$20,000 per project and must be for work undertaken after 1 July 2010.

“We have designed the application process to be as simple as possible and welcome eligible legal professionals to make use of this worthwhile initiative.”

For further information or to download the application form, go to <http://www.nationalprobono.org.au/page.asp?from=8&id=279>.

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