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MEDIA RELEASE

National Pro Bono Aspirational Target launched

The National Pro Bono Resource Centre today launched the National Pro Bono Aspirational Target (**the Target**). Under the Target, lawyers aspire to do a minimum of 35 hours of pro bono legal work each year.

Over 3000 lawyers have already signed up to the Target. The Target enshrines 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 other access to legal assistance.

The Target is an initiative of National Pro Bono Resource Centre, based at the Faculty of Law at the University of NSW. It is based on similar initiatives from the USA. The Centre is encouraging all lawyers and firms to commit to the Target, by signing on to its Statement of Principles.

Centre Director, John Corker said the main aim of the initiative is to raise the profile of pro bono across the legal profession and to lift it above being just a ‘fuzzy concept’.

“Most lawyers embrace pro bono as a fundamental professional and ethical responsibility. The Target highlights the shared nature of that responsibility. ...

Lawyers demonstrate an exceptional commitment to their profession and the public by providing pro bono legal services. People like to characterise lawyers as driven only by money but the truth is there are thousands of lawyers who take on work every day for free or a significantly reduced rate because they want to help those really in need....

They contribute in an important way by providing access to justice for many who are not eligible for legal aid or for non-profit organisations who assist the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized....

Apart from establishing themselves as leaders in pro bono practice, firms who sign on are likely to attract and retain the best graduates. Our research indicates that young lawyers respond well to a firm that makes a clear commitment to pro bono and this is a way that a firm can do that”

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The figure of 35 hours per year is based on the Centre's research and reflects levels of pro bono already being undertaken by many within the profession. Aware, however, that many lawyers are already doing what they can and may not reach the 35 hour target this year, the Centre is asking them to take a long term view of their commitment and to join others in signing on.

Signatories are being asked to monitor their progress towards the Target and the Centre will each year release de-identified data to show the number of signatories and the percentage who have met the 35 hours a year target.

For further information, a list of current Signatories or to 'sign-on' online go to <http://www.nationalprobono.org.au>.

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