

NATIONAL PRO BONO RESOURCE CENTRE

Pro Bono News 6/2003

Welcome to the sixth edition of the eNewsletter of the National Pro Bono Resource Centre (NPBRC). The Centre is affiliated with the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales and is funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

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1 New Director for NPBRC

The Centre is pleased to announce the appointment of its new Director, John Corker, who will take up the position in January 2004. John was admitted to practice law in Victoria in 1978 and started his career as a public interest lawyer at the Fitzroy Legal Service. He has since been a barrister in Victoria, a solicitor at Aboriginal Legal Aid in Alice Springs, manager of the Legal Section and then General Counsel for the Australian Broadcasting Authority, principal solicitor at the Communications Law Centre and, most recently, a Senior Associate with Clayton Utz in Sydney. The NPBRC Board, Advisory Council and staff all look forward to working with him and to a busy and productive 2004.

2 NPBRC and the Senate Committee

Jill Anderson and Jenny Lovric from the Centre, along with Professor Paul Redmond from the Centre's Board, appeared on 13 November to give oral evidence before the Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee Inquiry into Legal Aid and Access to Justice. In its opening statement, the Centre drew attention to the high level of commitment from many practitioners to the provision of pro bono services but noted that pro bono services are not and cannot be a substitute for publicly funded legal services. The Centre referred to some of the barriers to the provision of pro bono services and to areas where there is potential to enhance and expand services. They also raised the importance of a strategic and cooperative approach between pro bono service providers, community legal organisations and legal aid commissions in meeting the needs of low income and disadvantaged people. The transcript of the Centre's appearance is at: www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/commtee/s-lc.htm

3 New project - Regional, rural & remote pro bono opportunities

The Centre has funding approval from the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW to undertake a project aimed at improving opportunities for and access to legal services for disadvantaged and marginalised people in regional, rural and remote (RRR) communities in NSW. The project will assist community legal centres and their clients in RRR areas of NSW and support the development of three pilot projects to deliver improved pro bono services in RRR areas.

NPBRC Project Officer Jenny Lovric has been employed for a period of 8 months to carry out the project, which is currently at initial planning stages. She will work with a Steering Committee with representatives from the Law and Justice Foundation, the community legal centre sector, the Legal Aid Commission of NSW and a city firm with a pro bono practice. If you would like to know more about this project, please contact Jenny at the Centre on (02) 9385 7381 or by email on jenny@nationalprobono.org.au.

4 Post conference report

The Second National Pro Bono Conference: Transforming Access to Justice, October 20-21 2003

The Centre is pleased to report that the recent conference attracted 180 participants over two days of what was generally regarded as a most successful event. More than 20 delegates received subsidies to travel to and /or attend the conference. These subsidies – and the success of the conference - were made possible by the generosity of conference sponsors: Attorney-General's Department (Commonwealth); Allens Arthur Robinson; Arnold Bloch Leibler; Blake Dawson Waldron; Clayton Utz; Ebsworth & Ebsworth; Ford Foundation (Brazil); Fulbright Foundation; Freehills; Gilbert+Tobin; Law Council of Australia; LexisNexis; Maddocks; Thomson Legal & Regulatory (Asia Pacific); Mallesons Stephen Jaques; Minter Ellison and the Victoria Law Foundation. Conference hosts, NPBRC and the NSW and Victorian PILCHs are grateful for their support and involvement.

Conference papers

The Centre wishes to publish papers delivered at the conference. If you would like your paper published on the Centre website, please email it as a PDF or word document to info@nationalprobono.org.au. A first round of papers will be added to the website in the new year with a second round to be added after February. The deadline for submission for publication of the second round of papers is 4 February 2004. There is no word limit but please include a 100 word précis outlining the pro bono topics/themes covered in your paper. Please indicate how you wish to be acknowledged and include relevant details for a copyright notice. The Centre is also planning to produce a hard copy record of proceedings of the Conference and would like to hear from any conference attendees who wish to contribute. Contact ann@nationalprobono.org.au or call 02 9385 7776.

Conference photographs

Some of the photographs taken at the conference and conference dinner are being added to the Centre's website. If you would like to order any of these photographs or inquire about others, please email the Centre info@nationalprobono.org.au.

5 Mapping project

The Centre is continuing work on its project to map pro bono services and models of service in Australia. We are keen to find out more about the kinds of pro bono work being done by practices of all sizes and invite readers to contribute information or experiences by emailing info@nationalprobono.org.au. Centre staff will make contact in reply in the new year.

6 Australian Pro Bono Manual – update

The Manual, which is available on line at www.nationalprobono.org.au (or in hard copy for \$35 from the Victoria Law Foundation www.victorialaw.org.au) has been modified and improved since its launch at the National Pro Bono Conference in October. Amongst other things, internal cross references have been made into active links. Aimed primarily at law firms who wish to develop, maintain or expand organised pro bono programs, the Manual contains a wealth of information about planning pro bono programs, procedures and practice issues, precedents and pro formas and has a section with information and resources relevant to pro bono practitioners.

Statistics from the Centre's website indicate that the Manual is receiving a large proportion of the site's average 300 hits a day and has already been downloaded 115 times. Significantly, within weeks of its publication, the Centre was approached by a pro bono lawyers group in Chile, requesting permission to use the Manual as a model for a similar publication to be written in Spanish. We were delighted to agree.

7 Probono.net Australia

A reminder to check probono.net Australia, an interactive website designed to support information exchange between pro bono lawyers, staff of community legal organisations and others providing free legal services. It is based on the successful US based ProBono.net used by over 15,000 people (see eNewsletter 5). The site currently has two practice areas, one in asylum law and the other a general civil law practice area. If over the next few months, it is apparent that the site is a useful tool to assist in the sharing of information, the number of practice areas may be expanded. We welcome any comments or suggestions. To view the site and join a practice area, go to www.probono.net/au

8 Christmas break

The Centre will be closed between Christmas and the new year, re-opening on Monday 5 January 2004. We wish all of our colleagues and readers a pleasant break from work and a safe and happy holiday. Our first eNewsletter for 2004 will be published in early February.

9 To subscribe or unsubscribe to *Pro Bono News*

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<http://lists.nationalprobono.org.au>

This newsletter is available on the web at:

www.nationalprobono.org.au/publications/index.html

Please forward this newsletter to anyone else you think may be interested.

10 NPBRC contact details

National Pro Bono Resource Centre

web: www.nationalprobono.org.au (updated 30 October 2003)

email: info@nationalprobono.org.au

phone: +61 2 9385 7381

fax: +61 2 9385 7375

post: The White House, University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW, 2052