



Media Release

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Pro Bono Aspirational Targets

Amid some debate, the National Pro Bono Resource Centre has taken the initiative and established a national pro bono target scheme. Calling for all lawyers to commit to a voluntary target of 35 hours a year, the Centre is urging solicitors, barristers, firms and barristers' chambers to sign up by 1 January 2007 as 'Foundation Signatories' to its Statement of Principles.

The American Bar Association has had a 50 hour target since 1993 and although many law reform bodies in Australia have recommended pro bono targets, so far no-one has adopted them.

Centre Director John Corker says the aim of the initiative is to raise the profile of pro bono within the profession and to send the message that lawyers embrace pro bono as a fundamental professional and ethical responsibility. Corker says:

There are differences of opinion within the profession but for us, it's axiomatic. The target highlights the shared nature of the responsibility across the profession to enhance access to justice.

There are other advantages to signing up. Apart from establishing themselves as leaders in pro bono practice, firms who sign on are likely to attract and retain the best graduates. We know from our research that young lawyers respond to a clear commitment to pro bono'.

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 that this may not reach the 35 hour target, 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 aspirational 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.

Signatories can 'sign-up' online at www.nationalprobono.org.au/target.

Further information:

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