



What characterises a leading pro bono firm in Australia in 2011?

Over the past 15 years, pro bono practice has become an important part of many Australian law firms. Some of the defining characteristics of those firms with leading pro bono practices are:

1. The pro bono practice addresses unmet legal need, in matters where Legal Aid is unavailable.
2. Decisions to accept pro bono matters are made in accordance with a coherent pro bono policy.
3. The firm has a dedicated professional leading its pro bono practice.
4. Pro bono work looks and feels like other areas of practice. It is integrated into the firm's other practice procedures, including engagement letters, time recording, risk management, precedents, continuing legal education and induction.
5. Pro bono work has a meaningful role in lawyers' performance and assessment. It is treated as or equivalent to billable work, is recognised as part of the assessment process, is a criteria for consideration in promotion or for calculation of incentive payments.
6. More than two-thirds of lawyers in the firm participate in pro bono work as part of their legal practice each year.
7. All parts of the legal practice - departments, practice groups and offices, with lawyers at every level - are involved in pro bono work at roughly equal levels.
8. The firm is a signatory to the National Pro Bono Aspirational Target and/or performs pro bono work at least at a level of 35 hours per lawyer per year.
9. There is real knowledge of the issues involved in the areas which are the focus of the pro bono practice.
10. There is a willingness to conduct matters outside of the firm's usual areas of practice, and the firm provides or organises training to build capacity for partners and lawyers to enable them to provided pro bono representation in legal areas and for clients outside of the firm's usual legal practice.
11. There are deep relationships with a range of pro bono clients, and a broad range of legal services are provided on a pro bono basis, including:
 - Legal advice and representation for both individuals and non-profit organisations
 - Legal research
 - Training and legal education
 - Submission writing and law reform
12. There are strong project and referral relationships with community legal organisations, Legal Aid and ATSILS, which may include secondment arrangements.
13. The firm is recognised externally for expertise in areas in which it is involved through pro bono practice.
14. The firm promotes pro bono throughout the profession, and is involved in policy discussions regarding the development, structure and focus of pro bono work.

National Pro Bono Resource Centre

The Law Building, University of New South Wales NSW 2052

p (02) 9385 7381 f (02) 9385 7375 e info@nationalprobono.org.au

www.nationalprobono.org.au ACN 102 444 557