

PRO BONO NEWS

Issue 1, December 2009

Welcome to the inaugural edition of Pro Bono News, the newsletter for JusticeNet SA, South Australia's pro bono legal assistance centre.

Best wishes to all of our members and supporters for a merry Christmas and a happy and rewarding New Year. On behalf of the Management Committee and staff of JusticeNet SA thank you for support over the past year. We look forward working together in 2010.



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WHAT IS JUSTICENET?

JusticeNet is an independent not for profit organisation that coordinates pro bono legal assistance in South Australia. JusticeNet facilitates access to justice by matching charitable organisations and those individuals who do not have the means to afford a lawyer, and cannot otherwise obtain the requisite legal assistance, with a 'safety net' of member law firms and barristers. Our referral scheme is similar to those run successfully for many years by the Public Interest Law Clearing Houses (PILCHs) in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

JusticeNet employs a full-time Executive Director, Tim Graham, and a part-time administration assistant, Louise Young. JusticeNet also benefits from the invaluable assistance of law student volunteers and two secondees (currently from the Australian Government Solicitor and Clayton Utz).

JusticeNet works collaboratively with other stakeholders that make up the South Australian legal profession, including the Legal Services Commission, Community Legal Centres, law schools, private law firms, the Law Society of South Australia and the South Australian Bar.

For details of our referral service, eligibility criteria and procedures, see the JusticeNet Website at www.justicenet.org.au

REFERRALS

JusticeNet was officially launched by the Honourable Justice Mansfield AM on 2 July 2009. Since then, JusticeNet has had significant success in facilitating practical legal advice and outcomes for clients. The following are some recent JusticeNet referrals:

- Ms P was referred to McDonald Steed McGrath and Claire O'Connor of counsel who represented Ms P in the AAT in a review of a decision by a delegate of the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship to cancel her visa on character grounds. The review was successful. The Commonwealth has appealed the decision and Ms P's lawyers have indicated a willingness to continue to assist on a pro bono basis.
- Piper Alderman accepted a referral to provide a charitable organisation with advice concerning a substantial fine imposed by the ATO. The organisation received expert legal advice which led to the resolution of a dispute with the ATO.
- The Welfare Rights Centre approached JusticeNet seeking the assistance of counsel to represent a client in the AAT. The matter involved an appeal by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry from a decision of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal. The appeal centred on an untested question of law. JusticeNet referred the matter to Michael Roder SC who appeared for the client at the hearing of the appeal.
- Fisher Jeffries assisted Mr D, a client of the South Eastern Community Legal Centre, to prosecute an unfair dismissal claim. Fisher Jeffries provided expert advice and assistance which facilitated a favourable settlement with the employer.
- Ian Robertson SC and David Riggall of counsel provided advice and assistance to a client of the Southern Community Justice Centre. The client was an intervenor in property settlement proceedings. She claimed an equitable interest in the matrimonial home. With the pro bono assistance of counsel, the client's equitable interest was recognised by the parties in the overall property settlement.

WHAT'S AROUND THE CORNER

Legal Seminars for Not for Profits

JusticeNet facilitates legal assistance for charitable organisations in South Australia. We recognise that charitable and not for profit organisations provide essential information and services to the community. They also operate in an increasingly complex legal and regulatory environment.

JusticeNet is keen to explore opportunities for delivering practical and informative seminars addressing legal issues pertinent to charities and not for profits. By enhancing the governance and legal awareness of not for profits, we aim to assist them improve their services and accountability. In the New Year, JusticeNet will be talking to our member and supporters to explore how we can provide high quality legal information to the not for profit sector at a low cost.



WALK FOR JUSTICE

Walk for Justice 2010 – Put it in your Diary

On Monday 17 May 2010 JusticeNet will hold the third annual Walk for Justice, to kick off National Law Week and support pro bono legal services in South Australia.

The Walk for Justice is a 5km stroll around some of Adelaide's most well known and beautiful city landmarks.

The Walk is an important part of the legal calendar because it is a public demonstration of how serious the SA legal community is about improving access to justice for the less fortunate in our community. Why else would we want to get up and do exercise first thing on a Monday morning?!

All around Australia, there will be lawyers doing the very same thing in support of Australia's pro bono work. Last year the Walk attracted over 1,000 walkers nation-wide and was led in each state by some of the leading lights of the Australian judiciary and profession.

But the walk is not just about showing support (and keeping us fit), it is also about raising much needed funds so that pro bono legal work can continue to develop and grow in South Australia. There are many ways that individuals, firms, businesses and chambers can show support for the walk:

- Enrol to walk - the registration fee is **\$15 (\$5 for law students)**.
- Sponsor your walk - get your family, friends and colleagues to sponsor your walk. Every dollar counts and there will be prizes for the walkers that raise the most money!
- Organise a team - get a team together and see how much sponsorship you can raise together. There will be prizes for the teams that raise the most money.
- Be a sponsorship partner - various sponsorship opportunities exist. Contact JusticeNet (details below) to find out what sponsorship packages are available.

The details so far are:

- Start time: **7:30am**
- Start location: **Victoria Square Fountain**
- Route: **North to the Torrens, returning to Victoria Square**
- Finish time: approx. **8:30am**
- Complimentary breakfast location: **TBA**

More details, including registration forms, will be distributed early in the New Year.

For further information and details of our sponsorship packages please contact Tim Graham, via phone (08) 8303 5005 or email tim.graham@justicenet.org.au.

Student Volunteers

Since August 2009, a small group of law students have donated their time to volunteering at JusticeNet. Law student volunteers receive inquiries from applicants seeking pro bono legal assistance and to assist with the assessment and referral of these applications under the supervision of the Executive Director, Tim Graham. Getting involved with JusticeNet gives law students an excellent opportunity to develop their practical legal skills in a 'real world' environment, and to expand and apply their legal knowledge. JusticeNet is now accepting applications for law student volunteers for 2010.

NEWS & EVENTS

Access to Justice Submission

In November, JusticeNet made a submission on the Australian Government report - *A Strategic Framework for Access to Justice in the Federal Civil Justice System*. JusticeNet is broadly supportive of the central recommendation in the Report to use a strategic framework to better coordinate access to justice across the federal justice system. However, JusticeNet was disappointed the report gave insufficient attention to the role of pro bono in facilitating access to justice. JusticeNet recommends that the Australian Government provide sufficient recurrent funding to pro bono clearing houses to ensure their continued operation and innovation. JusticeNet also recommended that a proposed national coordination group for access to justice should include a pro bono clearinghouse representative.

OzAsia Lantern Festival

Carolyn Mitchell of Cowell Clark and Joanne Staugas of Johnson Winter Slattery generously sponsored a JusticeNet lantern in the 2009 Oz Asia Festival Lantern Parade. A giant lantern representing "access to justice" was designed with the assistance of the parade organisers. The lantern was one of many that entertained and informed festival goers at Elder Park in August 2009!



What's in a Name?

JusticeNet is looking for a new name for our newsletter. As an incentive, we will award a bottle of wine to the entrant with the most original and creative idea. The winning name will be judged by our Management Committee. Please email all suggestions to volunteer@justicenet.org.au. We look forward to hearing from you!

SUPPORTING JUSTICENET

The greatest challenge facing JusticeNet is to secure our financial sustainability. JusticeNet was established with the assistance of a one-off grant from the Law Foundation. Membership fees and other fundraising will form a core component of JusticeNet's long-term funding.

JusticeNet welcomes individual memberships (solicitors, barristers, law students, allied professionals) and corporate memberships (corporations, incorporated associations, partnerships, statutory authorities or government entities).

To find out more about becoming a member of JusticeNet, please visit our website at www.justicenet.org.au. Alternatively you can send an e-mail to tim.graham@justicenet.org.au or contact us on (08) 8303 5005.

JUSTICENET MEMBERS

JusticeNet acknowledges the support of our members, including:

Corporate members: Campbell Law, Cowell Clarke, DLA Philips Fox, Donaldson Walsh, Fisher Jeffries, Gilchrist Connell, Griffith Hilditch, Kain C+C Lawyers, Piper Alderman, Sparke Helmore, The University of Adelaide, and the University of South Australia.



Individuals: Hugh Abbott SC, Martin Anders, Melissa Ballantyne, The Honourable Justice Barry Beazley, The Honourable Justice David Bleby, Malcolm Blue QC, Christopher Brohier, Gabrielle Canny, Kerry Clark, Phillip Foreman, Tim Graham, Margaret Kelly, George Karzis, Kerry Kovacs, Nicholas Linke, Mark Livesey QC, Arlene Macdonald, Roxanne McCardle, Philip McNamara QC, Alan Meritt, Michael Mills, Neville Morcombe QC, The Honourable Justice Geoffrey Muecke, Claire O'Connor, Harry Patsouris, Ian Robertson SC, Michael Roder SC, Neville Rochow SC, Emily Rutherford, Roger Sallis, George Stathopoulos, Joanne Staugas, Paula Stirling, Jonathan Wells QC.

JusticeNet also acknowledges the support of the Law Foundation of South Australia, the University of Adelaide, the Law Society of South Australia and the South Australian Bar Association.

SUBSCRIPTION AND FEEDBACK

To subscribe or unsubscribe to Pro Bono News or for more information about any item in this newsletter, please send an e-mail to volunteer@justicenet.org.au or contact us by phone (08) 8303 5005 or fax (08) 8303 4344.