

In Kind

SPARKE HELMORE'S SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT FY2016/17



LETTER FROM THE PRO BONO & COMMUNITY TEAM

At Sparke Helmore Lawyers, we aim to have a positive impact on our local communities and to build local connections—we do this by providing non-legal support to local not-for-profit organisations (NFPs) and charities through our Community Program, as well as pro bono legal advice through our Pro Bono Program.

In Kind provides an overview of the many pro bono and community activities we have been involved in during the 2016/17 financial year, however, what this Report cannot quantify is the passion and dedication of our people. Many of our staff members are actively involved in community organisations from the grassroots level to the boardroom. An example of this is the way we support The Nappy Collective, which provides new disposable nappies to women's refuges and family crisis centres. In addition to our nappy donations, we provided a hub for counting, sorting and packaging more than 23,000 nappies and assisted with pro bono legal work.

Helping NFPs and charities with their legal needs through our Pro Bono Program frees up funds so they can provide their valuable services to those in need. We give legal advice and assistance to organisations to establish, and operate with, the best structure for good governance and efficient administration. We help with regulatory compliance issues and advise on the legal parameters so that organisations can collaborate with each other. We also provide charitable organisations with specialised advice and assistance across other practice areas, including employment law, property, litigation, insurance and intellectual property.

We are committed to helping disadvantaged individuals gain access to justice. Our lawyers across the country work closely with legal referral services, clearing houses and local legal centres to provide free legal advice on many different topics. In 2013, we signed up to the National Pro Bono Aspirational Target to achieve an average of 35 pro bono hours per lawyer, per year and we're pleased to report we have exceeded this target for the past two years.

We want to thank our pro bono and community partners, the partners and staff of Sparke Helmore and all of the communities we operate in. We are incredibly grateful for all of the time, support and opportunities you have given us.

The Pro Bono & Community team

Hannah Rose, Katy Mooney, Tony Deegan, Alicia Snijders, Georgia Murphy-Haste, Aimee Clegg, Morgan Long and Leah Harman



LETTER FROM SPARKE HELMORE'S MANAGING PARTNER



I'm proud to be leading a firm that makes pro bono and community activities a business priority, and I'm inspired by our people who have embraced those activities with such enthusiasm and dedication.

It's fantastic that our staff continue to exceed the National Pro Bono Aspirational Target and that Sparke Helmore has been acknowledged for our Wills Clinics. I'm grateful for the collegial approach of our staff and the collaborations we embarked on with our peers in the community and in other firms. You'll read more about some of our joint initiatives in the coming pages.

Our lives are enriched by serving the communities we belong to. We look forward to continuing our working relationships with our clients and community organisations to effect change.

I want to thank the Pro Bono & Community team, all of our pro bono and community partners, and everyone who volunteered their time and skills to our programs—we couldn't have made the following contributions without you.



Phillip Salem, National Managing Partner



How we've helped

\$10,000 

donated to batyr to support batyr@ school programs

 **\$44,174.95**

donated by the firm and staff to charitable causes

 **140**

bags donated to Share the Dignity's #itsinthebag campaign

 **2,100 NAPPIES**

donated to local women's refuges and family crisis centres through The Nappy Collective


183

estate documents drafted for more than 86 attendees at our Wills Clinics, held in collaboration with community organisations

62 MEALS 

provided to women at domestic violence centres through our involvement in Two Good


413.5 HOURS


spent by staff on non-legal volunteering at community organisations such as KickStart for Kids, RSPCA, Children's Medical Research Institute, the Ronald McDonald House Charities and the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC)

200 KILOMETRES CYCLED

by Team Sparke Helmore during Race for Change, raising \$5,425.75 for The Benevolent Society to help disadvantaged Australian children and families



Our commitment to pro bono

Our increased participation in a wider range of pro bono activities is just one thing we're happy to report on. In the 2016/17 financial year, we recorded 11,982 hours of pro bono work (117 hours more than our target). This is equivalent to an average of 38.4 hours per full-time equivalent (FTE) lawyer and exceeds the National Aspirational Pro Bono Target of 35 hours on average per FTE lawyer. In addition, 188 hours of pro bono legal work was generously provided by our paralegals and law clerks.

Facilitating access to justice by collaborating with community legal centres and clearing houses is an important part of our program. Eight lawyers undertook part-time pro bono legal secondments during the 2016/17 financial year. More than 95 lawyers also provided ad hoc legal advice.

We were a finalist for the Pro Bono Partnership Award at the 2017 Justice Awards for a second consecutive year, having been nominated in partnership with Justice Connect and six other law firms for our involvement in Justice Connect's Self-Representation Service.

Our lawyers volunteer with the Service to help unrepresented, disadvantaged parties in bankruptcy and employment matters before the Federal Court and Federal Circuit Court..

To further our commitment to access to justice, we have continued to hold Wills Clinics for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in regional WA and NSW since our first clinic in March 2016. In addition, we also provided a donation to ANROWS to support their research into women in the criminal justice system.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE CLEARING HOUSES AND LEGAL CENTRES WE SUPPORTED

- ACT Law Society Legal Advice Bureau
- ACT Law Society Pro Bono Clearing House
- Arts Law Centre of Australia
- Australian Centre for Disability Law
- Cancer Council Legal Referral Service
- Hunter Community Legal Centre
- Inner City Legal Centre
- JusticeNet
- Lakemba Advice Bureau run by Salvos Legal Humanitarian
- LawAccess
- LawRight
- Marrickville Legal Centre's General Advice and Employment Law Clinics
- Mental Health Legal Centre in Victoria
- Redfern Legal Centre
- St Kilda Legal Service
- University of Newcastle Legal Centre
- Wheatbelt Community Legal Centre

"Our community organisation would have folded if it weren't for your support. Many thanks again, particularly to Jo, whose timely responses helped us negotiate a good outcome in a situation that previously had offered very little hope."

Laura Williams, Community Organiser, Earthworker Cooperative

"I have personally found every one of your lawyers a joy to work with. MHLHC has thoroughly appreciated the working relationship with your firm."

Faith Cheok, Principal Legal Officer, Mental Health Law Centre (WA) Inc

WILLS CLINICS SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

An estimated 70% of burial disputes that go to court in Australia involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, yet in NSW the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have made a will is between 2% and 6%.

To address this, we have been providing two-day Wills Clinics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in communities in WA and NSW, in collaboration with community organisations. So far, we have provided Clinics in Bathurst, Maclean, Dareton, Northam, Umina, Wyong and Newcastle. During the 2016/17 financial year, the lawyers taking part in our Wills Clinics assisted more than 86 attendees by drafting more than 183 estate documents.

The Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health Services Moorditj Djinda Awards acknowledged the positive impact of our first Clinic in Northam, naming it the “Best Single Event in 2017”. The clinic was run by Partner Andrew White, Lawyers Georgia Murphy-Haste, Layla Langridge and Jacky Vetter and Associate Aimee Dash, who came together from across the country to prepare estate documents for almost 40 clients over the two days.

“This initiative has allowed us to have some good conversations with people about wills, establishing what they want regarding arrangements after death and now we have a real opportunity for them to actually take that next step.”

Linda Sharman, Senior Social Worker,
WA Country Health Service Wheatbelt



HELPING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

It is reported that women in prison often have a history of violent victimisation and may be at risk of further abuse when they are released. However, the support needs of women in the criminal justice system are often unrecognised and it's unclear how responsive the available services are to their needs.

With the help of \$10,125 raised by Sparke Helmore, research is well underway to address this issue. The funds have contributed to *The Forgotten Victims: Prisoner Experience of Victimisation and Engagement with the Criminal Justice System*, a project commissioned by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS). The project team is led by Professor Andrew Day of James Cook University and includes Dr Adam Gerace of Flinders University and independent researcher Dr Sharon Casey. The research is conducted in partnership with the South Australian Department for Correctional Services, represented by Ms Bernie McGinnes.

The project team is currently analysing in-depth interviews with women in prison and participating service providers. Their focus is two-fold—clearly identify the barriers to female prisoners' use of services and potential solutions toward a brighter future for the women and their children.

The final report is to be published by ANROWS in the first half of 2018.



Our national charity partners

In the 2016/17 financial year, we adopted five national charity partners:

- **RIDBC** is Australia's largest non-government provider of education, therapy and cochlear implant services for children and adults with vision or hearing loss, their families and the professionals who support them. A Sydney office team volunteered their time by rolling up their sleeves at RIDBC—Alice Betteridge School Numeracy and Literacy Open Day in North Rocks. We also provided RIDBC with more than 85 hours of legal work.
- **ANROWS** is an independent, NFP company aiming to deliver relevant and translatable research evidence that drives policy and practice leading to a reduction in the levels of violence against women and their children. Our Property, NFP, Dispute Resolution and Workplace teams assisted ANROWS with this mission by providing it with more than 120 hours of pro bono legal work and we contributed funds to The Forgotten Victims project.
- **The McGrath Foundation** raises money to place McGrath Breast Care Nurses in communities across Australia and to increase breast awareness in young people, particularly young women, through its national breast education initiative "Curve Lurve". Our Brisbane office held a Pink Stumps Morning Tea and snack box fundraising, while our Newcastle office embraced the Pull On Your Socks campaign.

- **batyr** engages, educates and empowers young people to have positive conversations about mental health by offering a range of programs that give a voice to the "elephant in the room". From training young people to share their lived experience of mental ill health, to running dynamic programs in schools and universities, batyr aims to smash the stigma surrounding mental health and encourage young people to seek help when they need it. We were a gold sponsor of batyr's annual Blue Tie Ball and batyr received our annual Christmas donation of \$10,000 to support batyr@school. We also provided batyr with more than 100 hours of legal work.
- **The Earthwatch Institute** engages people worldwide in scientific field research and education to promote the understanding of and action necessary for a sustainable environment. We helped Earthwatch by providing it with more than 50 hours of pro bono legal work. Some of our staff also took part in the exciting Edge Pledge campaign supporting endangered manta rays, with one staff member swimming with sharks to raise funds for this initiative.

We've used Benojo to collaborate with our charity partners on local and national initiatives and better measure our social impact. Through this platform, we raised more than \$22,500 for these five organisations in the 2016/17 financial year.



Supporting our local communities

SHARE THE DIGNITY

There are more than 85,000 homeless women in Australia. Share the Dignity supports these women and women fleeing domestic violence by providing them with sanitary items that most of us take for granted. They also fund funerals for victims of domestic violence and campaign for justice for women in Australia.

In November 2016, we delivered 140 handbags filled with personal care, sanitary items, little luxuries and other useful personal effects. Share the Dignity distributes these donations to women who are homeless, at risk of and experiencing domestic violence through their partner shelters and charitable organisations.



www.sharethedignity.com.au

SHARING MENTAL HEALTH STORIES

For Christmas in 2016, we donated \$10,000 to our national pro bono partner batyr for its batyr@ school initiative. The program features trained speakers who share their mental health stories to encourage students to talk about their own challenges and reach out for help when they need it.



www.batyr.com.au 

TOUCH OF COLOUR

On Friday 18 November 2016, Sparke Helmore joined 19 insurance industry companies at Sydney's Allianz Stadium for the Touch of Colour annual touch footy charity day, to raise more than \$140,000 for KidsXpress.

The charity provides a world-first therapy program for children aged between four and 14, who have been impacted by trauma or challenge. Through the therapeutic use of music, art, play and drama, KidsXpress supports children in need to find safe and healthy ways to cope with life.



www.kidsxpress.org.au

READY, SET, GO!

The 24th Sparke Helmore Newcastle City Triathlon was held on Newcastle Harbour on Sunday 26 February 2017. There were 46 members of the Sparke Helmore community, along with 1,200 other triathletes, that battled it out across the swim, cycle and run legs of the course. Cheering them on and providing the barbecue afterwards were 45 staff and family volunteers.

The Triathlon has raised more than \$468,000 for various local charities since it began in 1994.



www.newcastlecitytriathlon.com.au

**IF WE CAN HELP YOUR ORGANISATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE,
WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.**

**IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR
PRO BONO AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Hannah Rose
Head of Pro Bono & Community
hannah.rose@sparke.com.au
+61 2 9373 3501

Katy Mooney
Regional Pro Bono & Community Manager
katy.mooney@sparke.com.au
+61 2 4924 7626

More information is also available at www.sparke.com.au

