

In Kind

SPARKE HELMORE'S PRO BONO & COMMUNITY REPORT 2015



Making a difference



Through an organisation like Life Without Barriers, you meet people providing foster care to youngsters, some of whom have a disability. And it is humbling and inspiring.

When you see the Westpac Rescue Helicopter flying patients from regional and rural areas to big city hospitals for life-saving treatment, you realise these services are making a real difference to peoples' lives.

Working together to assist a charity to more effectively help young Australians dealing with mental illness really makes me feel like we are contributing to the community.

For me, personal involvement has brought into sharp relief what we are trying to achieve with our pro bono and community programs. Sparke Helmore understands it's our responsibility to help charitable non-governmental organisations and individuals seeking access to justice and legal services that make a difference. So we provide our people with opportunities to make a real contribution to their community and the organisations that inspire them.

Sparke Helmore has offered pro bono services for decades, but since formalising our Corporate Social Responsibility Policy, our pro bono and community programs have become a core part of our firm. We are now all involved as we share our legal expertise, our time and our financial support with organisations in need or with those less fortunate.

The causes we support are chosen by our staff because they are important to them, and that's why we are now well on the way to achieving the firm's aspirational pro bono and community targets.

Tony Deegan
Pro Bono Partner
Sparke Helmore



Thank you

This report provides a glimpse into the challenges faced by just some of the organisations and individuals we work with each year. And it reveals how we are responding.

We can't do it without the involvement of our people and the support of our clients.

Each year our people step up, delivering pro bono legal services and community support across Australia. Thousands of cupcakes are baked, bought and eaten; expert legal advice is provided free or at heavily discounted rates; races are run and bicycles pedalled to raise funds for worthy causes; time and resources are given to help charitable organisations and salaries are shared with those less fortunate.

There are also always opportunities to join forces with a client and support others in our community.

Pro Bono program results

We've been working steadily towards the National Pro Bono Aspirational Target since we committed to it in 2013. It encourages firms to achieve 35 pro bono hours per lawyer each year. We are proud of the contributions made by our staff this year, which have meant we have achieved some important milestones.

- In total we provided 8,808.3 hours of pro bono legal assistance in the 2015 financial year, which is double the amount we provided in the previous financial year.
- 8,808.3 pro bono hours equates to 29.23 hours per lawyer. Our short-term goal was to achieve 25 pro bono hours per lawyer by the end of June, a target we reached in April—well ahead of schedule.
- For the first time, we have achieved national engagement in our pro bono program with lawyers from all of our nine offices providing pro bono legal services.
- Engagement levels are at an all-time high, with 62% of lawyers and 53% of partners participating in the pro bono program, up from 52% and 43% respectively in the previous financial year. This is an outstanding result when compared with the results reported by other firms of our size.

Our pro bono program provides access to legal services, either free of charge or at a substantially reduced rate, for not-for-profit organisations—charities, whose limited funds could be better spent towards achieving their charitable purposes—and individuals who might otherwise find access to justice a struggle.

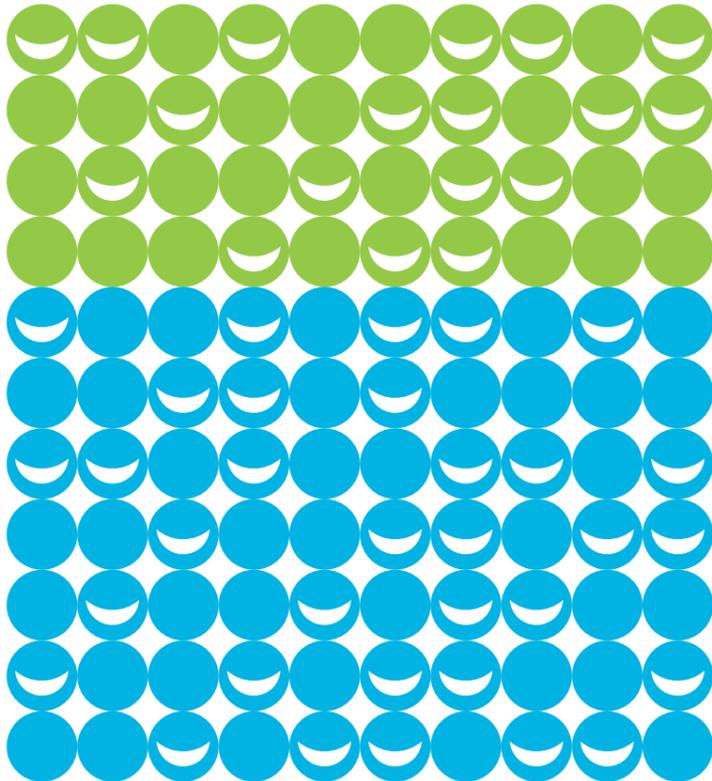
By carefully matching pro bono client needs with our lawyers' strengths, we have managed to significantly expand the range of pro bono legal services the firm provides and the offices that are participating in the program. For example, this year we have handled difficult property negotiations for Rainforest Rescue and complex tender and finance arrangements for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service.

We have also launched a not-for-profit law team to respond to the growing demand for assistance by not-for-profit and charitable organisations. We assist our clients to set up their organisation, to obtain charitable status and tax concessions, to implement measures to ensure good governance and compliance, and to enter into arrangements that allow them to collaborate with other organisations to achieve their goals.



8,808.3
HOURS OF
PRO BONO
WORK IN FY15
[DOUBLE FY14]
29.23
HOURS PER LAWYER

62%
LAWYERS
53%
PARTNERS
HAVE PARTICIPATED IN
THE PRO BONO PROGRAM
[UP 10% FROM FY14]



Community program results

In 2014 we asked our people which social issues were most important to them. As a result, we now focus our community efforts on four key areas: mental health, access to justice, animal welfare, and health and wellbeing.

There are a number of ways we get involved in community initiatives: through workplace giving, fundraising, donations and salary sacrifice; by supporting staff to get involved by sharing our resources ranging from meeting rooms to technology know-how; and through our annual Christmas appeal.

This year we launched a community volunteering initiative. We now allocate 50 “volunteer leave days” a year to staff working on a range of initiatives with charities and not-for-profits. We also actively support our staff to perform community service, such as jury duty or emergency services activities.

The firm shares its networks—bringing people together from different walks of life where we believe those links will benefit the broader community. As part of Sparke Helmore’s broader approach to corporate social responsibility, we have also supported initiatives focused on the environment. This includes having our environmental performance measured against the Australian Legal Sector Alliance benchmarks and implementing initiatives to reduce our impact on the environment.



The firm allocates
50 volunteer days each year to staff



Sparke Helmore helped Life Without Barriers provide Christmas parties for

600

children who are in foster care or are unaccompanied asylum seekers



We donated
100 of gifts to children in need



In a year, the firm’s donations to OzHarvest provide

2,168 meals



The Sparke Helmore NBN Triathlon has raised more than

\$450,000

for the Hunter Medical Research Institute



We donated hampers to Weave Youth & Community Services and our armed forces



We sponsored two injured animals from Edgar’s Mission



In 2014 a team of eight Sparke Helmore participants cycled

532km

in four hours, raising
\$3,731.10
to support an anti-cancer initiative



We donated clothing to St. Vincent’s Winter Appeal and Dress for Success



Tackling the elephant in the room

In a class of 30 Australian students, typically seven will be dealing with mental health issues and while two may seek help, a further five, on average, will suffer in silence. Batyr addresses this problem through peer-to-peer education and has so far reached more than 20,000 young Australians.

The organisation takes its name from Batyr, an Asian elephant internationally famed for his apparent ability to communicate more than 20 phrases.

Batyr tackles the elephant in the room. It runs programs in schools and universities using young speakers who have experienced mental health issues to engage, educate and empower other young people to reach out for support and to the great mental health services around them.

Sparke Helmore has committed to providing pro bono legal support to Batyr. This financial year, we have assisted them by drafting a sub-lease, a suite of workplace policies and template agreements, advising on employee entitlements and immigration issues, and reviewing various contracts.



www.batyr.com.au

“Thank you so much for all of your support, guidance, advice and hard work since our partnership has begun and I very much look forward to working closely with the Sparke Helmore team over the next year and beyond.”

Sam Refshauge, CEO and Director, Batyr



An invaluable service

The Mental Health Legal Centre (MHLC) strives to provide effective legal advice and assistance to people with a mental illness. People with mental illness often experience a range of complex and interrelated problems that can lead to financial hardship, social exclusion, discrimination, unemployment, homelessness and imprisonment.

Legal need in this area is well-documented, and there is clear evidence that people with mental illness are over represented in the criminal justice systems and in our prisons. The MHLC is uniquely placed to provide expert, responsive and flexible services that enable vulnerable Victorians with co-occurring mental health and legal issues to access equitable social justice outcomes.

The lawyers in our Melbourne office form an integral part of the MHLC’s model in delivering these services through supporting the Night Service Telephone Line, which operates twice a week, by representing clients at the Mental Health Tribunal. We also offer support to their other projects as they are launched, such as the Advance Statements Project and the Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Persons Project.

We value our relationship with the MHLC as it allows our lawyers to give back to the community and provide quality, responsive legal service to some of society’s most vulnerable people.



www.communitylaw.org.au

“The effect and impact of this work cannot be overestimated given the extremely vulnerable and disadvantaged position of many of our clients. To be treated with care, respect and dignity is invaluable.”

We are able to ensure a high quality legal service because of the dedication and knowledge of the Sparke Helmore team.”

Charlotte Jones, Principal/Manager, MHLC



When the dots connect

Justice Connect is an important pro bono referral partner of the firm. It was formed when the Public Interest Law Clearing Houses of NSW and Victoria merged in 2013. Its aim is to provide access to justice through a series of programs, mainly by matching people with pro bono legal services.

In 2014, Justice Connect received 4,711 requests for assistance and was able to help 1,653 people.

Earlier in the year, Jo Yap from our Sydney Commercial team completed a six-month secondment with Justice Connect, and Lisa Donohue, a Senior Associate from the Insurance team, is currently seconded to the organisation.

In August 2014, Justice Connect launched a new service intended to support disadvantaged self-represented litigants in the Federal Court and the Federal Circuit Court and, to date, has helped more than 241 clients and teamed with 11 law firms providing pro bono services. A team of lawyers from our Sydney office have been involved since day one, including Conor McNair, Stephanie Jupp, Julie Kneebone, Nicholas Lawrence, and James Clohesy, who have provided a range of advice, drafted legal documents and advised on procedure and courtroom guidance.

Our lawyers see firsthand the difficulties that people can face with access to justice and how intimidating legal processes can feel for some people.

As Sam Sykes said, “It is often easy to forget when working for large corporate clients that the law is grossly inaccessible for a significant portion of the population. It also serves as a reminder that we should commit to our obligations to undertake pro bono work.”



www.justiceconnect.org.au

“Alice wanted me to convey her gratitude... she followed your advice and strategy and was able to secure an order for payment of \$7,000 – a very significant amount for someone in her position.”

Shane Wescott, Lawyer – Self-Representation Service



Leading a Life Without Barriers

In 1999 when Sparke Helmore first provided pro bono legal support to Life Without Barriers (LWB), it was a case of a Newcastle law firm supporting a Newcastle not-for-profit providing assistance and care to people with physical or mental challenges.

Today both Sparke Helmore and LWB are national organisations—but our ties remain as strong as ever.

LWB is one of Australia’s major providers of services, including family support and out-of-home care for children and young people—with around 2,500 foster and kinship carers supported by its programs. LWB also provides a range of disability services, home and community care for older Australians and support for refugees and asylum seekers.

Around 2,000 people with disabilities connect with LWB each year and it has been closely involved in the recently completed trial of the Commonwealth Government’s National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in the Hunter. LWB will continue to be a part of the NDIS scheme as it rolls out across Australia.

LWB also helps thousands of young Australians battling mental illnesses, homelessness and people needing support with youth justice.

WE

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

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www.lwb.org.au

“Life Without Barriers’ pro bono relationship with Sparke Helmore has not only provided us with sound and timely legal advice, but their commitment to gaining a deeper understanding of our organisation has meant that meaningful partnership opportunities have developed, to the great benefit of both our organisations.”

Kristie Brown, National Manager, External Relations Strategy and Engagement, Life Without Barriers



Protecting fragile habitats

Since 1971, Earthwatch has enabled about 100,000 people to join leading scientists in the field to work on crucial environmental research projects locally and globally. Together, they have contributed roughly 10 million hours of data collection—far more than their scientists could have collected alone.

Two of them are Naomi Simmons and Casey Cross, who respectively joined expeditions to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and Shipton's Flat in Far North Queensland last year.

Naomi, a Senior Associate in our Newcastle office, spent five nights camping in the Atherton Tablelands at the South Johnstone Forestry Camp in the Wooroonooran National Park. Naomi and her group accompanied scientists from James Cook University, including Professor Stephen Williams, who has been researching the area for more than 20 years.

Naomi assisted the team collecting vital statistics at different altitudes near the camp, taking part in habitat surveys, thermal camera imaging, spotlighting and retrieving and renewing data temperature loggers.

"Spending time in the beautiful rainforest, spotting cassowaries and gaining knowledge was incredible. It was fantastic to be a part of a team that's helping to find solutions to one of today's most significant environmental challenges", said Naomi.

Stephen's research has indicated that Australia's tropical rainforests are likely to be significantly impacted by climate change. Many species endemic to the area are adapted to the cooler mountain environment. Environmental warming and extreme weather events can cause whole populations of species to die out. The ongoing research is finding areas that are buffered from climate change effects and using that information to help protect the species.

Casey, a BDM executive, joined the October expedition at Shipton's Flat. She worked with scientists, the traditional owners of Shipton's Flat and the Bana Yarralji rangers to collect vital data that will be used to build a better understanding of the effects of climate change on this fragile habitat, and to give us the knowledge to help minimise these impacts.

"While I theoretically know the effects of climate change, being a part of this expedition allowed me to physically experience what is happening on the ground in such a fragile habitat. We were there at the beginning of the wet season and didn't see a day of rain—apparently we should have had at least one big storm every day. We went on a night-time spotting expedition and were lucky to see a gecko or two, compared with 10 years ago where the team regularly saw frogs, geckos, tree roos and other endemic vertebrates by the handful", Casey said.





Above the clouds

There's no such thing as a typical day for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. In one recent 24 hour period the Newcastle-based team transferred to hospital a newborn baby with breathing problems, a middle-aged burns patient and a 24-year-old who had injured his arm when working with a grinder.

The Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service was Sparke Helmore's first pro bono client and the relationship traces all the way back to 1991. Today, our lawyers continue to assist the Service in a broad range of legal matters.

We recently ratcheted up our involvement when the Service, which operates as part of the NSW Emergency Services, was, for the first time, required to enter into a fully competitive public tender for a new 10 year \$350 million contract with NSW Ambulance. This exposed the Service to the full force of international competition as it tendered against local and overseas for-profit operators. For the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service this was "do or die". No new contract, no Service.

Sparke Helmore brought together a range of expert legal services from across the firm to support the Service through the complex tendering and financing process.

Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service was ultimately successful in its tender for the new contract to commence in early 2017. It will provide primary and secondary services for NSW Ambulance throughout Northern and North-Western NSW (including from a new base in Lismore) between the Hawkesbury River and the Queensland border.



www.rescuehelicopter.com.au

"We operate as a charity, but need the best advice you can get. We have worked with Tony Deegan and the lawyers at Sparke Helmore for many years. It's provided us with world-class legal advice at a greatly discounted rate. It's top shelf service. With the recent tender, which was a very long process, Sparke Helmore was involved all the way along and I'm sure it was the support we received that went a long way to making us successful."

Richard Jones, General Manager, Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service



Touching lives

In 2014, more than 123,000 Australians were diagnosed with cancer. One in two men and one in three women will have been diagnosed with cancer by the time they reach 85. Cancer affects not only the person diagnosed, but has a flow-on effect to partners, carers, family, friends and the wider community.

One of Cancer Council NSW's support services is the Pro Bono Legal Referral Service. The Service was launched in 2010 and has gradually rolled out across the country, operating as a partnership between Cancer Council NSW and Cancer Councils in each state and territory nationally. Sparke Helmore lawyers have volunteered with the Legal Referral Service since it launched. This partnership has continued to grow with our lawyers in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia supporting people affected by cancer through the Service.

"Being diagnosed with cancer can be extremely traumatic and most patients are primarily concerned with getting through treatment", said Sarah Penman, National Pro Bono Manager at Cancer Council NSW.

"Cancer Council hears that the legal and financial issues that arise as a result of a cancer diagnosis can often be a significant source of stress for patients and their families. Lawyers like those at Sparke Helmore who offer their services for free to people affected by cancer help to reduce this stress and the financial difficulties that can impact them."

In the last financial year, our lawyers have supported more than 48 people with free legal advice workshops and pro bono legal services, such as creating wills and powers of attorney, advising on accessing superannuation and insurance, and negotiating hardship variations to debts. The firm has also assisted clients with understanding their legal rights in the workplace while they are undergoing cancer treatment, or caring for someone undergoing treatment.



www.cancer.org

"Having Sparke Helmore as a partner firm is fantastic! Nothing is ever too much trouble for anyone at the firm, and the contribution has grown beyond individual client advice into community education sessions and legal content review. On behalf of Cancer Council, I'd like to acknowledge the firm's sensitivity toward families in distress, and their flexibility and compassion in dealing with seriously ill clients."

Sarah Penman, National Pro Bono Manager, Cancer Council NSW



Triathlon raises funds for medical research

From 28 February to 1 March 2015, the Sparke Helmore NBN Triathlon Festival took place in sunny Newcastle.

This year, after 22 years as separate events, the Sparke Helmore NBN Triathlon and Newcastle Foreshore Triathlons were held on the same weekend, with thousands turning out on Saturday and Sunday to compete and spectate.

We had a record number of people from Sparke Helmore participate in this year's triathlon festival. Fifty people from our nine offices competed in events throughout the weekend and were joined by a dedicated team of volunteers. For the first time we also had participants from Life Without Barriers and many cheered them on as they passed the finish line.

Our efforts on the course were in support of the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI). Each year a percentage of entry fees is donated to HMRI and, since 1994, the Sparke Helmore NBN Triathlon has helped raise more than \$450,000 for this important cause.

Funds raised have helped researchers at HMRI translate findings in the lab into life-changing health treatments and preventative strategies for illnesses such as asthma and airway diseases, cancer, diabetes, mental health, nutrition, pregnancy and reproduction, stroke and more.

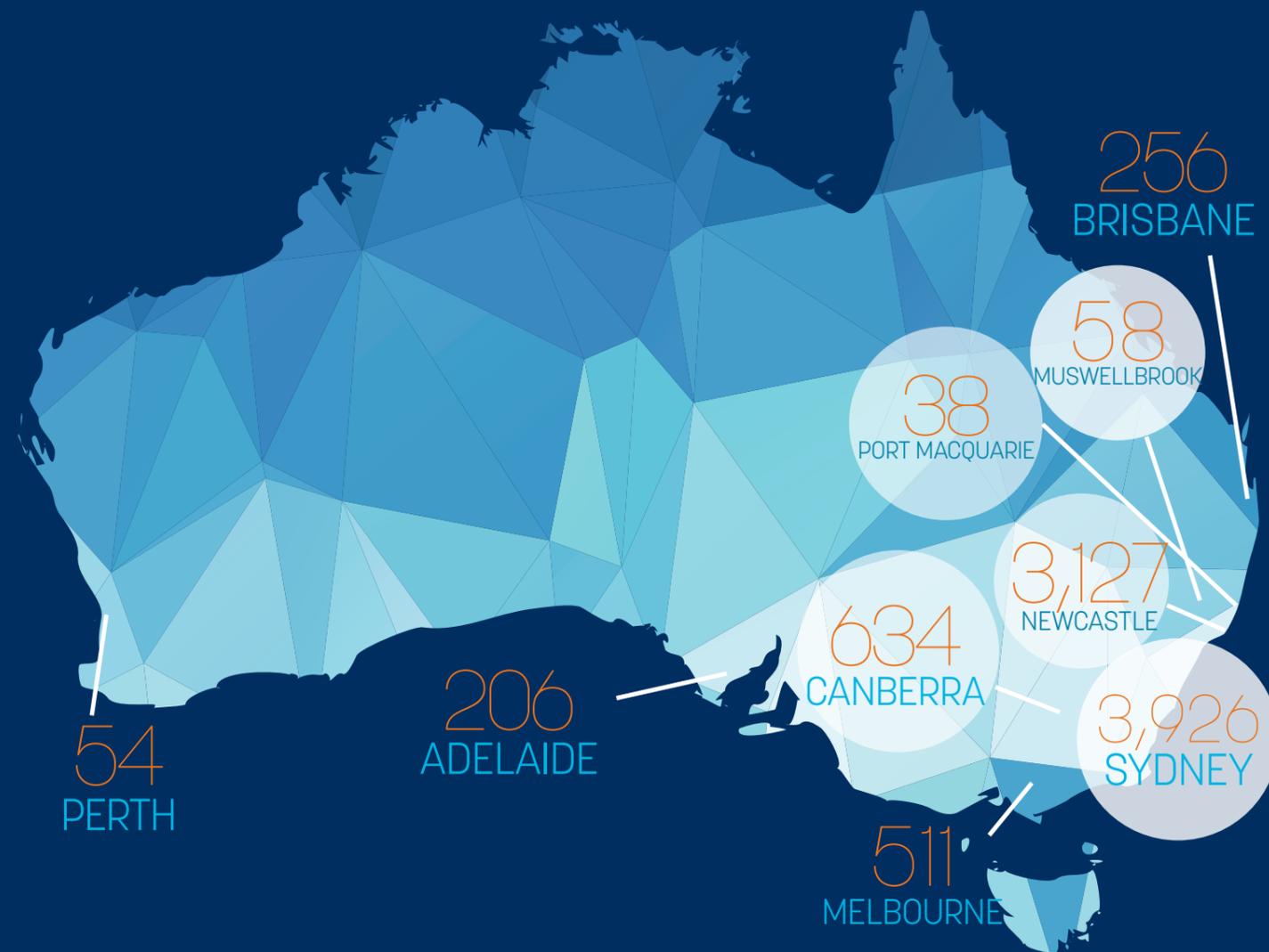
For 15 years, the triathlon has also funded the HMRI Award for Research Excellence, which recognises the Hunter's leading researchers. Recipients of the award are leaders in their field, who actively enhance the research environment in the Hunter through team building, mentorship or establishment of major research initiatives. The 2014 winner of the award was Professor Brian Kelly.



A SELECTION OF OUR OTHER PRO BONO AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- ActionAid Australia
- ANZUP Cancer Trials Group Limited
- Australian Business Volunteers
- Australian Red Cross Nepal Appeal
- Australian Network on Disability
- Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
- Awabakal Limited
- Diversity Council of Australia
- Dress for Success
- Edgar's Mission
- Gig Buddies Sydney
- Greyhound Rescue
- Humane Society International Australia
- Hunter Life Education
- Hunter New England Primary Health Network
- Hutt Street Centre
- JusticeNet SA
- Legal Advice Bureau of The Law Society of the ACT
- Life Education Australia
- Marrickville Legal Centre
- Mates4Mates
- Meals on Wheels
- MS Australia
- NRMA Slingshot Jumpstart Program
- NSW Police Legacy
- QPILCH
- Rainforest Rescue
- Ravenshoe Fire Assistance
- Redfern Legal Centre
- RSPCA Million Paws Walk
- St Kilda Legal Service
- St Vincent de Paul Society Winter Appeal
- The Atkinson Scholarship Program
- The Benevolent Society
- The Nappy Collective
- Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Fund
- Youth Off The Streets Overseas Relief Fund

Pro Bono hours by office location at 30 June 2015



Why we do it

I have found the experience to be quite humbling in that you can see matters from a different perspective...this has provided me with greater depth to my legal analysis.

Ian Bennett, Workplace Lawyer in Sydney, speaking about his experience at Marrickville Legal Centre

The work is incredibly rewarding with the knowledge that you are providing assistance in the client's time of need and giving them some relief for their journey ahead.

Teresa Wilson, Commercial Lawyer in Muswellbrook, speaking about a will, appointment of enduring guardian and power of attorney matter that was referred to us by the Cancer Council

As a junior lawyer, the exposure to such a variety of legal and legal-related work was great. The whole experience was engaging, challenging and enlightening. Now that I am back at Sparkes, I am excited to get involved in other pro bono opportunities the firm has to offer and continue to promote access to justice.

Jo Yap, Commercial Lawyer, speaking about her secondment with Justice Connect

Corporate lawyers aren't always seen as likely providers of pro bono legal services. However great opportunities can arise with a client committed to its CSR policy. Clients like Westpac who have been willing to team with us on projects making a difference in the community, such as supporting the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service.

Nick Humphrey, Corporate National Practice Group Leader in Sydney

These clients are often at a very low point in their lives and may not have access to any other legal services... we hope to continue this rewarding relationship with the MHLC for many years to come.

Aleco Lazaridis and Arjunan Thangarajah, Insurance Lawyers in Melbourne, speaking about their work with the Mental Health Legal Centre

It was eye opening to see how small ideas, when put into practice, can have a significant effect on the community. It was rewarding.

Julie Kneebone, Workplace Lawyer in Sydney, speaking about her work on a matter for the Nappy Collective

While the work can be challenging, I would recommend others get involved with the pro bono program...the work is very rewarding and gives clients peace of mind.

Cavelle Lindsay, Corporate Lawyer in Newcastle, speaking generally about the estate planning and Cancer Council referrals

I grew up in North West NSW, in a place called Narrabri. We didn't have a lot of money and my father abused my mother physically and psychologically, which made for a difficult childhood. My main aim growing up was to get out of Narrabri and prove that the cycle of violence could be broken.

I'm in a different place now and my mother did follow me to Newcastle—but that period of my life made me understand that whatever was going on in my life there were always people less fortunate, who needed a helping hand, and I knew that I wanted to help where I could. I've always worked with community groups and when the pro bono role came up with Sparke Helmore it fitted like a glove.

Working with colleagues in our offices all over Australia, and forging the connections between those who need help and those who can help, well, that's what it's all about.

Katy Mooney, National Pro Bono Manager in Newcastle

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