

# In Kind

SPARKE HELMORE'S SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
SUSTAINABILITY REPORT FY15/16



## LETTER FROM THE PRO BONO & COMMUNITY TEAM

Our firm has offered pro bono services to clients for several decades. Formalising our Corporate Social Responsibility Policy and becoming a signatory to the National Pro Bono Aspirational Target has given new impetus and more structure to our efforts. We're proud that we are exceeding the legal industry target in terms of average pro bono hours undertaken by our lawyers. Our investment in Benajo, an online platform, has also allowed us to collaborate more effectively with our charity partners on local and national activities, and to more effectively measure our social impact.

But it's more than a tally of hours or the dollar value of our financial support that we're proud of—it's in the very personal results and outcomes where we can see our people making a difference in the community and to the lives of individuals experiencing disadvantage.

Our people have been involved in pro bono and community projects that make a real difference. They've assisted individuals affected by cancer with their legal matters, staffed community legal centres and clearing houses through which access to justice is provided to many who otherwise would go unassisted, and supported numerous charitable organisations with employment, corporate and commercial-related advice. Much of our work has been centered on regional and remote Australia and on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Helping the youth in these communities is especially important to our firm.

This Report contains an overview of some of the pro bono and community activities our people have been involved in during the 2016 financial year and the steps our firm has taken to be more environmentally sustainable. We hope it will encourage more people to help make a difference.

*The Pro Bono & Community Team*

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

# Thank you

“ We’re very proud that our people dedicated more time than ever, during the last financial year, to be involved in pro bono and community activities. This often requires a sacrifice of personal time as well as juggling responsibilities. We are also honoured by the opportunity to partner with our clients, such as QBE, Lawcover and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, to collectively give back to our local communities.

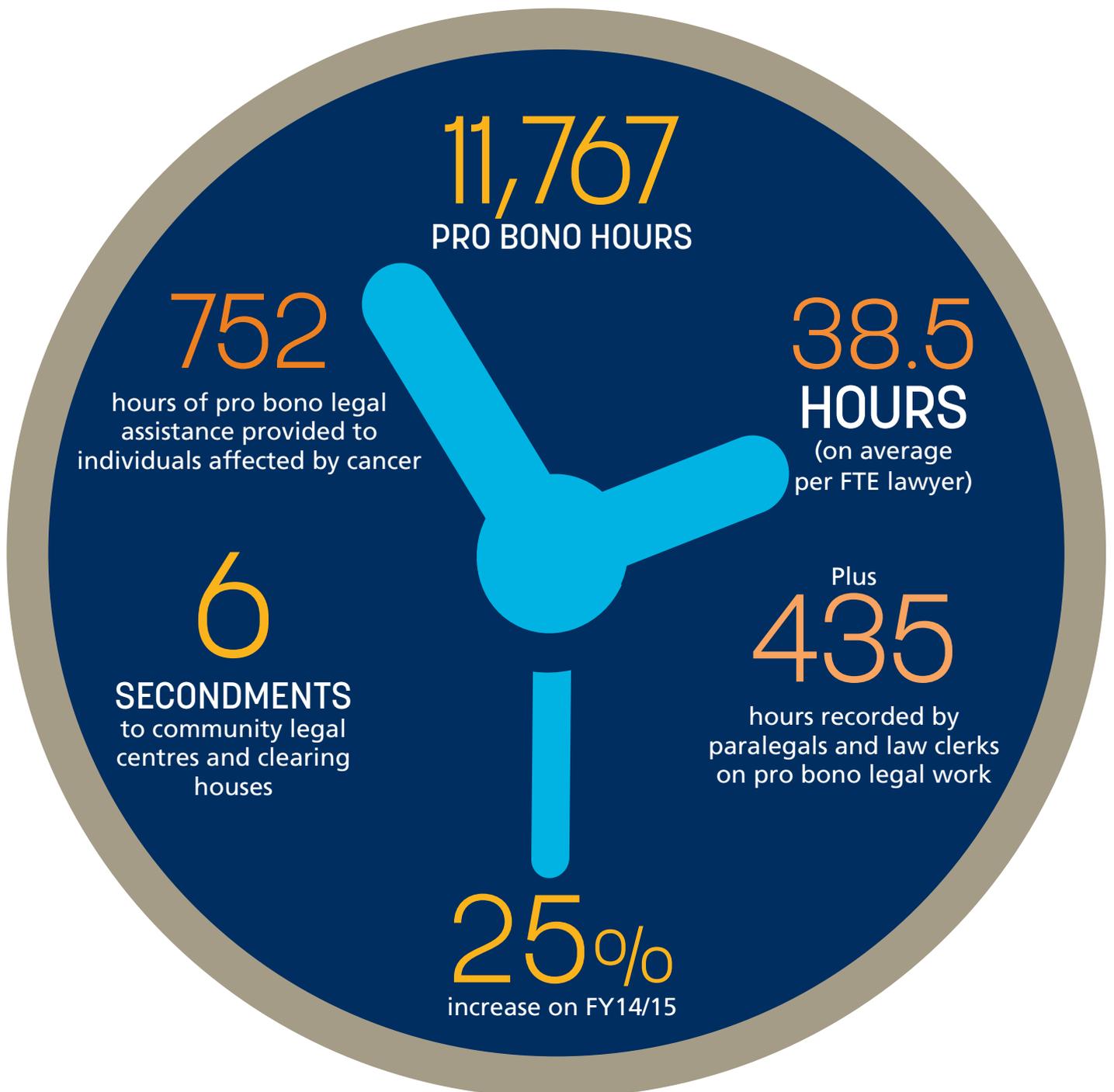
The involvement in our pro bono and community activities is voluntary and we can only make a difference with the support of our people and our clients. We are emboldened by the enthusiasm with which individuals at our firm participate, and the value and enjoyment that so many of them tell us they gain from it.

We thank everyone who has been involved in our activities during the year. This Report contains just the headlines of our programs and only scratches the surface of our community involvement. Our people have achieved so much we can be proud of. We will continue to work hard, with a particular focus on driving local action, making a local impact and building local connections. ”

Phillip Salem, National Managing Partner

# Our commitment to pro bono

We're delighted about our increased participation and the range of pro bono activities we have been able to support this year. In 2013, we became a signatory to the National Pro Bono Aspirational Target of 35 hours on average per full time equivalent (FTE) lawyer. In the 2015/16 financial year, we exceeded this target for the first time. The 11,767 hours of pro bono work we performed is 25% higher than the previous year—equivalent to an average of 38.5 hours per FTE. Our paralegals and law clerks also generously provided 435 hours of pro bono legal work.



# How we've helped

ASSISTED  
**40 INDIVIDUALS** &  
**36 CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS**



referred to us by members of the National Association of Community Legal Centres



50 blue bags funded for the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children's Teleschool Program



**\$468,000**

raised by the Sparke Helmore Newcastle City Triathlon for various local charities



80 FAMILIES supported through our food hampers to Weave Youth and Community Services



**25%**

of our insurance premiums invested to make a difference through QBE's Premiums4Good



1,816 NAPPIES donated to local women's refuges and family crisis centres through supporting The Nappy Collective



53 hours spent by staff on non-legal volunteering at community organisations such as Civic Disability Services, the Ronald McDonald House Charities, and the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children



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

**372**

**KILOMETRES CYCLED**

in three hours by six Sparke Helmore participants to raise funds for the Australian and New Zealand Urogenital and Prostate Cancer Trials Group



# Our commitment to pro bono

“ Assisting at the UNLC has been a great opportunity for me to broaden my legal knowledge. Coming from an insurance law background, I was apprehensive to be involved, thinking there was little that I could contribute. I found the majority of issues I dealt with involved general principles of law, and with the aid of technology and the support of the staff at the UNLC, I felt that I really could make a difference. It’s also been great getting to know the students. ”

Nikki McPhan (Lawyer, Newcastle)

“ We have been assisting the ACT Law Society Legal Advice Bureau since July 2012. I gain great satisfaction from helping people with their issues and many of them appreciate the time spent by the volunteers providing free legal advice. ”

Katerina Calvert (Special Counsel, Canberra)

“ I was fortunate to be able to assist with a Cancer Council Legal Referral Service matter involving a young mother having difficulty obtaining income protection benefits and an early payout from her superannuation fund following a terminal diagnosis. Despite the sensitive and emotional nature of this matter, to be able to assist this family with a successful outcome was one of my most rewarding achievements with Sparke Helmore to date. ”

Sandra Aldred (Paralegal, Newcastle)

## SUPPORTING THE LEGAL ASSISTANCE SECTOR

Facilitating access to justice by collaborating with community legal centres and clearing houses is an important part of our Program. This year, seven lawyers undertook six part-time pro bono legal secondments.

Here is a snapshot of the clearing houses and legal centres we supported during the year:

- ACT Law Society Legal Advice Bureau
- ACT Law Society Pro Bono Clearing House
- Arts Law Centre of Australia
- Cancer Council Legal Referral Service
- Hunter Community Legal Centre
- Justice Connect (including the expansion of its not-for-profit Information Hub and its Self-Representation Service run in the Federal Court in Sydney)
- Marrickville Legal Centre’s General and Employment Law Clinics
- Mental Health Legal Centre in Victoria
- National Children’s and Youth Law Centre
- Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House (now LawRight)
- Redfern Legal Centre
- St Kilda Legal Service
- Lakemba Advice Bureau run by Salvos Legal
- University of Newcastle Legal Centre (UNLC)

We’re delighted that the Marrickville Legal Centre’s Employment Law Clinic was nominated for a 2016 Pro Bono Partnership Award at the Annual Justice Awards, hosted by the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW. Our team was integral in the establishment of the Employment Law Clinic six years ago and our lawyers have since attended the Clinic on a regular basis to provide free legal advice on matters such as unfair dismissals, general protections, and bullying and discrimination complaints. This year alone, our lawyers dedicated more than 140 hours of free legal assistance to the Clinic.

## PROVIDING CERTAINTY

The Indigenous Issues Committee of the Law Society of NSW identified a high need for wills, powers of attorney and appointments of enduring guardianship in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. An estimated 70% of burial disputes that go to court in Australia involve Indigenous persons, yet the proportion who have made a will and provided instructions on their remains is low—between 2-5% of adults.

One of the highlights this year was our first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wills Clinic in Umina at Mingaletta Aboriginal Corporation, coordinated by the Central Coast Community Legal Centre and also supported by lawyers from Gilbert + Tobin. Our lawyers, Andrew White (Partner, Upper Hunter), Georgia Murphy-Haste (Graduate, Sydney) and Rui Chen (Lawyer, Sydney) assisted 10 clients and provided a total of 63.9 hours of pro bono legal work at the Clinic.



“ Providing assistance to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with their “end of life documents” is enormously rewarding work for us. It provides an opportunity to understand the history of this country through the eyes of its original community. The people we have met are, without exception, extremely warm and open and what we have done has been greatly appreciated by those communities. ”

Andrew White

## REDUCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

How do the media report domestic violence and what are the legal constraints that affect journalists’ reporting of these incidents? In a recent report by Our Watch, an organisation focused on ending domestic and family violence, together with Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS), found that less than 5% of news reports about domestic violence include information about where victims can find help. This is despite the fact the media can be a powerful source of information for women looking to leave a violent relationship.

We provided advice to Our Watch on the legal constraints that affect journalists’ reporting of violence against women and drafted guidelines that can be used to better inform and educate the media. Tim Castle (Partner, Sydney) and Alice Bain (Senior Associate, Adelaide) led the project, assisted by Lawyers Layla Langridge (Perth), Georgia Cowley (Sydney), Shannon Steed (Brisbane) and Samantha Burrell (Melbourne).

“ We thank Sparke Helmore Lawyers for helping us raise the profile of the issue of violence against women and their children, and for assisting in our work to shape the national conversation around this important social issue. ”

Mary Barry, Chief Executive Officer, Our Watch



[www.ourwatch.org.au](http://www.ourwatch.org.au)

# Collaborating for better communities

## A SPORTING CHANCE

The annual Sparke Helmore Newcastle City Triathlon is one of Newcastle's premier community participation sporting events. On Sunday 6 March, 17 people from Sparke Helmore joined more than 2000 participants to run, ride, swim and sweat over the gruelling course. Twenty volunteers from the firm were on-site to ensure the smooth running of the event and cheer on the competitors.

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



[www.newcastlecitytriathlon.com.au](http://www.newcastlecitytriathlon.com.au)

## SANTA'S BLUE SACKS

Imagine being a child and not hearing the jingle of bells or seeing the lights on the tree at Christmas.

Every year, Sparke Helmore supports local communities at Christmas by donating food and other items to charities and people in need. In 2015, we helped support children with vision or hearing loss by funding the purchase of 50 "blue bags" through the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC). The bags contain educational and other materials from the RIDBC's Teleschool program and are sent to children with vision or hearing loss in remote and regional Australia.



## ASPIRING YOUTHS

For young Australians living in rural and regional areas, accessing tertiary education and vocational opportunities can be difficult and the costs prohibitive.

Our Upper Hunter office has provided pro bono support to the Upper Hunter Education Fund since the Fund was established in 2008. The Fund is supported by donations from Hunter Valley enterprises, particularly the coal and mining industry. The message the community is giving recipients by providing such support is that “we care for and believe in you and want to be a part of helping you achieve”. For all young people in this time of transition, that message is a tremendously empowering one.

More than \$360,000 in grants has been distributed to over 200 local youth leaving secondary school. The grants provide much needed financial assistance and encourage the education, career and personal development of the Region’s youth. Supporting skilled young people to return from study and settle in the Upper Hunter helps foster a stronger community and will unlock future opportunities for a more skilled local workforce.



[www.upperhuntereducation.com.au](http://www.upperhuntereducation.com.au)

“ The money I am receiving will be put toward my textbooks as well as helping pay for my rent down here. I cannot thank you enough as I extremely appreciate the generosity that you have given to all of us in need. ”

Ben, studying a Bachelor of Biomedical Science at the University of Newcastle

“ It wasn’t just the financial support that helped me. The education on financial management and support...has helped me develop lifelong skills and the successful story I have today. ”

Gemma, studied a Bachelor of Nursing at Charles Sturt University and now works at John Hunter Hospital

“ This grant will greatly assist me in covering the cost of groceries. It will honestly mean so much just to afford simple things. I am so grateful for your generous support. ”

Alisha, studying a Bachelor of Arts (Media and Communications) at the University of Sydney

## INVESTING IN CHANGE

During the year, Sparke Helmore supported community benefit projects through our client QBE's Premiums4Good initiative. The initiative invests a proportion of our firm's insurance premiums in activities that create positive social and environmental change. Our contribution (25% of our insurance premium) supports family welfare and social access to finance projects. Part of the premium also invests in green bonds and the development of sustainable technologies. This is just one of the ways that we're looking at how we can make a difference to our community through as many channels as possible.



[www.qbe.com.au/premiums4good](http://www.qbe.com.au/premiums4good)

## BENOJO—FOR THE LOVE OF GOOD

As you can see from this Report, there are a lot of people across the firm contributing to community and pro bono work in many different ways. Keeping track of what people are doing and being able to measure the effectiveness of our efforts in an efficient way is crucial for us. We prefer to devote our time to assisting our charity partners achieve real social impact, rather than on administrative tasks.

This year, we invested in Benajo—an online platform that allows us to better collaborate with our charity partners on local and national activities, and more effectively measure our positive social impact.

To launch Benajo at Sparke Helmore, each office held an event featuring guest speakers from our national charity partners, ANROWS, batyr, Earthwatch, the McGrath Foundation and RIDBC.

Benajo is an integral part of our Community Program and supports our renewed focus on driving local action, making local impact and building local connections.

**BENOJO**  
Good humans wanted

[www.benajo.com](http://www.benajo.com)

# Focusing on environmental sustainability

At Sparke Helmore, we are committed to minimising the environmental impact of our business and ensuring our operations are carried out in line with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

We are an active member of the Australian Legal Sector Alliance (AusLSA)—an affiliation of Australian law firms dedicated to reducing their environmental impact. As a condition of our membership, we annually measure and report on our environmental impact across electricity use, greenhouse gas emissions from business, travel and paper use, the provision of recycling facilities and carbon offsetting. We also continuously seek ways to reduce our impact on the environment and actively participate in AusLSA by sharing our knowledge and experience of implementing sustainability initiatives.

The environmental programs we currently have underway include:

- transitioning from halogen to LED lights
- recycling paper, cardboard, e-waste, glass and plastics in all offices
- double-sided and “Follow me” printing, and
- automatic overnight computer shut down.

We are also committed to formulating an environmental management system, to be initially implemented in our Sydney office then rolled out nationally. We are focused on reducing our environmental footprint through sourcing environmentally sustainable products and implementing systems and procedures to monitor, manage and offset our resource consumption.

The following table shows our environmental impact from FY15/16.

Emission type	Tonnes CO2	Per employee
Natural gas/on-site combustibles	0.00	0.00
Company vehicles	0.00	0.00
Refrigerants	12.4	0.02
<b>Scope one</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Electricity	1,640	2.43
Green electricity	0.00	0.00
<b>Scope two</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>2.43</b>
Flights	646	0.96
Car travel (taxis, hire cars and personal vehicles)	59.4	0.09
<b>Scope three</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>1.05</b>
<b>Gross emissions</b>	<b>2,358</b>	<b>3.49</b>
Green energy tariff	0.00	0.00
Voluntary carbon offsetting	0.00	0.00
<b>Net carbon emissions</b>	<b>2,358</b>	<b>3.49</b>
Paper consumption (kg)	85,433	127
Recycled paper consumption (%)	49.2	N/A

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SPARKE HELMORE'S  
PRO BONO AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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