

LAW ACCESS WELCOMES INTRODUCTION OF WA PRO BONO MODEL TO ENHANCE ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Law Access welcomes today's announcement by the Hon John Quigley MLA Attorney General of a new Pro Bono Model to enhance access to justice in Western Australia. The Hon Attorney General said:

“The new pro bono requirements will apply to all law firms who undertake legal services for government departments and agencies from July 1, 2020.

Under the WA Pro Bono Model, law firms who undertake legal services for the State Government must subscribe to the National Pro Bono Target - a voluntary and aspirational target of at least 35 hours of pro bono services per lawyer per year.

In addition, law firms will be required to undertake pro bono services for 'approved causes' - which include the provision of legal services for individuals - for at least 10 per cent of the value of its Government legal work, and report annually on the total fee charged to Government and the types of pro bono services delivered. “

Law Access Chairman The Hon. Malcolm McCusker QC said:

“This is great news. The model will help to drive further growth in pro bono legal assistance to the most vulnerable in our community.”

“The model's *approved causes* provision will ensure pro bono legal efforts are directed to those most in need of assistance”

“The model builds on the extensive existing voluntary pro bono legal contributions by the legal profession in WA.”

“I am sure the implementation of this new model will be closely followed by other jurisdictions who have adopted pro bono requirements for law firms undertaking government work.”

– ENDS –

For comment please contact:

Dominique Hansen

CEO, Law Access

0412 122 813

dhansen@lawaccess.org.au

Background About Law Access:

Funded legal assistance in WA is provided by Legal Aid, Aboriginal Legal Service and community legal centres, but those bodies never have sufficient funds to provide legal assistance for all those in need. They are obliged to “ration” supply. That leaves a gap. Some persons who cannot afford legal assistance, but have a meritorious case, would be compelled to either abandon their legal rights or attempt to act for themselves, often with very unfortunate outcomes, both for themselves and the courts.

Law Access was established by the Law Society of Western Australia in December 2014 in an endeavour to bridge that gap. It assesses applications for legal assistance and matches successful applicants with lawyers having the relevant skills and experience who are prepared to act pro bono (for no fee). Those lawyers may work in civil, criminal or family law. They come from large and small firms as well as from the Bar. They generously volunteer their knowledge, skills and time because of their strong belief that no-one should be denied access to justice due to their lack of means.