

WA Government Pro Bono Model



On 1 July 2020, the WA government introduced a new pro bono model with the key aims of improving access to justice for the most disadvantaged and marginalised individuals in WA and building a thriving pro bono culture in WA.

What is the new model?

The new model applies to all law firms who do legal work for any WA government departments and agencies. If a law firm is on a panel contract providing legal services to the WA government they are now required to:

- (a) subscribe to the Australian Pro Bono Centre's National Pro Bono Target of 35 pro bono hours per lawyer per year (the target is aspirational and firms must use best efforts to meet the target); and
- (b) undertake pro bono legal work, which assists marginalised and disadvantaged individuals in Western Australia, to the value of at least 10% of the legal work done by a firm for the WA government (for example, if in a financial year a law firm bills WA government departments and agencies a total of \$500,000 in legal fees, that firm must undertake at least \$50,000 in pro bono work in Western Australia during that financial year.

The WA government has released an [outline](#) and [guidelines](#) for the model. The model is different to other jurisdictions that have already adopted pro bono requirements for law firms who undertake government work. The WA model requires law firms to undertake pro bono legal work for 'approved causes', which is defined in the guidelines as pro bono legal work:

- I. to individuals in WA who cannot obtain Legal Aid or otherwise access the legal system without incurring significant financial or other hardship;
- II. which will enhance access to justice for disadvantaged people in WA;
- III. to Law Access, a community legal centre in WA, the Aboriginal legal Services of WA and to bodies in WA whose primary focus is representation of Aboriginal people; or
- IV. by way of secondment of legal staff to Law Access, a community legal centre in WA, the Aboriginal Legal Services of WA, or bodies in WA whose primary focus is representation of Aboriginal people.

What is Law Access' role?

With funding support of the WA government, Law Access is working in partnership with Community Legal Western Australia, the peak organisation for Community Legal Centres in WA, to assist with implementation of the Pro Bono model. In particular, Law Access and Community Legal WA are building on and improving the referral pathway from Community Legal Centres to law firms who can provide pro bono assistance. The table below shows how Law Access can help.

Individuals

If you are an individual without the means to pay for a private lawyer, you have been unable to obtain help from a CLC or Legal Aid and your matter falls within our eligible matter types then Law Access may be able to assist you with finding legal help. You can apply for legal help using our [online application form](#).

The model will improve the referral pathway for individuals who cannot be assisted by a CLC. This means that if a CLC cannot help you, the CLC will be better equipped to directly refer appropriate matters to Law Access, who can then assist with finding legal help.

Community Legal Centres

If you are a Community Legal Centre (CLC), you can utilise Law Access to find legal help for your clients using our [online "refer a matter" form](#). You can also seek legal assistance for the CLC itself (such as governance or contracts advice) using our [online "CLC" form](#).

Law Access is developing resources and delivering training for CLCs to explain how to maximize the benefits of the new Pro Bono Model for CLCs and their clients.

Pro Bono Lawyers

If you are a lawyer who is willing to provide pro bono assistance, you can [register](#) to join our pro bono database. This will give you access to the Pro Bono lawyers Portal, which provides information about referrals that are available for pro bono assistance, as well as other training and useful information such as how to apply for pro bono disbursements. The Law Access website also has a dedicated ["support and resources" page](#) for pro bono lawyers.

Law Access is meeting with law firms to discuss the model and new opportunities for firms, as well as developing projects, resources and training for pro bono lawyers. Pro bono lawyers can also join our Pro Bono Coordinators Committee to be more engaged in our work. More information is available [here](#).