

STRATEGY PAPER – A MECHANISM TO BETTER PROMOTE AND SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL PRO BONO LEGAL WORK

The Attorney-General established the International Pro Bono Advisory Group to promote international pro bono work by Australia's legal profession, build effective partnerships in overseas legal capacity building and access to justice work, and identify linkages with the Government's international development assistance programs.

The Advisory Group brings together a range of private sector lawyers, Government and non-government agencies with expertise in international pro bono and development assistance work.

Australia's development assistance efforts have a strong focus on Asia and the Pacific. The work of the Advisory Group will help promote human rights and the rule of law in our region.

The Advisory Group will focus on three key priorities to promote and enhance international pro bono:

1. publicising international pro bono opportunities to the Australian legal community
2. supporting practitioners interested in international pro bono work, and
3. promoting links between international pro bono providers, governments and NGOs.

Focussing on these three key priorities would provide the following outcomes:

- greater participation in international pro bono by raising awareness of opportunities among Australia's legal community, governments, local partners, development NGOs, charities and lawyers in the Asia Pacific region (and others)
- enhanced collaboration between all stakeholders to maximise the impact of international pro bono legal work, and
- promotion of better practice and building on the outcomes of previous efforts through sharing of any lessons learnt.

Giving effect to these three priorities requires a collaborative, cooperative and inclusive approach that best utilises the respective areas of expertise of Advisory Group members. The steps to achieve these priorities do not represent an exclusive mechanism for all international pro bono legal work undertaken by Australia's legal practitioners and other members of the legal community. Rather, they seek to complement existing initiatives being undertaken by the legal profession, aid organisations and brokers.

Key steps to achieve each of these priorities follow.

1. Publicise international pro bono opportunities to the Australian legal community

- a) The Attorney-General's Department will update the Advisory Group's website to provide a portal on international pro bono legal work with a range of general resources such as factsheets and evaluation templates, and links to the websites of brokers and clearing houses.
- b) Law firms may also wish to develop broader corporate partnerships with brokering organisations separately based on their own strategic objectives for international pro bono legal work.
- c) The Law Council of Australia will publicise international pro bono opportunities by disseminating relevant information through law societies and bar councils and 'showcasing' successful projects.

2. Support practitioners interested in international pro bono work

- a) Utilising small working groups, the Advisory Group will:
 - develop fact sheets on key issues arising in international pro bono work, and
 - develop evaluation template documents for use by those involved in international pro bono projects, and report to the International Pro Bono Roundtable on key lessons.
 - develop 'know-how' on other issues as required.

Information will be available on the Advisory Group's website.

- b) An Advisory Group steering committee will organise International Pro Bono Roundtable in August 2010
- c) Lawyers Beyond Borders and other brokers can help pro bono lawyers to organise the logistics and arrangements for placements: pre-departure training, insurance, accommodation etc. This could also include practical information on, for example, best practice, lessons learnt from previous assistance, local context, lawyers' accommodation, practising rights and local familiarisation/orientation support in various countries. Content could be hosted on brokers' websites as appropriate.
- d) The Advisory Group will explore options for supporting the funding of particular costs associated with international pro bono work.

3. Promote links between international pro bono providers, governments and NGOs

- a) Advisory Group members will promote awareness of the Group and international pro bono resources and opportunities among colleagues and counterparts within and outside Australia, including brokers and clearing houses.
- b) The Attorney-General will liaise with his Commonwealth Law Minister counterparts advising them of the establishment of the Advisory Group and seeking information on legal needs that might benefit from pro bono assistance by the Australian legal community.
- c) AusAID will inform the Advisory Group about development assistance priorities and programs that are relevant to international legal assistance and issues about aid effectiveness. This will assist stakeholders to work together with partners in the Asia Pacific region (i.e. foreign governments, development NGOs and local legal professions) to strategically identify:
 - the legal needs in developing countries in this region and which countries are seeking pro bono legal support from us
 - which legal needs and what countries to prioritise, and
 - other legal sector assistance providers and mechanisms in partner countries.
- d) The Advisory Group will provide advice on how best to facilitate and coordinate pro bono legal assistance in relation to requests/projects that involve systemic and/or structural issues relevant to one or more countries.