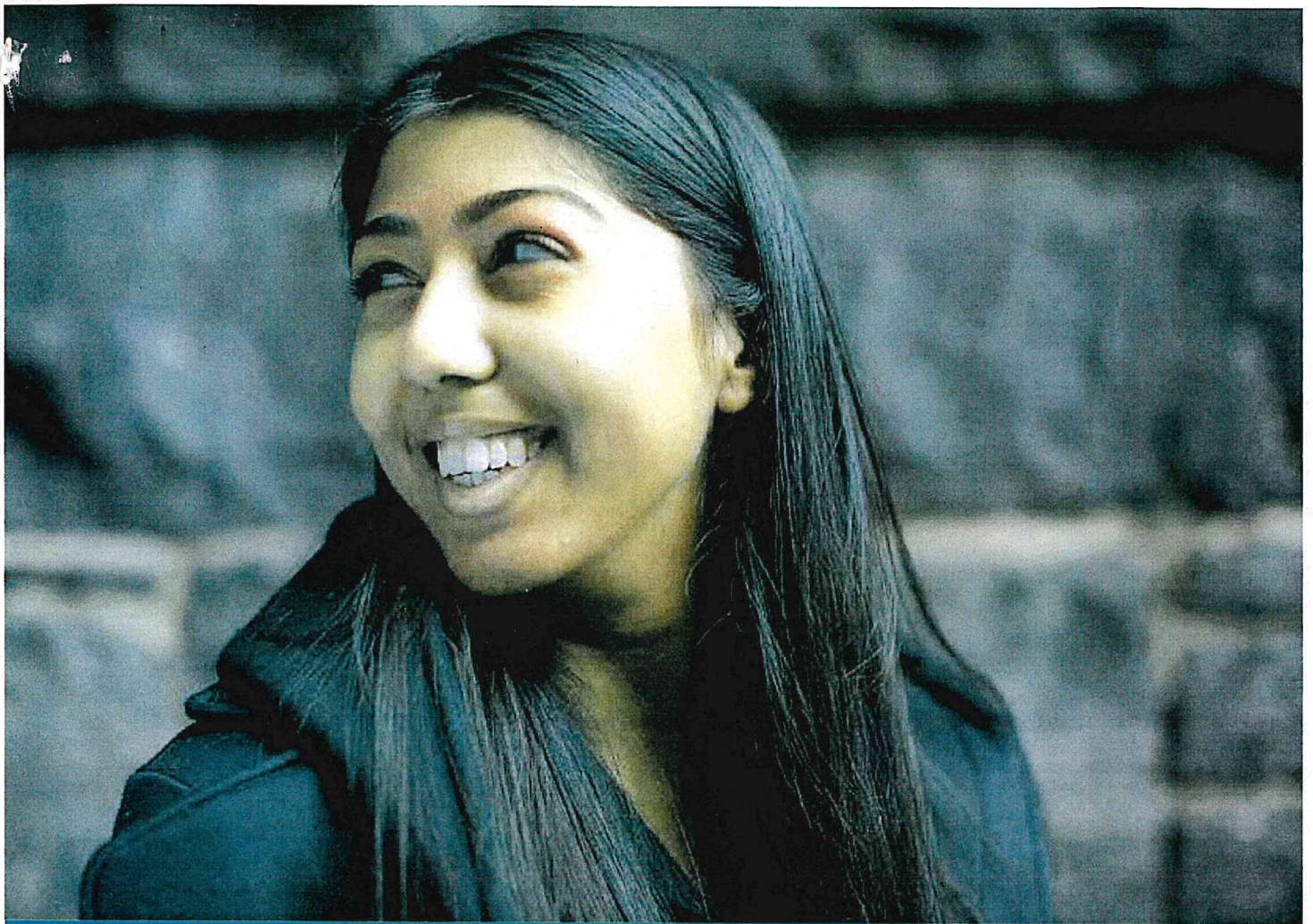




The power of pro bono

Nicholes Family Lawyers

Justice Connect's pro bono update, 2017-18



The power of pro bono

On behalf of Justice Connect and our Board, I would like to thank you and Nicholes Family Lawyers for your work in giving people more access to justice and better outcomes with Justice Connect in the past year.

This has been a big year for Justice Connect. In November, we launched *Fairer and Better Lives*, our new strategy, which is a vision for Justice Connect's work and the positive impact that it has. This happens in three ways:

1. Providing people with legal help where they cannot otherwise afford to access it.
2. Empowering people and communities by providing the tools and information they need to navigate the system themselves.
3. Challenging and changing unfair laws and systems through our advocacy.

This year we partnered with over 50 member firms to deliver on our vision to use the law to give people a fair chance at a better life. Together, we gave legal help to 4,181 people and organisations during the year, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of people who visited our nfplaw.org.au site, which is populated with hundreds of resources made by dedicated pro bono lawyers.

We believe in maximising the power of pro bono through legal service models that are targeted and high impact. When we talk about having a positive impact, this means we aim to help each person or organisation as best we can, and to reach as many people and organisations as possible through our work.

Now we're thinking about what's next: how we can change the systems that cause people's problems, and how we can use technology.

Perhaps most importantly, we're thinking about how the power of pro bono, combined with using new, digital tools, can drastically scale up our reach and our effectiveness, so we can make a bigger impact for more people.

Chris Povey
CEO
Justice Connect



Justice Connect and Nicholes Family Lawyers

At Justice Connect, we believe that everybody deserves a fair chance at a better life.

Without the pro bono support of our member firms, we simply would not be able to pursue this vision.

In just the first three months of 2018, you've responded to hundreds of enquiries, provided hundreds of people with information and training, and created more than 60 self-help resources.

As you know, Justice Connect is a special organisation. We reach out to people who are doing it tough, including people facing homelessness and victims of elder abuse.

We assist people who are working but have no way of affording legal help.

We 'help the helpers', empowering Australia's community groups by giving them skills and tools so they can focus on supporting people in need, and building stronger communities.

Pro bono lawyers have provided holistic legal representation, given advice and appeared in court.

Our services are in demand and your support has enabled us to assist more people in innovative ways.

Together, we help people deal with

problems that impact their housing, family relationships and health.

We know from our monitoring and evaluation work that your support gives people a real chance at reducing the associated stress of these problems and increases family cohesion, resilience and stability.

We have similar evidence for our work with community groups. Organisations report increased ability to manage organisational risks and responsibilities, and improved ability to deliver services because of your support.

We believe that the deep connection between Justice Connect and our member firms like Nicholes Family Lawyers are what make us unique. Our capacity to work with pro bono lawyers gives us the ability to reach thousands, and provide information that helps tens, even hundreds of thousands more.

And it's due to the contributions of firms like Nicholes Family Lawyers.

Thank you from the team at Justice Connect.



50,000+
pro bono
hours



The difference that a lawyer makes

In 2017, we continued our 25-year history of engaging lawyers to use the law to solve social problems.

So far this year, you delivered tens of thousands of pro bono hours, providing advice and assistance to individuals and community groups by working with Justice Connect through our specialist programs. These referrals included:

- 1148 instances of unbundled advice provided to self-represented litigants through the Self Representation Service
- 56 referrals of vulnerable older people through our Seniors Law Health Justice Partnership model
- 388 new files opened by Homeless Law to assist people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- 692 referrals from our Public Interest Law program
- 146 referrals of community organisations by Not-for-Profit Law for ongoing, help with more complex legal issues.

2017 also saw the beginning of our newest legal service, the Domestic Building Legal Service which provides advice to Victorian homeowners involved in disputes with their builders.

Directly providing legal help is how we ensure that Justice Connect remains available those that we help in times of greatest vulnerability.

Pro bono lawyers tell us that working directly with clients can be among the most fulfilling work they do, and it can have a profound effect on the lives of the people we help.

As we engage digital tools to reach more people locked out from the legal system, we hope to be able to dedicate more pro bono resources to help people and organisations left behind by the legal system.

Empowering people and communities

Pro bono contributions are core to our ability to empower people and organisations to use the law to tackle their real-life problems.

Legal empowerment is central to our goal of increasing the reach and scale of our impact. We give people and community groups the tools they need to help them navigate the legal system themselves. These tools include fact sheets, precedents, videos, and targeted training to skill up people and organisations.

In 2017, for example, Not-for-Profit Law made 173 referrals to our member firms to create or update legal information resources that are hosted at nfplaw.org.au, or conduct training of community groups. The Not-for-profit Law Information Hub, to which our member firms have made an extraordinary contribution over the last five years, was a finalist in the 2017 Global PILnet Local Impact Award.

Increasingly, we know that digital tools have the potential to revolutionise the way that we work, and the efficiency of pro bono. Building tailored digital tools to provide information in a targeted and interactive way can take our legal empowerment work to a new level.

Our pro bono network is key to enabling us to build these tools. In 2017 Not-for-Profit Law launched a [Tax Concessions Guide web application](#), which helps guide not-for-profit organisations through assessing if they are eligible, or remain eligible for income tax exemption.

Combining pro bono legal expertise with our strength in digital service design, we were able to deliver a unique, sophisticated self-help resource to benefit thousands of not-for-profit organisations.

One of the pro bono lawyers who worked on developing the Tax App said:

"I loved working on this app. It was really challenging to translate a complex area of law into a form that was logical, and could be readily understood and applied by not-for-profit organisations. It certainly forced me to think very differently.

"But more importantly, it was a fantastic project because I believe that it will save not-for-profit organisations time, confusion and money that is better directed to serve their purposes. I really hope that lots of organisations can benefit from using the app."

Justice Connect is committed to taking what we and our pro bono partners have learned developing tools for not-for-profit organisations, and applying this to developing resources for our individual clients.



Challenging and changing unjust laws and systems

Justice Connect has always taken an evidence-based approach to advocacy.

The work of pro bono firms and lawyers provides expertise and evidence which enable us to identify and tackle major justice issues.

In December 2017, we released *A Just Life*, which is a roadmap for Justice Connect's approach to advocating for what we believe will build fairer, safer and healthier communities.

It contains our top 15 priorities for what we should be valuing and investing in to bring about change. It forms the basis of our advocacy work.

While we ensure that pro bono lawyers' talents are directed towards changing laws that harm the people we help, we also work to change systems which may limit the ability of firms to engage in pro bono work. Specifically, this includes advocating for:

- adequate funding of the community legal sector and other areas where helpseekers require pro bono support
- investment in digital tools that will facilitate pro bono more efficiently
- setting consistent aspirational targets and pro bono panel arrangements across Australia.

Our advocacy work is supported by pro bono contributions, from the delivery of advice that allows us to spot issues in the first place, through to research and support of the campaigns for change that we run.

Some recent wins in advocacy include:

- Building of a powerful coalition of peak sector and professional groups to run a concerted campaign to #fixfundraising, which built nationwide support to fix our fundraising law.
- Our campaign against Melbourne City Council's proposed laws, which would have effectively criminalised homelessness, and our proposal for an alternative framework.
- Involvement in a coalition advocating for changes to the requirement for transgender young people to get Family Court approval to access cross-gender hormone treatment, a requirement that was largely removed by the Full Court decision in *Re Kelvin* in late 2017.



Kelly's story

When Kelly saw an ad in the paper for a position as a lollypop lady, she knew it was perfect for her. Sure enough, it was a job she loved—and the kids loved her back. Every year she received handmade cards and boxes of chocolate from parents and students.

Then, in October 2017, Kelly's lung collapsed. She rushed to the local hospital where she was admitted and treated. The doctor told Kelly not to go back to work immediately, and gave her a medical certificate. Kelly spent the next few days at home recovering.

Three weeks before Christmas, Kelly received a text from her employer asking her to come in for a meeting. No one told her why, and no one suggested bringing a support person.

Unknown to Kelly, her medical certificate had been processed incorrectly. She had been overpaid by three days. When she arrived at the office, she was accused of stealing wages and abandoning shifts. Kelly tried to explain the mistake, but no one would believe her.

She was told that she would no longer receive any shifts.

Kelly was devastated by the loss of her job. She knew that her employer hadn't treated her right, so she asked the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service for help.

VALS suggested that Kelly approach Justice Connect, who were able to connect her with lawyers working on a pro bono basis.

"They were always there with me, every step of the way," said Kelly. The lawyers listened to Kelly and helped her build a strong case. Along with having her concerns taken seriously, Kelly was able to find a resolution with her employer.

Kelly's distress was rightfully acknowledged and compensated. With pro bono legal support, she was able to fight for a fairer and better outcome.

Co-designing a better way of working together

Justice Connect continues to develop technological tools to improve the way in which people and organisations can access legal help.

Pro bono firms are central to the way in which we are designing digital tools, and have provided essential insights that have guided and shaped our work.

In 2017, member firms participated in several co-design sessions with our Digital Innovation Team. The aims of these sessions ranged from assessing the technology capability and appetite amongst our pro bono network, to gaining a better understanding of the different processes involved at firms when taking on pro bono matters.

We also worked with firms to describe the range of legal matters that Justice Connect may offer to firms and develop taxonomies.

This collaboration forms part of the Legal Help Gateway Project (Gateway) and will enable us to work with our pro bono partners to help more people and organisations in need. Some key features of the Gateway include:

- automated intake and triage of client inquiries, enabling us to help more people and organisations in need
- sophisticated case and workflow management, improving internal efficiencies in the way Justice Connect receives and places requests
- a pro bono portal, improving the way we work with member firms.

In addition to the other elements of the Gateway, firms have indicated strong support for our pro bono portal.

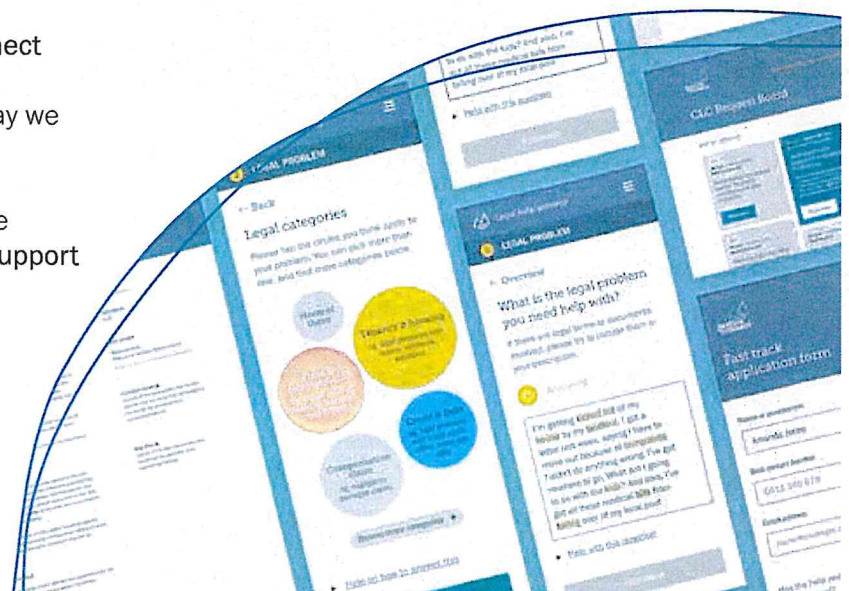
The research we conducted in 2017 provided rich information and insights that have informed the development of this work and strengthened our understanding of how we can better interact with our member firms. The portal will provide a single point in which to:

- communicate with Justice Connect about pro bono capacity and preferences
- view work that is on foot with Justice Connect
- browse and express interest in available pro bono opportunities.

Justice Connect will continue to directly approach firms with matters that match their preferences, however the portal will empower firms to seek work themselves when they have capacity to take on more pro bono.

In 2018, we have started the year focussed on building our online intake tool and new case management system.

We are very pleased to have recently begun work on the pro bono portal, and you will hear more from us shortly about the next steps involved in bringing the portal to life.





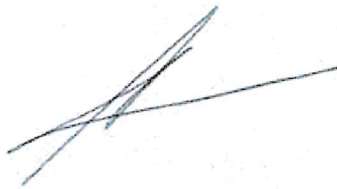
"The way I've thought of my whole situation is like Justice Connect coming in with big open wings. You feel like you're down and then someone comes in scoops you up to protect you."

This letter encloses your renewal of your membership to Justice Connect. As in previous years, there is no change to the cost of membership other than a CPI-related increase. Your membership fee is based on the number of partners that you have in Melbourne and Sydney.

The enclosed invoice is based on the number of partners when you renewed your membership last year. If your partner numbers have changed and you need an amended invoice, or you have any other questions, please contact Sophie Gordon-Clark, Chief Operating Officer on (03) 8363 4407 or sophie.gordon-clark@justiceconnect.org.au.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to partnering with Justice Connect. We very much look forward to working with you again in FY18/19.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping diagonal strokes.

Chris Povey
CEO



**justice
connect**

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