Welcome to the 2007 Justice Awards

The Law and Justice Foundation’s annual Justice Awards recognise the contributions of individuals and organisations to improving access to justice in NSW, particularly for socially and economically disadvantaged people.

The Awards presentation is a unique opportunity for the Foundation to highlight the achievements of so many, and for our guests to celebrate and congratulate them.
Your host for this evening is:
The Hon Paul Stein QC AM
Chair, Board of Governors
Law and Justice
Foundation of NSW

Justice Paul Stein was appointed as Chair of the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales in 2005. He has been appointed by the NSW Minister for the Environment and Climate Change to review the Borders River Gwydir Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and has recently completed a report of the Inquiry which reviewed the NSW Occupational Health and Safety Act.

He has been President of the Intellectually Handicapped Persons Review Tribunal, Chair of the Juvenile Offenders Lease Review Committee, of the Council of the Community Justice Centres (1987 - 1993) and the National Consumer Affairs Advisory Council (1987 – 1989).

He is a member of the Advisory Board of the Australian Centre for Environmental Law (ACEL) of the UNE Commission on Environmental Law (CEIL) and has participated in the training of judicial officers in Australia and the South-East Asia/Pacific region.

The 2007 Law and Justice Address:
The Hon Sir Gerard Brennan AC KBE

He was admitted to the Queensland Bar in 1951, appointed QC in Queensland in 1965 and subsequently in New South Wales, Northern Territory, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. He was appointed as a Judge of the Industrial Court of Australia and President of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Administration Review Council in 1976, and as a foundation Judge of the Federal Court in 1977.

He was created a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1981 and appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1988.

He is a former Chancellor of the University of Technology, Sydney and has been awarded Honorary Degrees by Trinity College Dublin, University of Queensland, Central Queensland University, Australian National University, Griffith University, Melbourne University, University of New South Wales and University of Technology, Sydney.

He is currently a Non-Permanent Judge of the Court of Final Appeal of Hong Kong.

And MC this evening is:
Ms Mary Kostakidas
Mary Kostakidas has been a journalist and broadcaster for many years (ABC and SBS), an editor at the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, a tutor at Sydney University, a research officer for the departments of Health and Youth and Community Services, and a court interpreter.

Mary has moderated panel discussions on a range of issues for various Government and non-government agencies and most recently moderated a panel discussion at the largest international television conference (Banff, Canada) on Globalisation in Broadcasting.

She was a member of the Drug and Alcohol Council, a councillor on the Constitutional Centenary Foundation, and appointed by the Prime Minister to the Republic Advisory Committee.

She has also served on the Order of Australia Honours Committee, the Sydney Olympic Cultural Organising Committee (SOCOG) and was a member of the Breast Cancer Council Advisory Committee. She has also served on the Order of Australia Honours Committee, the Sydney Olympic Cultural Organising Committee (SOCOG) and was a member of the Breast Cancer Council Advisory Committee. In 1997 Mary was an inaugural appointee to the Advertising Standards Board.

She is also a founding member of the James Joyce Foundation.

2007 LIAC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS
Sponsored by the Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC)
LIAC is a state-wide service providing free community access to legal information.

LIAC is an initiative of the State Library of NSW and the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW jointly funded by the Public Purpose Fund and the library. Based in the State Library, LIAC operates through the public library network across NSW.

The Centre of Excellence Awards recognise innovative and creative projects which increase community awareness of, and access to, the LIAC service.

www.sl.nsw.gov.au
Presented by: Ms Regina Sutton, State Librarian of NSW

The winners of the 2007 LIAC Centre of Excellence Aware are:
Maitland City Library

for its ‘Opening the doors to law’ project which created a number of activities aimed at engaging all members of the community to increase their understanding of aspects of the law. These included free seminars ‘Older People and the law’, ‘Neighbours, Householders and the Law’, ‘Buying and selling your home’, a debate for local high schools on issues relating to P-plate drivers, a dramatic presentation for infants and primary schools attended by over 1200 local school students, and a Law Week lunch on Women and the Law.

Richmond-Upper Clarence Regional Library

for extending its successful Law@your library education initiative throughout the region, targeting local government staff in ten local councils. The library thus promoted the LIAC service to council staff and two legal firms, including: Richmond Valley Council, Lismore City Council, Ballina Shire Council, Byron Shire Council, Tweed Shire Council, Richmond River County Council, Kyogle Council, Clarence Valley Council, State Wide Mutual and Jardine Lloyd Thompson Pty Ltd.
Ms Adele Bentham
Nominated by North and North West Community Legal Service
Adèle has been a voluntary Administrative Assistant with the Community Legal Service for 18 months. Her work fills a void caused by a lack of funding. She takes calls, makes appointments for clients, enters client data, and researches legal topics for the solicitors or for clients. Adèle’s caring nature puts distressed clients at ease while her efficiency and dedication eases the workload of other staff at the legal service.

Ms Margaret Jones
Nominated by Redfern Legal Centre
Margaret stands out from the Centre’s volunteers— not just for her passion and commitment to social justice, but because, at age 81, of different life experiences from her younger law student colleagues. A working class child of the Great Depression, she entered the workforce at 15, working until retirement in the late 1980s; she then became a mature-age student, graduating with a Degree in Humanities from Macquarie University in 2003. She became a Legal Assistant volunteer in 2004 (currently working two days a week) and also volunteers with the Inner Sydney Domestic Violence Action Group.

Ms Suse Mordaunt
Nominated by Kingsford Legal Centre
Sue began as a volunteer solicitor in 1985, making this her 22nd year with Kingsford! While working in a very busy private legal practice, she rarely misses her advice shift, where her experience and knowledge of family law is greatly appreciated by centre clients, and also by students participating in the clinical legal education program. In addition to her Centre efforts, Sue prioritises her work so she can, in her own words, “give something back to society” by providing pro bono advice and legal assistance to clients in a private capacity.

Ms Linda Wright
Nominated by Illawarra Legal Centre
Linda was on the first roster of volunteer solicitors when the Centre began in 1985. For the past eighteen years she has also volunteered on the Centre’s management committee, including three years as Chair, and thirteen as Deputy Chair. She has been instrumental in shaping the structure of the Centre, developing strong management and genuine participation by all members of the Centre and staff. Linda is also involved in the Generalist Solicitor’s Sub-Committee monitoring casework and law reform trends, and is a mentor for staff solicitors.

Ms Frances Tse
Nominated by the Environmental Defender’s Office
Frances is a full-time volunteer Legal Intern with the Environmental Defender’s Office, a community legal centre specializing in protecting the environment through the law. Frances has worked on a range of cases and research projects, including observing a court hearing about a pollution incident and reporting back the outcome to concerned residents; preparing briefs for counsel; preparing Legal Aid applications and drafting and researching advices for clients.

The nominees for the 2007 Combined Community Legal Centres Group Award are:

Ms Anne Cregan
Anne has been the National Pro-Bono Coordinator at Blake Dawson Waldron since 1999, and became a partner there this year. Anne has taken on 11 referrals from the Pro Bono Scheme since 2000, including civil and administrative law, AVOs, discrimination, and will and estates cases. She has also taken on matters traditionally ‘outside’ the scheme’s guidelines including one which related to local council by-laws and animals.

Mr Nicholas Patrick
Nicholas is the Pro Bono Director at DLA Phillips Fox, where he wrote and implemented the firm’s pro bono policy. He is Chair of the Board of Redfern Community Legal Centre, NSW Convener of Australian Lawyers for Human Rights and helped establish Australia’s first pro bono Animal Law Service (PALS). He has accepted several matters from the scheme and writes regularly for The Law Journal on pro bono issues.

The nominees for the 2007 Law Society President’s Award are:

Ms Bernadette Alias
Bernadette is a sole practitioner who became a lawyer in 1996 after an early retirement from a career as a school teacher. She has been a member of the Pro Bono scheme since 2003 taking on matters which included family, child care and protection, criminal and immigration. Her ability to speak French, Spanish, Italian and Indonesian has greatly assisted her ability with refugee case and clients from CALD backgrounds.

Presented by: Mr Joe Catanzariti

Presented by: Ms Michelle Jones, Chair, CCLCG NSW
also advocates with employers issues facing transsexuals. She has met with members of the Legislative Council to discuss the government from Centrelink to legislation, anti-discrimination legislation. Gina provides assistance, advice, information and advocacy for an extremely marginalised group - intersexuals and transsexuals.

Ms Brenda McKinnon
Nominated by Ms Karen Bowley, Upper Murray Community Legal Service
Brenda was the volunteer manager of the Albury-Wodonga Community Information Referral Centre for nine years prior to its closure earlier this year. She was involved in emergency relief, advocating for clients to agencies including welfare organisations and financial counsellors. She established the Centre's Community Legal Aid Assistance Scheme in 2002 to assist disadvantaged clients to complete legal aid forms in both NSW and Victorian jurisdictions, find lawyers, appeal decisions, make court appointments and attend court with clients. She is also a JP and has trained as an Independent Third Person assisting young people in police interviews.

Ms Wendy Neill
Nominated by Ms Lisa Woodgate, Marsdenville Community Legal Centre
Wendy is a graphic and web designer who has been volunteering at the Centre for two years. She completed a number of design projects i.e. Annual report, leaflets, before embarking in 2006 on developing an interactive web site to help the Centre to deliver information and advice to a growing catchment area. It has been designed with high levels of accessibility for the high percentage of clients from CALD backgrounds, vision impaired users, and younger people needing information about issues including debt and traffic offences. The site will reduce some demands on lawyers’ time by answering common questions online, allowing for immediate updating of information and advice when necessary and provide far wider access to the Centre’s resources.

Ms Ngareta Rossell
Nominated by Mr Stephen Blanks, NSW Council for Civil Liberties
Ngareta is an experienced journalist and advocate for asylum seekers who has used her journalistic skills to raise awareness of conditions in detention centres, and to highlight individual cases of detainees at risk of deportation to countries of origin where they would face renewed persecution, even death. Her campaigning brought to public attention the plight of children in detention; she remains active in highlighting the number of children in ‘community detention’ and their continued separation from their families. She is also documenting the history of detention in Australia, creating a valuable archive to bear witness to the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

Volunteers of Mission Australia Court Support Service (MACSS)
Nominated by Ms Pauline Nunn, Mission Australia
The MACSS began in 2000 and now has a team of 15 volunteers providing practical and emotional support for victims of crime attending Local, District, Supreme and Coroners’ Courts in the greater Sydney metropolitan area. Volunteers are trained to prepare victims for court, providing information about victims’ rights, court orientation and preparation, helping them understand legal terminology and making referrals to counselling and compensation. In 2006 MACSS supported 545 victims, providing over 2860 hours of support. The service expanded to include a permanent roster of volunteers at Burwood Local Court four days per week supporting many who are socially and economically disadvantaged and from CALD backgrounds.
2007 PRO BONO PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Sponsored by the National Pro Bono Resource Centre

This Award is presented to private law firms, community organisations and/or community legal centres in NSW which have developed an outstanding pro bono legal assistance relationship, resulting in improved access to justice for disadvantaged people in the community.

The National Pro Bono Resource Centre is an Australian independent, non-profit organisation that encourages pro bono legal services, supports lawyers and law firms to make it easier for them to provide high quality pro bono legal services and works with the profession and the community sector to match services with the clients and groups most in need of assistance.

www.nationalprobono.org.au

Presented by Mr John Carker, Director, National Pro Bono Resource Centre

The nominees for the 2007 Pro Bono Partnership Award are:

**Blinky Bill Portland Child Care Centre and Barry F Cosier & Associates**

The Child Care Centre is a not-for-profit community amenity built up over 15 years by local parents using a lot of community fundraising. A dispute arose with the local Council over ownership of the land it sits on, ultimately threatening its ability and legal right to continue to operate in situ. Solicitor Sonya Teerman provided pro bono services to the Centre, searching title deeds and relevant legislation, drafting the Centre, negotiating with local trustees for their centre and the land, following re-zoning by the NSW Parliament as a child care centre on crown land.

**Central West Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CWSLD) Program and Blake Dawson Waldron**

This CLSD is made up of legal and community service providers from a diverse and disadvantaged area which includes Broken Hill, Dubbo, Cobar and Walgett. Blake Dawson Waldron (BDW) has provided diverse and innovative pro bono services to partners, including referrals (provision of information, advice and representation), Community Legal Education (CLE) initiatives and assisting organisations with their own human resources/legal issues. Innovations include: writing Wills for Aboriginal people, running victims’ compensation matters to assist Women’s Legal Services with Aboriginal women, involving local practitioners in CLE on employment and discrimination, and providing transcription services to the local CLC.


The Homeless Persons’ Legal Service (HPLS) was established by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), and the Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH), and links private lawyers with community welfare organisations and their clients. A legal needs analysis and feasibility study highlighted the fact that addressing legal problems may reduce homelessness for people at risk of becoming homeless, and may break the cycle of homelessness for those already without secure housing. Seven PILCH member law firms, through volunteer lawyers, provide legal services on a pro bono basis at the premises of five welfare agencies at a fixed time each week. At least two lawyers will attend at each welfare agency (i.e. 10 lawyers over five welfare agencies) weekly, and are drawn from a pool of approximately 80 volunteers from the participating firms. HPLS is managed by a full-time co-ordinator and overseen by a reference group, which includes representatives of the homeless community and the community legal sector.

**Homicide Victim’s Support Group and Henry Davis York**

These organisations have a unique partnership providing pro bono legal services to clients of the Group - families and friends affected by homicide. Added to the emotional distress accompanying a homicide, a surprising number of legal issues arise for families and friends of the victims. The partnership provides clients with access to pro bono legal services, particularly for those participating in coronial inquests, as well as assisting with a broader range of legal issues including wills, estate and property issues through traditional referral mechanisms as they may have worked and named an income prior to onset.

**Kingsford Legal Centre and Freehills**

For over 15 years Freehills has provided KLC with a seconded solicitor, on 6 monthly rotations. The seconded solicitor participates in all areas of KLC service including advice and casework, community legal education, law reform and policy work as well as educating and mentoring the solicitors of the future. The appointment gives the Centre an additional ‘staff member’, helping to increase community access to legal rights, and providing added expertise in specific areas of law. Solicitors have also developed and delivered many community legal education programs. One of the most popular – especially with older members of the community – is on Powers of Attorney and Guardianship.

**Lou’s Place and Blake Dawson Waldron**

Lou’s Place opened in 1999 as a drop-in centre to provide a supportive place for women in crisis in Kings Cross. Blake Dawson Waldron has been providing a weekly outreach service since then to meet the legal needs of clients, working with staff and volunteers in an holistic approach which includes medical, counseling and crisis case management and therapeutic activities. The relationship also exists at other levels including providing Christmas lunch, financial support, donations of clothing and furniture, training staff on legal issues, community legal education to the clients, and assisting in the delivery of funding and volunteers to enable Lou’s Place to open on Saturdays.

**Mission Australia (Newcastle) and Sparke Helmore**

Mission Australia’s Northern NSW Divisional office and Sparke Helmore Lawyers’ Newcastle
The nominees for the 2007 Aboriginal Justice Award are:

Ms Neva Collings
Nominated by Mr Andrew Burke, Environmental Defender’s Office
The first-ever Aboriginal Liaison Officer for the Environmental Defender’s Office, Neva has written a ground-breaking Guide to Environmental Law for Aboriginal People in NSW. This plain-language workbook brings together a wide range of information, from access to land for cultural purposes to native title and managing Aboriginal-owned land. Neva also works part-time for the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and recently presented a report for the United Nations Environmental Program Convention of Biodiversity Secretariat on ‘Threats to Traditional Knowledge in the Pacific Region’. She is on the editorial board of the Indigenous Law Bulletin, has written policy papers for ATSIC, HRDC and the NSW Attorney-General’s Department and been the Coordinator of the Indigenous Law Centre at UNSW.

Ms Terri Janke
Nominated by Ms Robyn Ayres, Arts Law Centre of Australia
Terri is the Solicitor Director of Terri Janke & Company Pty Ltd which she established in 2000, representing Indigenous artists, cultural organisations, writers, musicians, filmmakers, and others across many fields of the intellectual property arena. She is a prolific author and public speaker on issues relating to Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP); her work includes Our Culture: Our Future: A Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights, the Australia Council’s Indigenous cultural protocols guide and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)’s Minding Culture, a set of 8 case studies of Indigenous Australians using intellectual property to protect traditional cultural expressions.

Mr Roger Knox
Nominated by Ms Donna Meehan, Department of Community Services
Roger is known as the Black Elvis from Tamworth or the King of Koori Country. A Gamilaroi man, he began his career as a gospel singer, and his relationship with his family, the law, and surviving two horrific plane crashes in one day are the inspiration behind his songs. Since the 1980s he has been a regular volunteer visitor to NSW prisons and youth offenders’ centres, using music and story telling to work with Indigenous inmates to break cycles of depression and offending. He has been involved in youth suicide prevention programs in Tamella-Moore, and helps Indigenous youth appearing at Tamworth Local Court.

Mr Mark Spinks
Nominated by Mr Murray Hipwell, Department of Community Services
Mark promotes employment opportunity for Indigenous people, recognising its importance in helping break cycles of social exclusion, poverty, poor housing, and poor health, and contact with the criminal justice system. He is a Development Officer at Centrelink Redfern, and in his own time works with many community groups. These include the Babana Men’s Group in Redfern where he links members with vocational education training and employment opportunities to help prevent contact and recidivism with the criminal justice system. He is the founder of New Employment Opportunity Network (NEON), developing employment opportunities for disadvantaged Indigenous people with low literacy. People in the community contact and rely on Mark not just for advice about work and education – but a whole range of issues including housing, tenancy, and alcohol and drug rehabilitation.

Ms Nancy Wallke
Nominated by Ms Angela Pollard, Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre
Nancy has thirty years experience working for the healing and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities. She is currently the co-coordinator of the Centre’s Mimring Ngu Wanjran Project undertaking social justice work for Aboriginal women and children experiencing family violence. She runs innovative workshops including healing circles, craft, photography, and uses different media including video, television advertising and “Strength Cards”, to increase knowledge and understanding of legal remedies by and for Indigenous women. Nancy is a mentor for local Indigenous workers, is involved in the National Indigenous Women’s Legal Services Network and chair of the CLCIC Aboriginal Advisory Group.
The nominees for the 2007 Justice Medal are:

Ms Jenny Bargen
Nominated by Mr James McDougall, National Children’s and Youth Law Centre
Jenny is a long-term advocate of children’s legal rights who was involved in the Kids on Justice Report (1990) and in government consultations leading to the Young Offenders Act NSW (1997). As the Director, Youth Justice Conferencing, Department of Juvenile Justice NSW she has established a state-wide youth justice conferencing program which has successful partnerships with the police, courts and community and focused on including Indigenous youth and community. She has published, and contributed to, papers and reports on young people and criminal law and trained many organisations in community-based responses to youth offending.

Ms Robyn Cotterell-Jones
Nominated by Mrs Taryn Stubbs, Victims Of Crime Assistance League (VOCAL)
Robyn has been a volunteer for VOCAL. VOCAL is a not-for-profit organisation based in Newcastle, which provides a support service for people who have suffered from violent crime and similar tragedy. In 1998 she secured government funding to establish the Victim Support Unit of VOCAL, of which she is now Executive Director. This service assists victims at all hours of the day and night, providing support, care and advocacy, skills which Robyn has brought to this role from her previous experience caring for victims of war.

Ms Joy Connor
Nominated by Mr David White, Tenants Union of NSW
Surely is an experienced advocate for community housing with an emphasis on issues relating to the legal rights of residents of residential parks. As a co-ordinator for the Parks and Village Service (PAVS) she managed training, community education and research activities, facilitating policy development in relation to residential parks. She has also written the discussion paper Home Among the Gum Trees: Australian Residential Parks. As a community advocate for people living in residential parks in New South Wales, helped start a campaign involving residents, tenancy workers and housing researchers and policy makers to get the issues of park residents recognised and appropriate policies developed to resolve their problems.

Dr Mary Crock
Nominated by Mr Paul Power, Refugee Council of Australia
Mary is currently a legal academic at Sydney University, where her long-term advocacy of and activism for refugee issues is reflected in her work on protection of child asylum seekers. She has been a campaigner for changes to immigration and refugee law from the early 1980s, when she helped establish and run the Melbourne Refugee and Immigration Law Centre, to her recent work with both the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. She has published on specific aspects of migration law and is also engaged in a project examining how migrants have shaped public law in Australia.

Ms Faye Drueett
Nominated by Mr Mathew Keeley, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care
Faye is a long-term advocate for disability rights and is currently Vice-President of People with Disability Australia (PWDA). She has been a disability campaigner in federal and state governments, in the non-government sector, in service provision, policy development, and in the management and administration of legislation. Faye became widely known for the case of Drueett v State of NSW (1994).

Faye presented for jury duty following a summons but found the court, the jury box and jury room inaccessible to wheelchair users. A court official said as “she was an invalid she did not have to worry about jury duty.” She was compensated by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission for discrimination by the NSW Courts and all court buildings are subsequently being made accessible to people with disability.

Ms Tania Evers
Nominated by Ms Lee-May Saw, Women Lawyers Association of NSW
During her well-established legal career as solicitor and barrister, Tania has been an active representative of people with a mental illness and intellectual disability. Her work as a lawyer and a community advocate has substantially benefited her clients, in particular through its influence in educating senior and junior lawyers and other people working within the legal system, and her advocacy for policy and law reform to make the legal system more equitable and accessible for people with a mental illness or intellectual disability. She has also had positions on the executive committees and management boards of organisations such as the Lawyers Reform Association, Globe House, the Intellectual Disability Rights Service, and the Defence Lawyers Association.

Mr Danny Gilbert AM
Nominated by Mr Mathew Keeley, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care
Danny is an experienced commercial lawyer who in 1988 co-founded Gilbert + Tobin, one of Australia’s most successful law firms. He has led the firm’s pro bono practice with its emphasis on Indigenous issues, undertaking work regarding The Block in Redfern, for Stolen Generations, and for business development projects through the Indigenous Enterprise Partnership in Cape York as well as arts organisations including the Bangarra Dance Theatre. Since the late 1970s he has been a tireless contributor to improving access to justice as a volunteer and executive member at organisations including Marrickville Legal Centre, the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. In 2005, Danny was honoured with the Order of Australia (AM) for his services to the law and the community, particularly Australia’s Indigenous peoples.

Mr Atef Hamie
Nominated by Ms Violet Roumeliotis, Canterbury Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre
Atef is a long-term advocate for the rights of refugee and humanitarian groups and helps them access a range
of services and programs to assist their integration into Australian society. He deals with Arabic-speaking communities ‘mainly and with some of the emerging communities from African nations. Many people he assists have been imprisoned, tortured and suffered great hardship and trauma on their path to Australia from places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Ghana, Congo, Somalia and Burma. He accompanies people to court, to appointments with their solicitors, to meetings with probation and parole and juvenile justice officers, and attends with them at youth conferences and meetings.

Ms Beverley Lazarou
Nominated by: Ms Louise Blazewska, Legal Aid NSW
Bev has been the Coordinator of the Southern Women’s Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme (Southern Women’s DVCAS) since its inception in 1996. In that time, she has overseen the provision of over 15,000 services to women and children experiencing domestic violence in the third busiest Local Court in NSW (Sutherland). She has established and consistently maintained best practice in the delivery of court assistance services to women and children experiencing domestic violence, identifying new ways to improve the Scheme’s services. She fought to establish a children’s worker position and was instrumental in developing a proposal for a police civilian crisis intervention project to provide support at the ‘key’ time of a domestic violence incident.

Mr Michael Raper
Nominated by: Ms Deborah Comins
Michael is a passionate yet balanced community worker who outputs sound evidence to advocate for reductions in levels of poverty, inequality and hardship. As Director since 1996 of the NSW Welfare Rights Centre, he leads a community legal centre specialising in Social Security and Family Tax Benefit law, helping the most disadvantaged people in Australia access their rights and entitlements. He is the editor of the Independent Social Security Handbook, a comprehensive plain language guide to social security entitlements and legislation. His high-profile Presidency of the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) from 1997 to 2001 was effective in spotlighting issues including the inequities of ‘breaching’ policies applied to social security recipients, and the effects of taxation changes on people on low incomes. Michael is a strategic thinker, acknowledged for his ability to identify and deliver solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

Mr Steve Snellgrove
Nominated by Ms Louise Blazewska, Legal Aid NSW
Steve has been Manager of the Unsmoke and Districts National Financial Counselling Service for 15 years, providing information, assistance and advocacy and on behalf of people facing debt and debt problems, financial hardship, and particularly those who have urgent need for intervention. His catchment covers a vast area where he has a reputation as an exceptionally professional, knowledgeable and passionate advocate, committed to alleviating the substantial burdens and unfairness facing disadvantaged people in the areas of financial hardship and credit and debt.

Ms Faye Westwood
Nominated by Mr Richard Bradung, Wesley Community Legal Service
An experienced criminal solicitor, Faye joined the Wesley Community Legal Service in 2005, part of Wesley Mission’s Gambling Counseling Service. She assists people with gambling addiction who are charged with gambling-related crimes including larceny, embezzlement, social security fraud, obtaining benefit by deception and making and using false instrument. She recently acted in NSW’s largest gambling fraud matter, successfully arguing for judgment to consider the significance of severe pathological gambling as a psychiatric disorder affecting the gambler’s awareness of the consequences of his actions.
Blake Dawson Waldron

Blake Dawson Waldron is one of Australia’s leading international law firms. In line with its professional responsibility as lawyers and a desire to give something back to the community, the firm has a significant commitment to pro bono work, assisting individuals and organisations through in-house work, secondments and making available the resources of the firm. The pro bono program assists people who are disadvantaged and marginalised and the organisations which assist them and in matters in the wide public interest. The program focuses on legal issues for indigenous people, people with a mental illness or intellectual disability, and in NSW, western Sydney central and far western NSW.

www.bdw.com.au

Chalk & Fitzgerald

Chalk & Fitzgerald Lawyers is a Sydney-based law firm which specialises in administrative (government) law, environmental and planning law and native title law. The partners and solicitors of Chalk & Fitzgerald have many years experience in providing legal services to Aboriginal communities and organisations in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia particularly in relation to environmental, land and resource management and litigation.

Clayton Utz

Clayton Utz recognises that providing pro bono help to people and organisations who cannot afford legal assistance is the inherent professional responsibility of every lawyer. All Clayton Utz lawyers, regardless of their seniority or area of law, are expected to conduct pro bono work as an everyday part of their legal practice. We assist more than 400 pro bono clients each year, most of them referred to us by a community legal organisation. www.claytonutz.com

Freehills

Freehills’ pro bono program provides legal services for matters that are in the public interest. It accepts transactional and litigious matters, offers pro bono solicitor secondments to community legal centres, presents legal workshops and supports the work of the Public Interest Law Clearinghouse. For over a decade Freehills has operated Sydney’s inner-city Shopfront Youth Legal Centre, with Mission Australia and the Salvation Army, offering legal services to homeless people aged 25 and under. Freehills has also established a Pro Bono Business Law Clinic for participants in Mission Australia’s employment program, the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme. www.freehills.com

Gilbert + Tobin

Gilbert + Tobin’s pro bono work is an important part of the legal profession’s contribution to the betterment of our community. We share a responsibility to ensure that our legal system is just and equitable, and that everyone in our society has access to legal representation and advice. Law firms are in the privileged position of having the resources to assist people who cannot afford legal services. We are committed to working with all lawyers to build a successful and sustainable pro bono culture throughout Australia that improves access to our legal system. www.gtlaw.com.au

Minter Ellison

Minter Ellison has a long-standing commitment to pro bono legal services — the cornerstone of our Community Investment program. We are proud of our leadership role in establishing the Homeless Persons Legal Service in partnership with the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. Our staff derives enormous satisfaction from our weekly legal clinics at Claymore and Macquarie Fields in Sydney’s outer south-west. Our aim is to target our assistance to communities in greatest need — with a focus on breaking the cycles of homelessness and disadvantage. www.minterellison.com

Seven Wentworth

Seven Wentworth was established as barristers’ chambers in 1957 in the Wentworth Chambers building in Phillip Street, Sydney. Its members have consistently been the leaders of the Australian Bar, and it is one of the most eminent sets of barristers’ chambers with a history of judicial appointments second to none in Australia. The members of Seven Wentworth are sole practitioners carrying out separate practices and appear in courts at all levels, and in international tribunals and arbitrations.