

5 November 2021

Report corrects perception of lawyers

Australia's legal profession prides itself on providing a voice for people in need, but it has rarely spoken up on its own behalf. A new report released today articulates the contribution lawyers make to the community and addresses misconceptions regarding the profession.

"Every day I speak with lawyers who are making a real difference in the lives of Australians without expecting any recognition," Law Council of Australia President, Dr Jacoba Brasch QC stated.

"As a profession we have been very reticent to promote the contribution we make and I think the result is that many people either have a limited understanding of all that my colleagues do on behalf of clients and the community, or actually believe some of the false stereotyping we are subjected to."

As the peak body for the Australian legal profession, the Law Council appreciates the importance of identifying and quantifying this contribution to ensure it is well understood within the broader community.

This is far from the first time this need has been identified. Back in a speech delivered in 2007, then-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of NSW, the Hon James Spigelman AC QC highlighted the positive social, economic and political contribution made by the legal profession and its failure to communicate the significance of this contribution with the broader community.

"Even if we just look at the direct employment and economic benefits provided by the legal profession, it is immense," Dr Brasch explained. "Over 100,000 Australians are employed within the legal sector and the total market size of the legal services sector is estimated to be approximately \$23 billion.

"This stimulates our economy and assists local communities through payment of taxes and rates; commercial leases and investment; and lawyers', paralegals' and administrative staff salaries help support families, pay mortgages or rent, and buy goods and services from other Australian businesses.

"But this is just the tip of the iceberg. The democracy, legal protections and economic foundations that make us the 'lucky country' would not exist without the legal profession.

"Through its integral role in the administration of justice, the legal profession is vital to the health of Australian society.

"Lawyers offer a voice and tools to all members of our community seeking justice. Thanks to the strength of Australia's pro bono and legal assistance sectors and our specialist not-for-profit and charity lawyers, the most marginalised and disadvantaged within our community are able to access assistance when they need it."

The Law Council of Australia is the national voice of the legal profession, promoting justice and the rule of law.

Media Release



In 2020-21, Australian lawyers provided 641,965.75 hours of pro bono work, according to the latest National Pro Bono Centre report. This is over 16 per cent more pro bono hours than in 2019-20.

“Australians pull together to help one another in times of crisis, and lawyers are a critical part of our nation’s disaster response – as evidenced most recently during COVID,” Dr Brasch said.

“Statistics from the early days of this public health crisis found 49 per cent of Australian businesses relied upon external advisors, including lawyers, in the face of uncertainty caused by the pandemic. We could safely assume this figure would now be even greater. In addition, lawyers have assisted individuals with matters ranging from insurance, family law and family violence, through to tenancy and housing and social security.

“Of course, lawyering is not just what happens in the courtroom. Often it is about aiding policy or law reform at the highest level. Many of the protections we take for granted, like discrimination law, only exist because lawyers have fought hard for social change.

“As the Lawyer Project Report concludes – lawyers play a vital role in well-functioning societies and their often hidden contributions make the profession a unique and integral part of the community.”

A full copy of the Lawyer Project Report is available [here](#).

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