

# Media Release

## **Barristers increase pro bono hours by more than 30%**

### **VICTORIAN BAR PRO BONO AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED**

*Wednesday 18 May 2011*

Victorian barristers have boosted the hours they commit to pro bono legal assistance by 36%, compared to the previous 12 month period, according to the latest data released at the annual Victorian Bar Pro Bono Awards presented at the Supreme Court last night.

Formally recorded hours added up to a massive 33,624 hours based on time spent by barristers representing people and cases pro bono. It adds up to an estimated \$11.7M in legal fees provided to the Victorian community over the 12 month period of 1 May 2010 to 30 April 2011.

“This is an exceptional commitment,” said Victorian Bar Chairman Mark Moshinsky SC. “Barristers have a long tradition of assisting those who need legal assistance no matter how difficult the issues. This year’s nominations demonstrate just how serious some of these cases can be.”

Hours spent on matters including issues such as sex trafficking, discrimination on the basis of gender, race or sexual orientation, police brutality, voting rights, asylum seekers and environmental protection, resulted in the nomination of the barristers who worked on them for the 2011 Pro Bono Awards.

President of the Court of Appeal, Justice Chris Maxwell was guest speaker at the 2011 Awards presentation in the Supreme Court Library.

Awards were presented to:

1. Victorian Bar Trophy Debbie Mortimer SC  
*For outstanding individual achievement in pro bono advocacy over a long period. In particular for her work in environmental cases, the rights of refugees and Indigenous Australia and human rights.*
  
2. Daniel Pollack Readers Award Kathryn Bundrock  
*Kathryn has appeared on behalf of Victorians charged on minor summary matters and infringing offences. She has impressed instructors with the professional standard of her advocacy, and with her warm and accessible approach to clients and solicitors.*

## Emrys Nekvapil

*After just two years at the Bar, Emrys has acted for community legal centres and as a duty barrister. He has acted in criminal and Human Rights Charter matters, including cases involving police and discrimination on the basis of race and sexual orientation.*

## Serge Petrovich &amp; Ashley Halphen

*Serge has acted in matters involving the Kerang Rail Disaster and the North South Pipeline and has shown a talent for understanding the stress and vulnerability of people in very difficult circumstances. Ashley has worked tirelessly over 10 years and has served as a duty lawyer in remote communities as in-house trial counsel for NAAJA (North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency), has taught in the Solomon Islands and spent time in the USA assisting defendants facing the death penalty.*

Fiona McLeod SC

*Since 2003, Fiona McLeod has appeared pro bono in landmark cases concerning human trafficking, including those involving child sex trafficking and slavery, the deaths of Cambodian woman in a detention centre and a baby in an emergency department. She has also acted in Administrative law matters related to water projects.*

Awarded to Ron Merkel QC, Kristen Walker, Fiona Forsyth & Neil McAteer

*For their work in Rowe & Anor v Electoral Commissioner & Anor: This case concerned the disenfranchisement of voters not on the electoral roll. The case enabled approx 100,000 voters to vote in the 2010 federal election, and will allow hundreds of thousands of voters to vote in the future. The case was completed within a two week period to achieve an outstanding result.*

The data on pro bono hours worked by barristers showed that there was a 10% increase in the hours recorded under the Duty Barristers Scheme (2028 hours in 2010, 2257 hours in 2011).

The rest of the increase was made up of hours (22,644 in the 2010 period and 31,367 in the 2011 period – a 38% increase) recorded via the Victorian Bar Pro Bono Scheme administered by PILCH and informal pro bono work reported in a survey.

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