

Pro Bono Program – Procedures Manual (for Partners)

About the Pro Bono Program

The My Community Legal Pro Bono Program is a legal referral service which refers eligible clients of My Community Legal to private law firms (**'Pro Bono Partners'**) whom may provide legal services for free. The service is targeted at individuals who are in genuine need of legal assistance and are unable to afford private legal services or obtain the help they need from other sources.

Our Pro Bono Partners are not obliged to accept a referral, hence My Community Legal do not expect that legal assistance will be provided in all matters that meet our eligibility criteria.

Becoming a Pro Bono Partner

The My Community Legal Pro Bono Program depends on the generous support of our Pro Bono Partners.

If you or your firm is interested in becoming a Pro Bono Partner please email probonoprogram@mycommunitylegal.org.au.

About the Pro Bono Partners Procedures Manual

The Pro Bono Partner's Procedures Manual outlines the procedures that My Community Legal follow in determining whether a person is eligible for referral to a Pro Bono Partner, and the process for referring eligible person to Pro Bono Partners for pro bono legal assistance.

1. Assessment

Client's first approach My Community Legal, and are provided free legal advice by one of MCL's Volunteer Practitioners. If the Practitioner believes the client requires further support (which cannot be provided by other means), the client will be invited to complete an Application Form.

An assessment of the applicant's matter is completed by one of MCL's Volunteer Practitioners, the Coordinator and Principal Solicitor to determine whether the applicant is eligible for a referral to a Pro Bono Partner.

To be eligible for referral to our Pro Bono Partners for pro bono legal assistance, the following criteria must be met:

- The applicant must require legal assistance and be unable to afford private legal services.
- The applicant must be unable to obtain Legal Aid. This will be satisfied in the case of an applicant who has been refused a grant of Legal Aid or whose matter is not one for which Legal Aid is available.
- The matter must be a civil law matter, employment matter, property law matter, wills and estates, criminal law matter, family law matter, domestic violence matter or immigration law matter.
- The matter must be considered by My Community Legal to have reasonable prospects of success or be a reasonable step in the circumstances.
- The applicant must be unable to resolve their matter through the assistance of My Community Legal, assistance from other services, negotiation, other practical options, or, alternatively, there is some extenuating circumstance (e.g. English as a second language, elderly, etc.).
- On the basis of the information provided, it is likely that our Pro Bono Partners would be able to assist with the matter.

2. Pro bono Application

Applicants are required to complete a Pro Bono Application Form provided by My Community Legal. Applicants are asked to provide their personal details, financial details, details about their legal matter and detail about the type of assistance or outcome sought from pro bono assistance.

If an application does not meet My Community Legal's eligibility criteria, the applicant will be informed that they did not meet our criteria and, where possible, provided with possible alternate options (for example, a referral to another appropriate service).

If the application meets My Community Legal's eligibility criteria, an appropriate Pro Bono Partner will be matched. My Community Legal will contact the proposed Pro Bono Partner with sufficient details for a conflict check.

We ask for Pro Bono Partners to complete conflicts checks and confirm whether they are able to consider the matter further for assistance within 5 business days.

3. Pro bono referral

If the selected Pro Bono Partner confirms there is no conflict, we will provide:

- The Application Form,
- MCL Intake Form, and
- All other relevant documents.

We ask Pro Bono Partners, once they have received this referral, to confirm if they are able to offer assistance within 5 business days if possible. If they are not able to offer assistance, we ask that they provide a reason for My Community Legal to note in our records. If appropriate, another Pro Bono Partner can be approached.

4. Finalising Referral

If the Pro Bono Partner confirms they can offer assistance, an email is sent to the applicant advising them of the successful referral and that the Pro Bono Partner will be in contact with them to discuss the scope of their engagement.

The applicant is also advised that My Community Legal has no further involvement in their matter once it has been referred, and future enquiries that they may have regarding their matter should be directed to the Pro Bono Partner.

5. Expectations of Pro Bono Partner

It is the responsibility of the Pro Bono Partner to:

1. Contact client follow receipt of applicant's details;
2. Determine and advise the applicant of the scope of legal services to be provided;
3. Conduct carriage of the matter to a professional standard;
4. Follow up on referred files with My Community Legal (see (7) below).

6. Expectations of My Community Legal

The Pro Bono partner can expect that My Community Legal will:

1. Complete a vetting process of the applicant before they are referred (this will be completed with reference to the applicant's Application Form by the Principal Solicitor before referral is made);
2. Ensure the applicant's legal matter is suitable and in a legal area specialised by the Partner.

Please note, My Community Legal do not have capacity to complete additional financial checks on the applicant, and relies on the information provided by the applicant in their Intake Form and Application.

7. Following up on referred files



My Community Legal request the Pro Bono Partner provide a matter closure statement once they have ceased pro bono services with the Applicant.

The matter closure report should include:

- Scope of work undertaken;
- Outcome of Applicant's matter;
- If the Applicant requires any other assistance from My Community Legal; and
- If there is any feedback from the Pro Bono Partner.

The Pro Bono Partner is requested to provide the matter closure report via email and should do so within 14 days of completing pro bono work and closing the client's file.

Contacts

If a Partner has any queries/ issues that arise, please contact the Gold Coast Coordinator, Jade, on jade@mycommunitylegal.org.au. If any matters need to be escalated, contact can be made with the Principal Solicitor.