

Pro Bono Work for Lawyers: The Options are Endless



Review by Jennifer Holdstock, Russell Kennedy

Review of the *Voluntas Pro Bono Directory*

There are no more excuses for people wanting to do pro bono work, but not knowing where to start! The *Voluntas Pro Bono Directory – A Guide to Pro Bono Opportunities for the Legal Profession* was first published in 1997 and the latest edition was released in 2001. This national directory is published by the Victoria Law Foundation and seeks to provide members of the legal profession with information about pro bono schemes established in each State and Territory. There is something for everybody who wants to get involved in pro bono work, from information on your local community legal centre to Lawyers for Forests.

Many firms are now promoting pro bono work amongst their professional staff and some firms are seconding staff members to established pro bono schemes as a matter of regular practice. So what does it all mean?

The idea behind working pro bono is that the services are provided at a reduced rate or for no charge at all. The introduction to the directory includes a useful definition of "pro bono" from the Law Council, which includes: situations where lawyers act for no fee or for a reduced fee where a client has no other access to the courts and the legal system, and/or where the client's case raises issues in the public interest. Working pro bono can also involve providing free community legal education and law reform work, or giving free advice and representation to charitable and community organisations. Practitioners may volunteer at community legal centres in their own time, or work on cases taken on by a firm for no fee.

The directory is divided into States, with a strong focus on Victoria, and also includes a Commonwealth section. The Victorian section covers pro bono opportunities within legal and community contexts. The legal section provides detailed information on the community legal centres in Victoria, including: the areas they service, how to become involved, and what sort

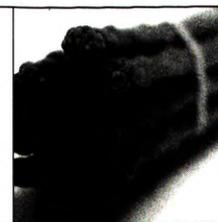
of training is provided at them. Information is provided on the Law Institute of Victoria, the Victorian Bar's Legal Assistance Schemes, the Public Interest Law Clearing House and country law associations. The community section provides information on the Arts Law Referral Service, Catholic Social Services Victoria – Volunteer Service Bureau, Community Information Centres, Volunteering Victoria, Amnesty International and Lawyers for Forests.

For those wishing to participate in the services provided by the various pro bono schemes, the directory provides the scheme's name, contact person and contact details. This useful guide is freely available on-line at: www.victorialaw.org.au/pdfbook/ProBono_Directory_2001_162kb.pdf

Downloading the guide and printing it out is the most useful way of accessing the material, as it is difficult to navigate online.

Voluntas has also published a Victoria-specific guide called *Law Help: Pro bono, low cost and free legal services directory*, which has been updated as at February 2003 and is available at: www.victorialaw.org.au/pdfbook/Law_Help.PDF.

Wining and Dining Footscray Style



By Paul Burke, Slater and Gordon (Footscray)

The view from my office takes in part of Footscray's Nicholson Street Mall, often the site of Sam Newman's "Street Talk". It is true that there are often large groups of the sorts of socially dysfunctional people that Newman features in his segment in this area, but this is only a small part of Footscray.

While Footscray is only about 5 km from the city, at times it can seem to be a million miles from anywhere. However, why not discard your copy of "The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook" and concentrate on the cornucopia of attractions that Footscray has to offer; there are a staggering number of different nationalities involved in Footscray's thriving food scene, for example.

My office's favourite restaurant in Footscray is the Taj Palace Indian restaurant on Nicholson Street. It is the best Indian food in Melbourne and the most affordable. Merv Hughes's doppelganger runs the establishment and always greets you with his arms outstretched and a hearty "Please".

A few doors down is The House Public Hotel – a pub that has been fighting valiantly to stay traditional (in the sense that no money has been spent on it in a long time). I fear that this may change soon, as it has recently been sold to a boxing identity and I am told he has big plans for the place. In its present state, I can safely say that it is a pub that sells alcohol.

The recent case of mass food poisoning from pork rolls at a local Vietnamese restaurant has not dented the public's desire for the items. They can be bought, for a few dollars, at hot bread shops and Vietnamese restaurants, of which there are approximately one hundred thousand in Footscray. If you don't appreciate spicy foods, be certain to say "NO CHILLI!".

My personal recommendation for a Vietnamese restaurant is Thuc Don in Leeds Street. They serve large, fresh rice paper rolls and the tastiest pork noodle. Other Vietnamese restaurants worth visiting are Hai Hai on Barkly Street and Thien An on Irving Street. Be amazed by the thought of an avocado milkshake.

On the way there you may be tempted to buy a hot jam donut from Olympic Donuts, which operates from a caravan. The proprietor has kindly provided a list of prices for purchasing donuts in bulk. You will have to do the maths yourself if you intend to buy more than twelve 50c donuts.

If you are short for money, as most young lawyers are, then go no further than Star Seafood on Nicholson Street. A chicken roll and chips will set you back \$3.20 and it is Halal to boot. For the non-Muslim, you will also be hedging your bets in relation to the afterlife.

For those capable of preparing their own meals, there is no better place to buy ridiculously cheap fresh fruit, vegetables, meat and seafood than the Footscray market. For those more adventurous, a visit to the Little Saigon market will reveal that competition is alive and well in Footscray.

So if you do find yourself in Footscray, don't be afraid to be a little bit adventurous – you will benefit from the experience.