

A Bridge over Troubled Waters: pro bono in a challenging economy

In a thriving global economy, a culture of pro bono was fast developing, as evidenced by the IBA Pro Bono Declaration and the Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas. But what has happened to this pro bono culture in the now troubled global economy, where the ranks of the poor are swelling just as paid legal aid programmes shrink and volumes of remunerative work decline dramatically? Can lawyers be persuaded to expand their pro bono efforts to meet the growing need for legal aid, despite financial pressures prompting them to spend more time on profitable activities at the expense of pro bono? Can governments be persuaded that cutting legal aid budgets is false economy? What factors suggest that pro bono can still be 'marketed' as a sound business investment for law firms?

Demonstrating the IBA's commitment to the promotion of a pro bono culture among its members, a short opening address will be provided by the IBA President, **Fernando Peláez-Pier**, following which a panel of seven outstanding practitioners, advocates, academics and bar association leaders, all inspired to change lives with a lawyer's tools, will provide different examples of how to foster and grow a pro bono culture in trying economic times. They are:

- Ms **Malathi Das** of Ms Joyce A Tan & Partners, Vice-President and Chair of the Family Law Section of LAWASIA and Vice-President of the Law Society of Singapore. Malathi practises in the field of commercial, intellectual property law and family litigation and also tutors on the Family Law and Drafting module at the Postgraduate Practice Law Course run by the Board of Legal Education in Singapore. She is also closely involved with the development of Singapore's legal aid programme.
- **Kevin Carroll**, Q.C.L.S.M., incoming President of the Canadian Bar Association. Among its many initiatives in pro bono, the CBA has begun its Pro Bono Mentorship Program which connects lawyers who are currently involved, or wish to be involved, in pro bono legal work with mentors who have helpful experience. <http://www.cba.org/CBA/groups/probono/>
- **Horacio Bernardes Neto**, Senior Partner of Xavier, Bernardes, Bragança Sociedade de Advogados in Sao Paulo.
- Professor **David McQuoid-Mason** is the James Scott Wylie Professor of Procedural and Clinical Law at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. He is the founder of the South African Street Law programme, the co-founder of the Democracy for All programme and president of the Commonwealth Legal Education Association. He served 13 years as Dean of the Law School at the University of Natal and facilitated a number of non-governmental organization training workshops on street law and human rights in countries around the world. He has also advised on the establishment and

improvement of legal aid systems in Lithuania, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Moldova and Nigeria, as well as the establishment of paralegal advice offices in Sierra Leone, Mongolia, Moldova and Cambodia.

- **Joss Saunders**, Company Secretary and Head of Legal, Oxfam. Described as part lawyer, part campaigner, Joss has worked with Oxfam for almost 15 years and is recognised as a leading lawyer in the field of charity law and was the driving force behind the '1,000 City Lawyers' initiative, which led to the creation of Advocates for International Development.

“Working with more than 3,000 local partner organizations, we work with people living in poverty striving to exercise their human rights, assert their dignity as full citizens and take control of their lives.” <http://www.oxfam.org/en/about/what>

- **David Hillard**, Pro Bono Partner, Clayton Utz, Sydney. David has led the Pro Bono practice at Clayton Utz since 1997, is focused on providing assistance to people who are disadvantaged and cannot obtain Legal Aid, and to the not-for-profit organisations which support them, and was appointed as the firm's first Pro Bono Partner in 2005. David has written and spoken extensively on the importance of recognising pro bono work as an inherent professional responsibility of being admitted to practice law.

“We see giving back to the community as a fundamental part of being a member of it.”
<http://www.claytonutz.com/community/home.page>

- **Javier Rivera**, Executive Director, Madrid Bar Association

In a session dedicated to participation from all attendees, these speakers will, through initial remarks and subsequent discussion, examine how the different sectors which they represent can cross-fertilize their pro bono efforts and how a pro bono culture can still blossom in the current economic climate.

We'll also hear briefly from **Robin Wright Westbrook**, the committee's co-Communications Officer, on how we can use our committee's website and blog to publicise and develop the ideas that emerge during the session and to continue to work together, share ideas and stay informed going forward.