

# Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

## Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Australia

### Introduction

Pro bono legal services are an important focus for Australian lawyers and law firms. Australia prides itself as a global pro bono leader; since 2007, a National Pro Bono Target (National Target) has been used to encourage all Australian lawyers to complete at least 35 hours of pro bono legal services per year. Since the National Pro Bono Target commenced in 2007, the signatories have collectively reported more than eight million hours of pro bono legal work.<sup>1</sup> Although pro bono legal services remain voluntary, the wide network of Australian organisations and individuals (across law firms, incorporated legal practices, barristers' chambers, and in-house legal teams) supporting the strategic delivery of pro bono legal services is providing crucial access to justice for those in need.

### At a glance

Minimum pro bono hours requirement for lawyers?	Specific pro bono licence required?	May foreign lawyers practice pro bono?	Insurance required for law firm pro bono?	Insurance required for in-house pro bono?	Rules to limit advertising pro bono work?	Does pro bono work count to CLE credit?	Limitations for in-house lawyers to do pro bono?
No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

### The landscape

Professional regulation	
<p>1. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of legal services, including any licensing required to provide legal services. Please highlight any differences for lawyers working as in-house counsel.</p>	<p>The Australian legal profession is composed of solicitors and barristers.</p> <p>Solicitors are represented by the law society of the state or territory in which they practice (e.g., the Law Institute of Victoria<sup>2</sup>) and are regulated by a legal practitioners board (e.g., the Victorian Legal Services Board<sup>3</sup>). Barristers are represented by the relevant bar council or association in their jurisdiction (e.g., the Victorian Bar Association<sup>4</sup>), which, depending on the jurisdiction, may also perform regulatory functions.</p> <p>Each Australian state and territory has implemented regulations and rules governing the legal profession (e.g., in New South Wales,</p>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/provide-pro-bono/target/> (last viewed on 12 January 2026).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.liv.asn.au/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.lsb.vic.gov.au/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.vicbar.com.au/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

	<p>Western Australia, and Victoria, lawyers are subject to uniform rules made by the Legal Services Council (the Uniform Rules)<sup>5</sup>.</p> <p>Practicing law in Australia requires admission to the Australian legal profession or, if applicable, registration as an Australian-registered foreign lawyer. Australian lawyers are required to apply for and maintain a current legal practicing certificate (the specific requirements vary across the states and territories, but typically, an Australian lawyer must be a “fit and proper person” to hold and renew a practicing certificate) and must maintain appropriate professional indemnity insurance.<sup>6</sup> The scope of an Australian lawyer’s ability to provide legal services will be subject to any related conditions described on the practicing certificate, such as supervised or restricted practicing conditions.</p> <p>Under the Uniform Rules, Australian legal practitioners who engage in legal practice as in-house lawyers are known as “corporate legal practitioners” — this will entail a condition on the legal practicing certificate, which will only authorise practice as (i) a “corporate lawyer”, (ii) a volunteer at a community legal service (CLS), or otherwise on a pro bono basis, and (iii) until such practicing certificate is renewed, a government legal practitioner.<sup>7</sup> In most Australian jurisdictions, an in-house corporate lawyer’s practicing certificate should allow that practitioner to undertake pro bono legal work.<sup>8</sup></p>
<b>Regulatory landscape for pro bono</b>	
<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p>The laws and rules that regulate the provision of legal services in Australia (as described above) apply equally to the provision of pro bono legal services.</p> <p>There are no explicit regulations in Australia that impose minimum fees on the provision of legal services. Legal costs charged to a client (if any)</p>

<sup>5</sup> See <https://legalservicescouncil.org.au/uniform-framework/uniform-rules.html> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.lsb.vic.gov.au/lawyers/practising-law/professional-obligations/who-can-practise> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>7</sup> See <https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/corporate-lawyers-and-uniform-law> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>8</sup> See “Appendix C - Practising Certificates and Professional Indemnity Insurance” in *Pro Bono Legal Work – A Guide for In-House Corporate Lawyers* (March 2023), <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CORPORATE-GUIDE-2023-FINAL-2.pdf> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

	must be fair and reasonable in the circumstances. <sup>9</sup>
3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?	<p>All Australian solicitors who provide pro bono legal services are required to maintain an appropriate Australian practicing certificate and indemnity insurance; there is no additional licence required to specifically provide pro bono legal services on top of that required for the provision of legal services generally.</p> <p>Lawyers who volunteer and/or provide pro bono legal services may be entitled to a free or low-cost practicing certificate.<sup>10</sup> In New South Wales, for example, such a practicing certificate will include a condition that the holder is restricted to practicing as a volunteer at a CLS or on a pro bono basis only.<sup>11</sup></p>
4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?	<p>Foreign lawyers in Australia may practice either foreign law (subject to the applicable practicing restrictions) or may apply to be admitted as Australian lawyers; the relevant conditions and requirements are determined and applied by the legal practitioners board in the state or territory in which the foreign lawyer intends to practise. In Victoria, for example, foreign lawyers may be admitted either as an Australian-registered foreign lawyer or as an Australian legal practitioner. An Australian-registered foreign lawyer is not entitled to practise Australian law.<sup>12</sup></p> <p>There is no additional licence required by foreign-qualified lawyers to specifically provide pro bono legal services.</p>
5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?	<p>There are no rules in Australia requiring lawyers to work a minimum number of pro bono hours. However, law firms that wish to secure work for government legal services are required by some Australian government departments to comply with mandatory pro bono requirements — the Commonwealth, Victorian, New South Wales, South Australian, Western Australian, and</p>

<sup>9</sup> See <https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/consumers/legal-costs-and-billing/get-your-lawyers-costs-writing> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/provide-pro-bono/solicitor-or-barrister/volunteer-practising-certificates/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.lawsociety.com.au/practising-law-in-NSW/working-as-a-solicitor-in-NSW/your-practising-certificate/conditions> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>12</sup> See <https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/lawyers/practising-law/practising-certificates/foreign-laws-and-lawyers> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

	Queensland governments include specific pro bono requirements in their tender arrangements for legal services. <sup>13</sup>
6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?	Aspiring lawyers in Australia are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers.
7. Aside from mandatory targets (if any), are there aspirational pro bono hours targets for lawyers set by the local bar association, regulatory body or other body?	<p>The National Pro Bono Target, which was launched in 2007, is a voluntary and aspirational target of at least 35 hours of pro bono legal services per lawyer per year that can be signed up to by Australian law firms, incorporated legal practices, individual solicitors, individual barristers, and barristers' chambers.</p> <p>In 2020, the National Target was expanded to include a voluntary and aspirational target of at least 20 hours of pro bono legal services per lawyer per year for Australian corporate and governmental in-house legal teams and lawyers.<sup>14</sup></p> <p>The National Target is administered by the Australian Pro Bono Centre, which is a not-for-profit national centre for pro bono legal services.</p> <p>The Australian Pro Bono Centre publishes an annual report on the performance of signatories to the National Target on a de-identified basis.<sup>15</sup></p>
8. Do lawyers receive any "Continuing Legal Education" (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	Lawyers in Australia do not automatically receive any CLE or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked. The Australian Pro Bono Centre previously made a submission to the Law Council of Australia that the continuing professional development (CPD) rules should permit a lawyer who undertakes at least one day (7.5 hours) of pro bono legal work to claim one CPD unit towards the required annual minimum of 10 units of CPD activity, <sup>16</sup> however, this proposal was not adopted. <sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/provide-pro-bono/government-tender-arrangements/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/provide-pro-bono/target/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>15</sup> See <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/provide-pro-bono/target/#reports> (last visited 16 January 2025).

<sup>16</sup> See [https://probonocentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/NPBRC\\_Submission\\_to\\_LCA\\_Pro\\_Bono\\_and\\_CPD\\_Rules\\_06032015.pdf](https://probonocentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/NPBRC_Submission_to_LCA_Pro_Bono_and_CPD_Rules_06032015.pdf) (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>17</sup> See the meaning of "CPD activity" under Rule 8 of the Legal Profession Uniform Continuing Professional Development (Solicitors) Rules 2015: <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2015-0242> (last visited 30 December 2024).

	<p>If a pro bono task can be structured as a learning activity that fulfills the educational criteria<sup>18</sup> of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme in a state, it may be possible to claim CPD points. However, this is contingent upon the acceptance of the activity by the local regulator and generally necessitates justification.</p>
<b>Insurance and advertising</b>	
<p>9. Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers?</p> <p>If insurance is required, can lawyers meet the requirement by working under the cover of another pro bono provider, e.g. in partnership with a private law firm or organization working on the same pro bono project?</p>	<p>Subject to certain specific exemptions, all Australian lawyers are generally required to hold or be covered by professional indemnity insurance before engaging in legal practice, including pro bono legal services.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>In-house corporate or government lawyers are not generally required to hold professional indemnity insurance under the Uniform Rules; however, they are required to hold professional indemnity insurance if providing pro bono legal services at a CLS (in which case, the CLS will generally arrange the insurance) or outside of a CLS.<sup>20</sup> Other than insurance coverage provided by a CLS, in-house corporate and government lawyers may also be able to access the National Pro Bono Professional Indemnity Insurance Scheme, which provides such lawyers with free insurance coverage while working on pro bono projects approved by the Australian Pro Bono Centre.<sup>21</sup></p> <p>Australian-registered foreign lawyers are not required to hold professional indemnity insurance under the Uniform Rules; however, an Australian-registered foreign lawyer must notify their clients in writing if (i) they do not hold an indemnity insurance policy, or (ii) they do hold an indemnity insurance policy (together with details of the type and extent of insurance).<sup>22</sup></p>
<p>10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?</p>	<p>There are no rules in Australia that prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients. Any advertising or solicitation of new pro bono clients must comply</p>

<sup>18</sup> For example, see the criteria for New South Wales: <https://www.lawsociety.com.au/practising-law-in-NSW/working-as-a-solicitor-in-NSW/your-practising-certificate/CPD> (last visited on 12 January 2026).

<sup>19</sup> See Part 4.4 (Professional indemnity insurance) of the Legal Profession Uniform General Rules 2015: <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2015-0246> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>20</sup> See <https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/lawyers/practising-law/professional-obligations/professional-indemnity-insurance> (last visited 30 December 2024).

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/provide-pro-bono/pi-insurance-scheme/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>22</sup> See <https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/lawyers/practising-law/professional-obligations/professional-indemnity-insurance> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

	with applicable laws and regulations (such as the Uniform Rules) in respect of advertising and marketing legal services. <sup>23</sup>
<b>Pro bono practice and culture</b>	
11. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for pro bono? What are the major unmet legal needs?	<p>Public legal aid in Australia does not adequately meet the demand for free legal services, primarily due to means and merit testing, which may exclude members of the population who either (i) fall above the minimum means standards, rendering them financially ineligible, but who nonetheless have insufficient funds for legal representation or (ii) meet the minimum means standards but are seeking assistance on matters that do not meet the merit standards. In these circumstances, pro bono legal services seek to address the need for free legal services. One major area of unmet need is in civil law matters, where it is difficult to obtain a grant of legal aid for many kinds of cases.<sup>24</sup></p> <p>Unmet legal needs are found in everyday issues such as goods and services, family, housing, violence, debt, employment, and government decisions, especially affecting individuals experiencing vulnerability. These are the areas where legal aid, community legal centers, and pro bono services are most overextended.<sup>25</sup></p>
12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?	<p>The main providers of Australian pro bono legal services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLS and community legal centres, which provide free legal and related services to the public, focusing on the disadvantaged and people with special needs,<sup>26</sup></li> <li>• law firms, who are able to access resources and expertise provided by the Australian Pro Bono Centre in the establishment of an effective pro bono program,<sup>27</sup></li> <li>• duty barrister schemes provided by Australian bar associations to assist litigants with legal and financial need,<sup>28</sup> and</li> <li>• university legal clinics, which combine a</li> </ul>

<sup>23</sup> See <https://www.lawsociety.com.au/practising-law-in-NSW/ethics-and-compliance/regulatory-compliance/advertising-legal-services> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>24</sup> See <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/aus-pro-bono-manual/part-3/chap-3-1/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.victorialawfoundation.org.au/research-publications/puls-volume-1?utm\\_](https://www.victorialawfoundation.org.au/research-publications/puls-volume-1?utm_) (last viewed on 12 January 2026).

<sup>26</sup> See <https://clcs.org.au/legal-help/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/provide-pro-bono/law-firm/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>28</sup> See <https://www.vicbar.com.au/Web/Web/Contents/Community/ProBono/Pro-Bono.aspx> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

	<p>teaching clinic for law students with qualified volunteer solicitors, who are able to provide free legal advice in specified areas of need (e.g., the Kingsford Legal Centre at the University of New South Wales, Sydney).<sup>29</sup></p>
<p>13. Are there any noteworthy examples of how innovative technology or artificial intelligence is being used to enable access to pro bono or otherwise as part of pro bono cases or matters?</p>	<p>A number of CLS and community legal centres in Australia have developed online tools using AI to assist with the provision of pro bono legal services. Notable examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Marrickville Legal Centre, a Sydney-based community legal centre, has developed an online chatbot, New Age Legal Assistance, which utilises AI to operate as a first point of contact for enquiries made to the centre. For less complex enquiries, such as traffic-related offences and tenancy matters, New Age Legal Assistance is able to provide clients with AI-generated advice and resources. For more complex and higher-need enquiries, New Age Legal Assistance gathers key information regarding the client's enquiry ahead of a face-to-face consultation at the centre and also assists with booking consultations;<sup>30</sup> and</li> <li>• Justice Connect, a pro bono legal clearinghouse, has developed in partnership with the University of Melbourne an AI model that generates a plain English summary of potential legal issues from a given set of facts. The model is designed to help individuals seeking assistance to understand the potential legal issues relating to their enquiry and can also be used by providers of pro bono legal services to analyse and triage enquiries. Providers of pro bono legal services can request access to the model for no cost from Justice Connect.<sup>31</sup></li> </ul> <p>In July 2024, Justice Connect launched an AI-powered tool called SmartAssist, which helps users find relevant self-help resources by analyzing their descriptions of legal problems. This tool utilizes a natural language processing AI model. The model was trained on over 12,000 de-identified language samples from clients and the community, which were tagged by volunteer lawyers with the appropriate legal areas. Additionally, a 'Training AI Game' was used to further refine the model, involving pro bono lawyers in annotating and correcting language samples. As of 2023, the diagnostic</p>

<sup>29</sup> See <https://www.unsw.edu.au/klc/free-legal-help> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>30</sup> See <https://www.mlc.org.au/using-artificial-intelligence-to-improve-access-to-justice/> (last visited on 22 January 2025).

<sup>31</sup> See <https://justiceconnect.org.au/fairmatters/bringing-ai-to-the-legal-help-ecosystem-with-a-free/> (last visited on 10 January 2025).

	<p>model achieved an accuracy rate of 88% across 12 legal categories.<sup>32</sup></p> <p>Credit Guardian is an AI-powered tool being developed in Brisbane to help identify if vulnerable individuals have been mis-sold loans. Created through a pro bono project by MinterEllison and LawRight, it aims to aid those at risk of homelessness by assessing financial documents for compliance with Australia's responsible-lending laws. The tool aims to reduce caseloads by quickly determining loan compliance and it accelerates initial legal assessments.<sup>33</sup></p>
<b>Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts</b>	
<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>The main sources of pro bono and/or other pro bono resources in Australia are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Australian Pro Bono Centre:<sup>34</sup> supports the provision of pro bono legal services by lawyers and law firms. Information and resources for existing and potential Australian pro bono legal service providers are available on its website, including the Australian Pro Bono Manual;<sup>35</sup></li> <li>• Justice Connect:<sup>36</sup> pro bono legal clearinghouse in Victoria and New South Wales;</li> <li>• LawRight:<sup>37</sup> pro bono legal clearing house in Queensland;</li> <li>• JusticeNet SA:<sup>38</sup> pro bono legal clearing house in South Australia;</li> <li>• Law Access:<sup>39</sup> pro bono legal access scheme in Western Australia; and</li> <li>• Community Legal Centres Australia:<sup>40</sup> the peak national body for Australian CLS and community legal centres.</li> </ul>
<p>15. Is there any public or private organization with which a local or foreign lawyer can register to be made aware of pro bono opportunities?</p>	<p>Interested local or foreign lawyers should contact the Australian Pro Bono Centre, the applicable legal clearing house in their jurisdiction, and/or a local community legal</p>

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/5349577/2025-Snapshot-AI-in-Law-Firms-CLCs-Govt-4-August.pdf?utm\\_](https://www.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/5349577/2025-Snapshot-AI-in-Law-Firms-CLCs-Govt-4-August.pdf?utm_) (last viewed on 12 January 2026).

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.ft.com/content/1fe18586-16c4-4eb5-89cf-41afdf16cf85?utm\\_](https://www.ft.com/content/1fe18586-16c4-4eb5-89cf-41afdf16cf85?utm_) (Last viewed on 12 January 2026).

<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/about-the-centre/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>35</sup> See <https://www.probonocentre.org.au/aus-pro-bono-manual/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>36</sup> See <https://justiceconnect.org.au/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>37</sup> See <https://lawright.org.au/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.iusticenet.org.au/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>39</sup> See <https://lawaccess.org.au/about/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>40</sup> See <https://clcs.org.au/about-us/> (last visited on 30 December 2024).

	centre.
16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?	<p>There are numerous awards relating to pro bono work by Australian legal practitioners given by a range of stakeholders in the Australian legal profession.<sup>41</sup> As an overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of state and territory law societies or institutes have one or more annual awards for pro bono work by legal practitioners, law firms, and other providers of pro bono legal services;<sup>42</sup></li> <li>• Various government bodies recognise pro bono work through awards, such as the Western Australian Attorney General's Community Service Law Awards;<sup>43</sup></li> <li>• The Australian Law Awards, an annual awards program organised by leading industry publication <i>Lawyers Weekly</i>, has a category for Pro Bono program of the year.<sup>44</sup> <i>Lawyers Weekly</i> “30 under 30” awards programme for young Australian legal practitioners also has a category for pro bono / community lawyer of the year;<sup>45</sup> and</li> <li>• A number of CLS and community legal centres give their own awards for outstanding pro bono assistance. For example, Arts Law, a national community legal centre for the arts, has annual awards for legal practitioners and law firms who assist with its provision of pro bono legal services.<sup>46</sup></li> </ul>

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## Learn more

[Navigate the full Global Pro Bono Guide](#) to explore the global landscape and pro bono practices and opportunities across 100+ jurisdictions.

<sup>41</sup> See the tab labelled “Oceania” at <https://www.globalprobonohub.com/awards/> (last visited on 16 January 2025).

<sup>42</sup> See [New South Wales Law Society Pro Bono Service Award](#), [Victorian Bar Pro Bono Awards](#), [Queensland Law Society Pro Bono Team of the Year](#), [Law Society of South Australia Pro Bono Award](#), [Law Society of Tasmania Outstanding Pro Bono Legal Award](#) and [ACT Law Society’s Pro Bono Service Award](#) (each last visited on 30 December 2024).

<sup>43</sup> See <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-justice/attorney-generals-community-service-law-awards#:~:text=The%20Attorney%20General%27s%20Community%20Service,benefit%20the%20Western%20Australian%20Community> (last visited on 16 January 2025).

<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.lawyersweekly.com.au/australian-law-awards/categories> (last visited on 16 January 2025).

<sup>45</sup> See <https://www.lawyersweekly.com.au/biglaw/41065-finalists-released-across-five-new-categories-for-30-under-30-awards-2025> (last visited on 16 January 2025).

<sup>46</sup> See <https://www.artslaw.com.au/about/volunteers-pro-bono-support/> (last visited on 16 January 2025).