

BALANCE

LAW SOCIETY NORTHERN TERRITORY

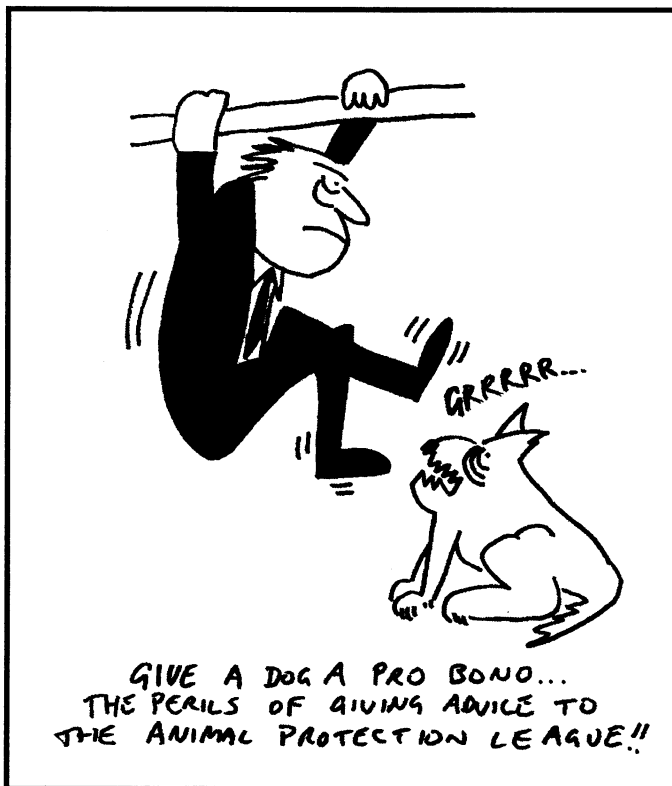
BEYOND THE CALL

There is a side to the legal profession that most members of the public don't know. A characteristic reluctance to discuss the contributions they make to the community means the work lawyers do pro bono often goes unrecognised and the negative stereotypes portrayed in the public arena remain largely unchecked. But lawyers are more than simply businessmen. *Balance* investigates what sets them apart.

"In recent years lawyers have seemingly steered away from their calling as a profession to become more like business operators," Law Society Northern Territory Vice-President Mr Ian Morris said.

"What distinguishes lawyers and keeps the legal profession alive is that lawyers contribute to the community by way of pro bono work."

This contribution is extensive in the Territory. A myriad of sporting, charity and community groups receive free expertise



from legal firms and individual practitioners year round.

Lawyers are usually tight-lipped about their efforts. According to Mr Morris the reluctance to discuss their contribution is systemic to legal practice.

"Lawyers don't advertise. They tend to be quiet about their work because of confidentiality issues with their clients. They are not trained or used to talking about the community work they do."

The groups who benefit from their services are not so reticent.

President of the St Marys Football Club, Mr Vic Ludwig, spoke

passionately to *Balance* about the benefits of and necessity of pro bono legal assistance for sporting clubs.

"Clubs are open to litigation from so many areas these days. We don't have a lot of money and some of the incidents where we need legal advice involve substantial amounts of money," said Mr Ludwig.

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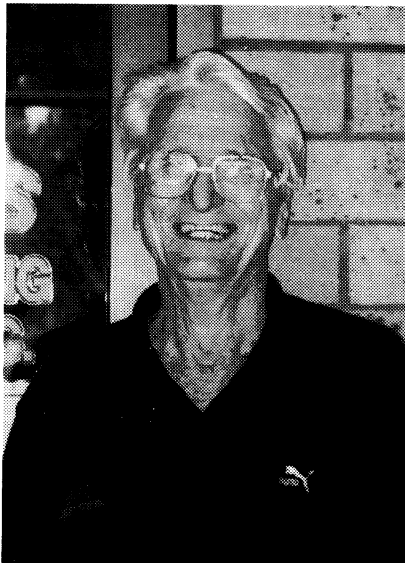
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BEYOND THE CALL

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David de Silva, partner at De Silva Hebron, has been an active committee member of the St Marys Football Club for the past few years. As a lawyer he has provided assistance with contracts, deeds and documents which require legal opinion on a no-fee basis.

"We have twelve members on our committee to run the club. You really need one of them to be an accountant and one of them a lawyer to run the club properly. With the GST coming we need the help of lawyers and accountants even more."



Mr Vic Ludwig, President of the St Marys Football Club

According to Mr Ludwig, who has been president of the Club since 1962, "accountants are even harder to get hold of than lawyers!"

The Northern Territory Football League (NTFL) also relies heavily on the legal community to provide representatives on their Tribunal, which, according to their constitution, must be made up of qualified legal practitioners.

Danny Masters and Dominic Conidi from Cridlands join Darwin barrister Ben O'Loughlin to comprise the NTFL Tribunal which meets each Tuesday night for the entire football season — from October through to March. The

Tribunal deals with reports from umpires and issues arising from weekend games.

Michael Barfott, the NTFL Football Operations Manager, gave praise to their efforts.

"They give up their valuable time for the Tribunal and it is very much appreciated."

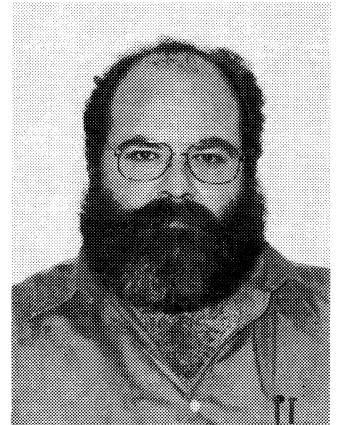
The Alice Springs profession are equally involved in a range of community activities and are equally humble about their efforts.

"People don't really talk about the community work they do here," Alice Springs Law Society representative Ms Katrina Budrikis told *Balance*. "It's just not part of the professional culture to speak about it."

They may not talk about it, but they certainly provide a vital service according to the Director of Central Australia Supported Accommodation (CASA) Ms Carmen Greg.

"Non government organisations like ourselves are not funded for any occasions where we need legal advice or support. These days you can hardly sneeze without the fear of some sort of legal challenge. Funding departments don't recognise the need for legal support, and in some cases when we can't cover the costs we are left taking the money from client services."

"We are really reliant on the people who have done work for us. Peer Schroter was on our committee and handled some very difficult cases for us free of charge. Jodeen



Mr Ian Morris: "What distinguishes lawyers and keeps the legal profession alive is that lawyers contribute to the community by way of pro bono work."

Carney also offers her time and has always given advice when I have needed it," said Ms Greg.

"That sort of support is so vital."

"accountants are even harder to get hold of than lawyers!"

Darwin firms Ward Keller and Clayton Utz, like many firms in the Territory, act as honorary solicitors

for non-profit organisations in the Territory, providing legal advice and assistance as a community service.

Ward Keller has been a supporter of Carpentaria Disabilities for the past 8 - 10 years. Carpentaria Disabilities is the largest provider of specialist support



Clayton Utz provides the NT Red Cross with advice on bequest issues as well as a range of other legal matters.

services in the Territory. Ward Keller's Mr Kevin Stephens has served on their committee for the past four years.

According to Carpentaria's Chief Executive Officer, Mr John Butler, the greatest area of involvement from Ward Keller has been in contract law.



DCLS volunteers Mr Oliver Hardy and Ms Clair Wong. Over 10,000 volunteers have given their time to the community through DCLS since 1991.

"Ward Keller has been a great assistance. The advice we get is as good as we are going to get anywhere," said Mr Butler.

"In the NT we are going down the path where you can't just have a cake stall without needing a licence of some sort. Organisations need legal support."

Clayton Utz offer their services to the Northern Territory branch of the Red Cross.

Executive Director of the NT Red Cross Mr Watts told *Balance* that the Red Cross "receives advice on bequest issues and a whole range of other issues which is of great benefit to us as we don't then have to spend our fundraising money on legal advice."

A component of the Clayton Utz contribution is participation in the Red Cross "Wills Day" which will be held on 17 May 2000 where community members are invited to have a will prepared in exchange for a \$25 donation to the Red Cross.

Ms Papina Papazogolou, like many individual lawyers, gives to the community by sitting on a voluntary committee.

Ms Papazogolou is a member of the subcommittee which presents the annual Greek Glenti Festival. She works at Water James McCormack as

a solicitor and spends eight months a year preparing for the big one day event.

"All the Genti Festival committee members are professional," she said. "We are volunteers who have got contacts and use them to get the work done."

"It's a lawyer thing," said Law Society President Mr Jon Tippett. "Of course they make money, everyone earns a livelihood, but few professionals give of their time so generously to the community in the same way that lawyers do. Many legal practitioners see serving the community as part of their professional duty."

Many members of the profession give service by providing free legal advice on behalf of

organisations such as Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS).

There are currently 79 volunteers, including 15 articulated clerks, 27 restricted practising certificate holders and 16 unrestricted certificate holders on the books of DCLS.

DCLS volunteer coordinator Ms Sam Schuman said that "since 1991, DCLS volunteers have assisted over 10,000 people at advice sessions. The members

"Many legal practitioners see serving the community as part of their professional duty."

of the management committee are also volunteers.

"There has also been a huge input from the legal community during both editions of the NT Law Handbook. Work on the legal information in this book is voluntary. The volunteers for the law handbooks are usually 'dobbled in' by their mates to do this!" said Ms Schuman.

The Save Jabiluka campaign, which reached its peak in 1998, recruited the services of a number of willing Darwin lawyers on a no-fee basis to assist with advising and representing campaign activists.

Tim Pritchard runs the Environment Defenders Office in Darwin and was instrumental in coordinating the legal support for the Jabiluka campaign.

"I undertook to arrange free legal advice sessions for protesters before the

large protests — a dozen or so practitioners came and assisted," said Mr Pritchard.

"There are so many informal contributions lawyers make. You

can go to the Roma Bar and speak to three or four lawyers about advice on particular points.

"Territory lawyers are extremely helpful and give freely of their time to non profit organisations like ours," he said.



Jabiluka protesters were assisted by Territory lawyers who gave their time in a voluntary capacity in free legal advice sessions.