



Mills Oakley launches new charity

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Leading national law firm Mills Oakley is proud to announce the launch of a new charity dedicated to pro bono work.

The new charity, known as Everyday Justice, will provide free legal advice for the “missing middle.” This term describes the growing number of low to moderate income earners in Australia who are ineligible for means-tested Legal Aid services but are unable to afford a private lawyer. To access the legal system, the missing middle often must make a difficult choice between incurring substantial financial hardship, self-representing or abstaining from pursuing their legitimate legal claims altogether. Everyday Justice hopes to alleviate some of this undue hardship.

Innovative, accessible justice

Everyday Justice will emphasise accessibility for clients, delivering services online and via telephone, as well as in person. Innovative legal technology solutions will ensure that vulnerable people, including those with disabilities, the elderly and those in rural, remote and regional communities have ample access to free legal assistance without the need to travel great distances to obtain it.

“During the COVID lockdowns, Mills Oakley honed the skill of providing seamless client service remotely,” observed Mills Oakley CEO John Nerurker. “We are well placed to apply those lessons with Everyday Justice.”

Everyday Justice will provide advice on employment law, tenancy, credit & debt, bankruptcy, financial abuse, fines & infringements, human rights, environmental and other areas of public interest. Many of these practice areas have experienced a strong increase in demand since last summer’s bushfires and the ongoing coronavirus related lockdowns.

An opportunity for aspiring lawyers

Everyday Justice will also provide a pathway for aspiring lawyers to gain the practical legal experience required for admission, offering internships to law graduates and newly qualified lawyers interested in pursuing careers in the social justice sector.

“An unfortunate consequence of the pandemic is that many firms cut back on their graduate intake,” said Nerurker. “Everyday Justice will give back to the profession by providing a comprehensive training program for aspiring lawyers.”

That training program will cover all areas of the firm’s practice. Interns will then have the opportunity to help make a meaningful impact on the lives of those in need, in a supportive, stimulating and diverse learning environment. “We want to equip more young lawyers with the practical skills needed to help Australians with their everyday legal issues,” said Nerurker.



Deep experience and community connections

Two of the charity's senior figures are well-credentialed in the pro bono space. Mills Oakley partner **Luke Geary** will chair the Everyday Justice Board and managing lawyer **Amy Burton** will be responsible for day-to-day pro bono operations.

Both Amy and Luke have been recognised for their contribution to accessible justice. Amy was named Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year at the Lawyers Weekly Women in Law Awards, while Luke's many accolades include Managing Partner of the Year at the Australian Law Awards, in recognition for his work at a previous firm, and Anzac of the Year for services to the legal profession and the community.

Everyday Justice will continue to work closely with the many charities supported by MO, who will refer clients to the service.

Everyday Justice will also formally partner with [The College of Law](#) to identify suitable candidates for the internship program. **Terri Mottershead**, Executive Director of the College's [Centre for Legal Innovation](#), will serve on the Board of Everyday Justice. Mills Oakley partner **Vera Visevic** will also serve on the Board.

"Every charity needs to have roots in the community," said John Nerurker. "It is vital to have a consultative approach, taking advice and seeking engagement from as wide a cross-section of stakeholders as possible. We are not here to re-invent the wheel – we are here to follow best practice and to assist as many vulnerable people as we can. And given the number of vulnerable people affected by COVID-19, the need has never been greater."

The decision to launch Everyday Justice was welcomed by Australian Pro Bono Centre CEO Gabriela Christian-Hare, who commented:

"Mills Oakley is to be congratulated for establishing and investing in Everyday Justice as a vehicle through which vulnerable Australians can obtain pro bono legal support across a range of critical areas. The charity will also help to build the next generation of lawyers committed to access to justice, the public good and community service through pro bono work."

A coming of age for Mills Oakley

The launch of Everyday Justice reflects the evolution of Mills Oakley into a modern, progressive national firm. Mills Oakley has passed many milestones in the past five years, including appointing the firm's 100th partner, crossing the \$200m revenue mark and opening a Perth office to become a truly national firm.

"We have enjoyed tremendous success in recent years," said Nerurker. "But with that success and national profile comes an obligation to give back to the community in equal measure. While we have been active in the community for many years, it is time to step up and take our pro bono strategy to the next level. This is a coming of age moment for Mills Oakley."