



**Everyday
Justice**

A Mills Oakley Philanthropic Initiative

2021/2022

ANNUAL REPORT

A NATIONAL FREE LEGAL SERVICE TO HELP PEOPLE
WHO HAVE EVERYDAY LEGAL ISSUES BUT CAN'T
AFFORD A LAWYER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Everyday Justice acknowledges the Gadigal people of Eora nation, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin nation, the Ngunnawal people, the Turrbal and Jagera people and the Whadjuk Noongar people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which our Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane and Perth offices operate. We would like to pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their Elders past, present and emerging.

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ABOUT US

Everyday Justice is a not-for-profit law firm owned by Mills Oakley, one of Australia's leading national law firms. Everyday Justice provides free legal services to the "missing middle" – people who require legal assistance but cannot access it from government funded services, and cannot afford a private lawyer without incurring substantial financial hardship.

Everyday Justice emphasises accessibility by providing nation-wide legal services online, over the phone and in person. This ensures vulnerable people, such as people with disabilities, older people and those

in rural or remote communities, can still access legal services, irrespective of physical impediments. The firm offers free 30-minute phone and video appointments for those who need legal advice about issues within our practice areas. We also provide more intensive free legal services, such as drafting legal documents and representing clients.

MEETING LEGAL NEED

The Law Council of Australia, in its 2018 *'Justice Project Final Report'*, found that there is a critical shortfall in legal services available to the missing middle.^[1] Unlike in education or healthcare, there is no universal system for people who need legal assistance in Australia, and securing funding for such services has proved challenging. This often results in people needing to make tough choices when it comes to asserting their legal rights. Many people must represent themselves, which is often incredibly stressful, or are forced to give up their rights, which can have significant impacts on a person's safety, wellbeing and/or financial security.^[2] If Australians cannot afford to assert or enforce their legal rights, the law becomes meaningless. Everyday Justice exists to change this.

[1] Justice Project Final Report, 2018, page 1115.

[2] Justice Project Final Report, 2018, National Legal Aid Submission, Submission No 128, page 281.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

The performance of Everyday Justice is a testament to the significant social impact that can be made through proper investment in a pro bono law firm. The past two years have been uniquely challenging, and this report speaks to the amazing and crucial work that Everyday Justice does. At a time when accessible legal services are more necessary than ever, it is vital to have a firm focused purely on pro bono practice and wholly committed to helping people in need, no matter where they are.

Wholly owned by Mills Oakley, Everyday Justice provides a wide range of legal services, as outlined in this report. It is a truly national legal service, with clients all across Australia and is run by outstanding and experienced social justice lawyers. In 2022, our team has continued to deliver high-quality services. The outcomes achieved by them are the product of daily skill and care and many hours of navigating complex and varied matters, often in challenging circumstances. They have much to be proud of and I want to acknowledge their contribution to the legal profession, as well as to the wider community. I applaud the culture of understanding, compassion, support and encouragement they foster and their dedication to nurturing those under their guidance. I am also grateful for the work of my Board colleagues who have dedicated themselves to ensuring that Everyday Justice has clear strategies and objectives, and the resources to meet them.

Importantly, Everyday Justice has relied heavily on its volunteer networks and relationships with other community organisations who have aided us in delivering our services, have referred and assisted clients and have lent strength to our vision for Everyday Justice.

I would also like to recognise the many passionate legal interns – law students, graduates and admitted lawyers – who have generously volunteered their time and energy to assisting us, without whom it would not be possible to run a free legal service for people who desperately need it. My sincere and heartfelt thanks go to them for helping us respond to community need.



I cherish our partnership with the College of Law in developing the up and coming lawyers of the next generation to have a passion for service in public interest law.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the courage of our clients, who often come from disadvantaged backgrounds, for finding the strength to seek out justice and for trusting us to help them do so. We appreciate their resilience, and their feedback is invaluable. Hearing from them about the ways in which our services have improved their lives and wellbeing is what inspires us to keep going. We strive for continuous improvement, never allowing ourselves to become complacent.

I am incredibly proud of our achievements so far, and I look forward to the year ahead as we continue to grow the impact for everyday people to achieve justice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luke Geary', written in a cursive style.

Luke Geary

LETTER FROM THE MANAGING SOLICITOR

It wasn't intentional that Everyday Justice launched right in the thick of Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in its first 16 months of operation the firm has worked hard to navigate and respond to the changing legal needs of the community. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused more people to fall into the 'missing middle' cohort and heightened existing inequality, making the need for free, accessible legal services more apparent than ever.

Throughout the past year, Everyday Justice has worked closely with financial counselling organisations around Australia to help small business owners who have been significantly impacted by COVID-related lockdowns, after observing that few existing free legal services had the resources to offer such services. Just under 400 clients have received free legal advice and representation. Of those, over 150 clients have been assisted through ongoing advice and limited representation services, such as drafting court documents and guiding self-represented litigants throughout mediation, tribunal and court proceedings.

Everyday Justice has also fully engaged in a range of litigious matters, obtaining successful outcomes in the Children's Court of Queensland, the Land and Environment Court, the Supreme Court and the Federal Circuit Court. In each of these cases, the firm has been incredibly grateful for the support of senior pro bono Counsel.

Everyday Justice has also been committed to ensure that its legal internship program has been accessible to PLT students facing ongoing COVID-19 related lockdowns. The firm assists PLT students nationally to complete their compulsory practical work experience days. Everyday Justice has supported each of these interns to find suitable law graduate roles following the internship program, as highlighted in this report.

Currently, we are working on some very exciting projects, including collaborating with a small group of in-house lawyers to pilot an 'In House Pro Bono Program'.



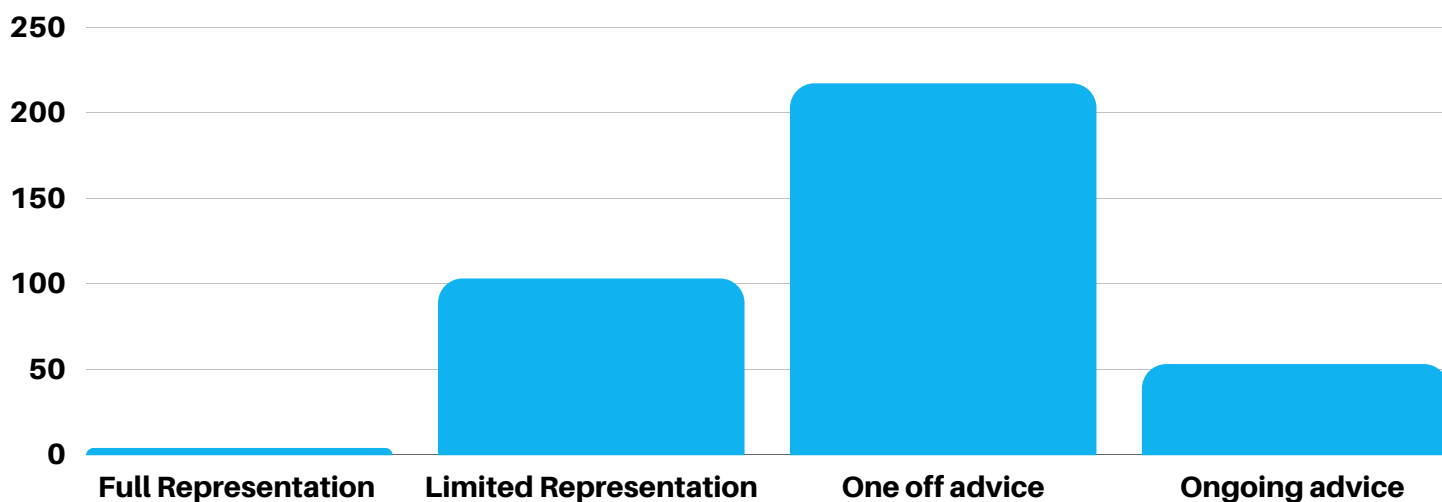
The purpose of this program is to provide greater opportunities for in-house lawyers to participate in pro bono legal work that matches their practice area expertise.

I am incredibly grateful to our wonderful team, our amazing legal interns and the Everyday Justice Board for allowing us to achieve these outcomes in the past year. I am also deeply appreciative of the support provided by Mills Oakley lawyers and staff and our partnership with the College of Law. The achievements listed in this report are the result of sustained effort, support and teamwork and I thank each person who assisted Everyday Justice and our clients. I am so proud of all that we have achieved and look forward to the upcoming year.

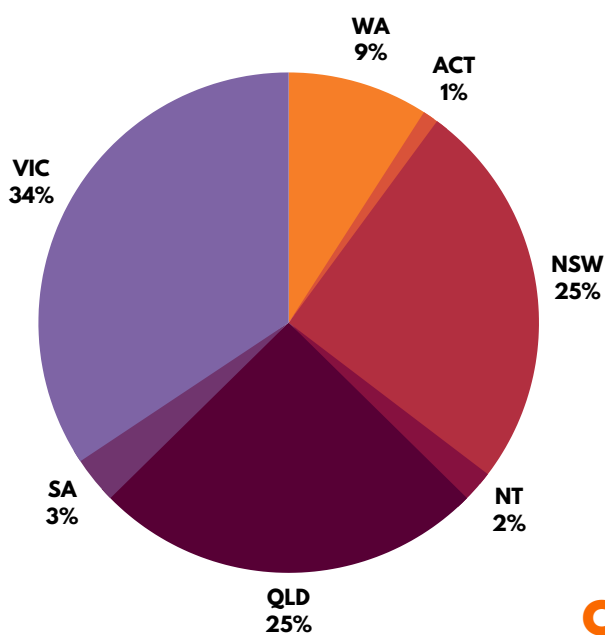
Amy Burton

EVERYDAY JUSTICE'S YEAR AT A GLANCE

Services provided in 2021-22



Location of Clients



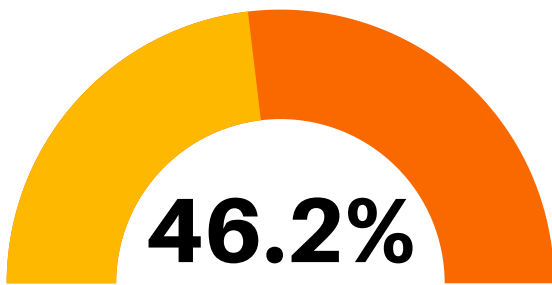
**15,253
PROBONO
HOURS**

Our Top Practice Areas



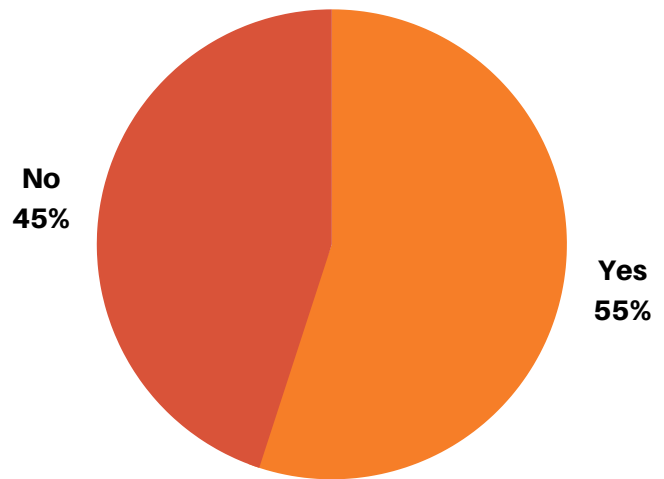
Client Demographics

Employed



**AVERAGE WEEKLY
HOUSEHOLD INCOME:
\$735.53**

Centrelink



42%

Clients who report
having a disability

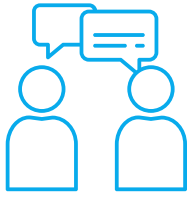
4%

Clients who identify as
Aboriginal or Torres
Strait Islander



OUR VISION

Everyday Justice has three main purposes:



We provide free legal advice to people and organisations who cannot access means-tested Legal Aid services or afford a private lawyer without incurring substantial financial hardship



We act for free in public interest law matters involving issues such as social or public welfare, human rights, reconciliation, the natural environment and the protection of animals.

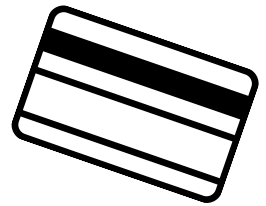


In partnership with the College of Law, we advance education by creating a holistic learning environment for law graduates and newly qualified lawyers who are interested in gaining legal experience in social justice and public interest matters. Internships are available in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and Perth.

OUR PRACTICE AREAS



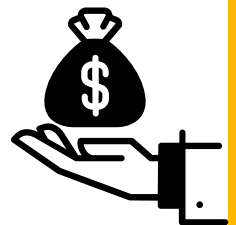
What we can help with



- Employment law
- Tenancy
- Credit & debt
- Financial abuse
- Fines & Infringements
- Human rights
- Climate change law
- Public interest law

What we can't help with

- Family Law
- Criminal Law
- Immigration
- Property
- Centrelink
- NDIS
- Workers Compensation



CASEWORK HIGHLIGHTS

Assisted a small business restaurant owner severely impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns to exit his five year commercial lease early, without facing penalties for doing so.

Helped a single mother who had experienced severe domestic violence to negotiate with a creditor to have an \$80,000 debt waived. Her abusive ex-partner had acquired the debt using the client's business name, and until we got involved the creditor refused to waive the debt.

Represented a client in a family provision claim in the Supreme Court of NSW. The client received the entirety of her mother's estate, \$38,000, which under the rules of intestacy would automatically go to her father who perpetrated domestic violence against the client and her mother.

Drafted 56 wills and other planning documents for clients. Many of these were referrals by the Cancer Council where we assisted people with terminal cancer to plan and prepare end of life arrangements.

Assisted a client to successfully argue in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) that the notice of termination issued by her landlord was retaliatory, preventing the client's imminent homelessness.

Worked in collaboration with a financial counsellor to assist small business owners to settle a dispute with their commercial landlord on favourable terms. The clients had experienced significant mental health episodes during Victorian COVID-19 lockdowns, and were at risk of the landlord bringing a claim against them for almost \$300,000 in outstanding rent.

Represented a client experiencing homelessness in an appeal against a development control order issued by a Local Council. The Local Council agreed to revoke the order against our client after we were engaged in the matter.

Assisted a client to obtain a rent reduction of \$4,000 granted by the NCAT due to the landlords' failure to repair the property.

Assisted a client to engage with their employer, who had unlawfully withheld wages as compensation for a liquidated damages claim based on an employment contract provision. The client received over \$3,000 owed by the employer.

Advocated for a client to have his long-standing driver's license disqualification lifted, allowing him to more actively participate in his community and volunteer work.

Helped a client in custody and in significant financial hardship to recover a \$12,500 debt. The debt was paid within a few weeks after we were engaged by the client.

Assisted a client to receive a \$60,000 death benefit after her partner passed away.

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL



37 years of trauma were lifted off my head. I cannot praise the service enough...

"Growing up my mother and I were victims of domestic abuse from my father. Although my parents separated in the 1980's, they were still legally married when my mother sadly passed away in 2020 and I could not live with knowing that my father would inherit her estate. I was unable to get assistance from Legal Aid or a Community Legal Centre and could not afford a private lawyer. I was referred to Everyday Justice by my social worker after the loss of my mum and they took up my case probono. The service was very accessible, and they did amazing work on my case, eventually getting me the whole of my mother's estate. Everyone involved was professional, caring, polite and empathetic throughout the whole process. They always understood where I was coming from and took everything I said on board. They listened to me and cared about my situation in a way no solicitors had done before. I had never dealt with a death on my own before and there were so many unknowns and uncertainties. I felt very well supported by the solicitors at Everyday Justice and felt that they handled every aspect of the case with respect and dignity. What they did for me was massive; 37 years of trauma were lifted off my head. I cannot praise the service enough and truthfully, I cannot imagine where I would be if I had not received their help. They did my mother justice."

Mary, 49

OUR BOARD



LUKE GEARY
CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Luke is a Partner in the Mills Oakley Not-For-Profit, Human Rights & Social Impact team in Brisbane and has extensive experience in the Not-For-Profit sector. Luke was a Partner at Mills Oakley in Sydney until late 2009, when he left the firm to found unique social enterprise law firms 'Salvos Legal' and 'Salvos Legal Humanitarian'. At Salvos Legal Luke headed up the Corporate & Commercial team, and was the firm's Managing Partner. Luke returned to Mills Oakley as a Partner in November 2017. Luke has been named one of Australia's Best Lawyers for Non-Profit/Charities Law in the Best Lawyers list since 2016, including being named as Australia's Non-Profit/Charities 'Lawyer of the Year' in 2020. Luke was recognised as one of the 10 Most Innovative Lawyers in the Financial Times Asia-Pacific Innovative Lawyers 2016 awards, and was included in Pro Bono Australia's 'Impact 25' most influential people in the Australian social sector in 2015.



VERA VISEVIC
DIRECTOR & COMPANY
SECRETARY

Vera is a Partner in the Mills Oakley Not-For-Profit, Human Rights & Social Impact team in Sydney. She has over 20 years' experience in acting for numerous charities, religious and not-for-profit organisations. Vera provides a full suite of commercial services to not-for-profit clients, including protecting commercial arrangements through drafting services agreements, privacy policies, internal policies and procedures, and reviewing grant and other government agreements.



TERRI MOTTERSHEAD
DIRECTOR

Terri is the Executive Director of the College of Law's Centre for Legal Innovation (Australia, New Zealand and Asia-Pacific). She works internationally with leaders and managers of law firms, alternative legal service/product providers, legal associations, legal incubators and accelerators, legaltech entrepreneurs, law schools, business schools, business professionals and lawyers, supporting their contribution to the transformation of legal practice. She has been a global thought leader in people centred legal practice innovation for more than 25 years, having lived/worked in Australia, Asia, UK and US. Terri has worked as a practising lawyer and has led the in-house talent management functions for a number of international firms and associations.

OUR TEAM



AMY BURTON
MANAGING LAWYER

Amy has extensive community law experience. Prior to joining the team, she was a Senior Associate at Salvos Legal Humanitarian, where she provided pro bono legal representation to vulnerable clients in the areas of migration and refugee law, criminal, care and protection, family, housing, debt and employment law. She regularly represented victims of modern slavery and advocated for legislative and policy reform in the area. In 2017, Amy was awarded 'Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year' at the Lawyers Weekly Women in Law Awards. In 2018, Amy was awarded a John Monash Scholarship, Australia's most prestigious scholarship for overseas postgraduate study. She undertook her Masters of Law at Georgetown University in Washington DC, researching practical strategies to improve access to justice for the 'missing middle', including through the use of 'low bono' law firms.



LAUREN STUBBS
ASSOCIATE LAWYER

Before joining the Everyday Justice team, Lauren worked as a solicitor at Legal Aid NSW in various specialist teams within the Civil Law Division. Her main areas of practice include housing, employment, discrimination, administrative law and, victims of crime matters. Lauren is an experienced litigator and has represented vulnerable clients in a range of civil law matters in Tribunals and Courts across Australia. Since joining Everyday Justice in December 2020, she has represented clients in a range of jurisdictions including NCAT, the QLD Industrial Relations Commission, the Land and Environment Court, the Federal Circuit Court and the Supreme Court. In 2022, Lauren was listed as a finalist in the Lawyers Weekly 30 under 30 awards in the Probono/Community Lawyer of the Year category.

JOINING US IN 2022



RAQUEL DOS SANTOS
MANAGING LAWYER

Raquel has dedicated most of her professional life to exploring how legal services can increase access to justice and address system-level issues to improve the justice sector. Before joining Everyday Justice, Raquel worked on commercial and pro bono matters at Allens, an Australian top tier firm, and in not-for-profit organisations, Justice Connect and LawRight, leading court-based services in a range of jurisdictions in QLD, VIC, NSW, the ACT and TAS. Raquel has a background in business management, has completed post graduate studies in innovation and design thinking, and holds legal qualifications in Australia and Brazil, where she started her legal career in the public service.



GLEN FALKENSTEIN
LAWYER

Glen has dedicated his professional career to furthering access to legal justice. Before joining Everyday Justice, Glen worked in Justice Connect, Not-for-profit Law, in the NSW Parliament as a policy analyst, and as a legal advocate for persons seeking asylum in Australia and Nauru. Glen completed a postgraduate law and a social research degree at the University of Technology Sydney, with semesters at the Tulane University Hague campus, where he placed first in his class, and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Glen is undertaking his Master of Laws at UNSW, specialising in Corporate, Commercial & Taxation Law and Media, Intellectual Property & Technology Law. Glen has a background in journalism and web innovation, and has held senior roles in the not-for-profit and community sector.

OUR INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

**Practical Legal Training Placement
in Partnership With The College of Law**

Everyday Justice is proud to partner with the College of Law in its new internship program. We have created a holistic learning environment for law graduates who are undertaking the Practical Legal Training ('PLT') program and newly qualified lawyers who are interested in gaining legal experience in social justice and public interest matters.

Everyday Justice has had 61 legal interns volunteer with us since opening in January 2021, including admitted lawyers, PLT interns and law students from all across Australia. Legal interns assist Everyday Justice lawyers with a wide range of tasks including:

- answering queries from potential clients;
- assisting with client intake;
- assisting with obtaining instructions from clients;
- attending meetings with clients;
- legal research, analysis and problem solving;
- drafting legal documents; and
- assisting with other Everyday Justice activities from time to time.

During the internship, interns also get the opportunity to be mentored by Partners from Mills Oakley. Through meetings with their Professional Development mentors, interns are able to receive advice, guidance and support early on in their legal careers.



**COLLEGE
OF LAW**

OUR INTERNS

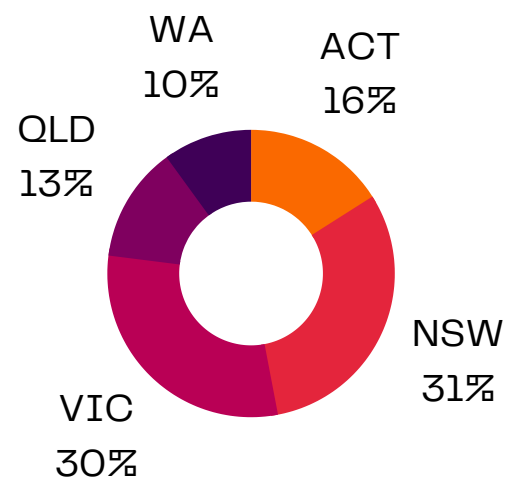
61

LEGAL INTERNS
IN MILLS OAKLEY
OFFICES ACROSS
AUSTRALIA

11

HIRED BY MILLS
OAKLEY

INTERNS BY STATE



Since it's opening in 2021, Everyday Justice has had a total of 61 legal Interns.

11 Everyday Justice interns are now employed as either legal assistants, law graduates or junior lawyers at Mills Oakley, in the Commercial Disputes and Insolvency team (Melbourne & Sydney), NFPs, Human Rights and Social Impact (Sydney & Brisbane), Family Law (Sydney), Toxic Torts (Sydney), Private Advisory (Brisbane) and Workplace Relations & Safety (Melbourne – graduate rotation).

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

**EVERYDAY JUSTICE
FINALIST
PROBONO PROGRAM
OF THE YEAR 2022**

AUSTRALIAN LAW AWARDS



**LAUREN STUBBS
(ASSOCIATE LAWYER)
FINALIST
PROBONO/COMMUNITY
LAWYER OF THE YEAR 2022**

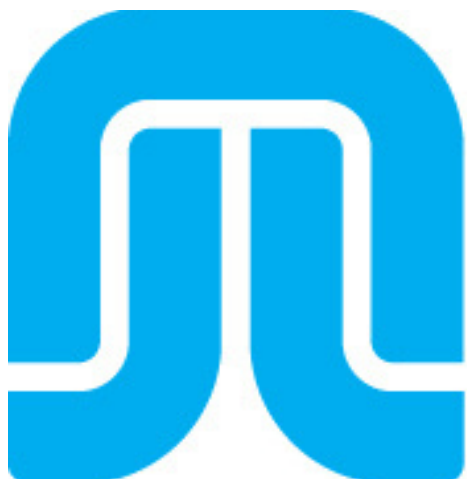
**LAWYERS WEEKLY
30 UNDER 30 AWARDS**

SPECIAL THANKS

Our sincere heartfelt thanks go to the staff and lawyers at Mills Oakley who assist us with our matters and in the day to day operations of our service. In 2021-22, Mills Oakley lawyers assisted Everyday Justice in 19% of our matters.

We are particularly grateful to Andrew Greenhalgh, Stuart O'Neill, Deren Hassan, Troy Palmer and Adam Lunn, our top Mills Oakley volunteers, who generously dedicated their time and energy to helping us with some of our more complex pro bono matters.

We also deeply value our partnership with the College of Law, which allows us to work with, develop, train and mentor emerging talent in the legal industry.



**COLLEGE
OF LAW**

GET INVOLVED

Volunteer

Everyday Justice regularly seeks volunteer solicitors who are committed to social justice and interested in doing pro bono work.

Complete Your Practical Legal Training

Everyday Justice's PLT program in partnership with the College of Law helps students to develop special skills in client intake and casework prior to admission as a lawyer. You can apply via The College of Law website.

ABN: 38 645 694 784

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**Everyday
Justice**

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