



P  L C H

Public Interest Law Clearing House





The Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH NSW) bridges the justice gap by linking individuals and not-for-profit organisations with legal and other professional advisors to help build a just free and sustainable society.

PILCH NSW offers its members opportunities to give to the community through a broad range of pro bono work.

Members who accept pro bono referrals and participate in PILCH NSW projects gain valuable enriching experiences and make a difference to the quality of life for people in NSW and beyond.



About PILCH NSW

Formed in 1992, PILCH NSW is a membership based organisation which each year refers two hundred requests for help from the community to our members.

PILCH NSW also provides advice, coordinates projects to create systemic change and hosts events to raise awareness about public interest matters. It is a trusted pro bono “clearing house” which works with referral networks such as Community Legal Centres, Law Access NSW, the Legal Aid Commission and not for profit organisations.

Members include NSW based law firms, barristers, accounting firms, law schools, corporate law departments, the NSW Bar Association, the Law Society of NSW, NSW Legal Aid Commission and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre.

Funding is sourced almost exclusively from annual membership fees supplemented by a grant from the NSW Public Purpose Fund and PILCH fundraising efforts. A Board of Directors guides management of the organisation.



Our Mission Statement

PILCH NSW is committed to protecting human rights, responding to emerging issues of public concern and helping build just and fair communities.

We Aim to Bridge the Justice Gap by:

Providing the community with access to pro bono legal representation and other professional service to enable pursuit of important legal and social issues that would otherwise go unaddressed.



Developing and coordinating projects which respond to unmet legal need and which address systemic issues.



Forming partnerships which encourage and facilitate the clinical training of future lawyers by offering law students volunteering, coursework and internship opportunities.



Equipping our members with the specialised knowledge and skills required to work with the community across a range of needs.





“The Public Interest”

Where does PILCH fit in?

PILCH NSW receives, assesses and refers requests for pro bono assistance from members of the public and not-for-profit organisations.

Referral requests to PILCH are assessed against a public interest criteria developed over our years of service and with an evolving understanding of community needs. ‘Public interest’ is interpreted to include issues that particularly impact on disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised groups or raise matters of broad public concern.

Public interest issues arise across a range of areas including accountancy, corporate law, credit and debt, discrimination, employment, human rights, administrative law, homelessness, environmental matters, criminal, immigration, associations management and international law.



Access to Justice

“It is fundamental to our democracy and to our nation of law that all who require it should have access to justice.” Sir Anthony Mason

Vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised people frequently have legal problems that can be devastating without help. Not-for-profit organisations that assist vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised people, sometimes need assistance as well.

Demand Exceeds Supply

Community Legal Centres and Legal Aid are a vital component of access to justice for all people in the community, providing independent legal assistance to a large number of clients as well as contributing to law reform initiatives. These services have limited resources however, and legal need in the community exceeds the capacity of these services to provide assistance.

Those who cannot afford to pay for assistance or gain access to Community Legal Centres or Legal Aid, risk falling into the justice gap.

Bridging the Justice Gap

Individuals and not-for-profit organisations receive assistance from PILCH NSW Members for no fee where they are unable to afford to pay for assistance or when assistance is otherwise unavailable.

In this way, PILCH NSW Members help to Bridge the Justice Gap.



Access to Justice for Individuals

Many people are socially and economically disadvantaged and struggle to gain access to a range of affordable services, including legal advice. Access to justice can foster social inclusion within communities and address historical and ongoing inequality.

PILCH NSW Members assist individuals to raise issues of public importance through litigation, by giving advice and other forms of advocacy in a range of forums.



Access to Justice for Not-For-Profit Organisations

PILCH NSW is the only service in NSW that assist not-for-profit organisations with their legal needs.

Not-for-profit organisations assist people to become active agents in their own lives. These organisations often have concerns about the administration of their operations which require legal accounting and other professional advice. PILCH NSW members help with advice on vital structural, administrative and legal matters.



Services for Community Legal Centres

PILCH NSW members provide a range of services for CLCs. These include legal advice, access to training facilities, venues, publications support and pro bono referral of cases beyond a centre's capacity. This practical assistance enables CLCs to use more of their limited resources to help more people.



Cooperative Work & Projects

As a peak body, PILCH NSW identifies emerging and important issues that affect the broader community. PILCH NSW also works in partnership with community Legal Centres, Government Agencies, not-for-profit organisations and law schools to address emerging issues of unmet legal need.

Projects coordinated by PILCH NSW aim to address systemic problems which require redress for the public good. PILCH NSW members are provided opportunities to work collectively on these important issues. Members assist with advocacy and in shaping proposals for law reform.



Public Events

PILCH NSW organises public events for the benefit of members and stakeholder organisations.

PILCH NSW also holds public events to raise awareness about specific public interest issues within the community and the pro bono sector. Events include public seminars, movie nights and large fundraising initiatives.

PILCH Law Walk for Justice, is a national event raising funds for all PILCH organisations in Australia. The event attracts hundreds of participants and raises much needed funds to support public interest work.



Membership

PILCH NSW members are provided with opportunities to work collectively on public interest cases and projects which will make a real difference to our community. It is corporate social responsibility in action.

Membership of PILCH NSW means:

Demonstrated commitment to social justice



Opportunities to work at the forefront of emerging legal issues



Embracing a culture of pro bono service delivery



Demonstrated commitment to community service and
Corporate Social Responsibility



Opportunities for staff secondment, student placement and
clinical training



Participation in a collegiate environment which supports the
development of pro bono practice



Promoting teamwork, creativity and personal growth for staff



How to Join

Becoming a member of PILCH NSW is easy. Simply complete a membership application form available on our website. Membership fees vary depending on the size of your firm, chambers, or organisation. Individual barrister memberships are welcome. Contact the PILCH NSW Executive Director for further information.



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PILCH is supported by the following professional institutions:



**The Law Society
of New South Wales**



New South Wales Bar Association



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