

Thursday, 28 May 2009

media release

Legal community launch commitment behind Lawyers Beyond Borders

Australia's legal community has thrown its support behind Lawyers Beyond Borders, a new program of Australian Volunteers International (AVI).

Lawyers Beyond Borders was officially launched last week by Australia's Attorney General the Hon Robert McClelland at the University of Sydney's Law Building. More than 400 members of Australia's legal community celebrated the launch of the program that will provide Australia's legal professionals the framework to share their expertise with developing countries through a range of international volunteering and partnership initiatives.

In his address, Mr McClelland said he continued to be impressed by the number of legal professionals wanting to use their skills to give back to communities around the world.

He also noted: "Australian lawyers can make a great contribution to strengthening the rule of law in the region.

"I hope that Lawyers Beyond Borders, in partnership with the government, law firms and others can help unlock this capacity."

Mr McClelland also officially announced the key figures of Australia's legal community that will serve as patrons of Lawyers Beyond Borders. These are:

- Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia
- Sir Ninian Stephen KG AK GCMG GCVO KBE QC
- The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG
- The Hon. Elizabeth Evatt AC
- Professor Mick Dodson
- Professor Hilary Charlesworth AM

According to AVI's CEO Dimity Fifer, AVI has continued to experience ongoing support and long term commitment from legal professionals wanting to work in programs that respond to the needs of overseas communities.

"Since the 1960s AVI has placed more than 800 Australian professionals to work in a legal capacity on long-term overseas assignments. They have worked everywhere from small non-government organisations in Swaziland to the People's Lawyer's Office of Tuvalu.

"Lawyers Beyond Borders aims to harness the spirit of justice and provide more opportunities for legal professionals and legal organisations to work in partnership with AVI on international volunteer projects, e-volunteering initiatives and e-mentoring activities."

Fifer says the activities of Lawyers Beyond Borders will continue to reflect the values and approach to development of Australian Volunteers International.

"All participants and partners will be working towards shared goals, contributing to positive and sustainable change and responding to the needs of our partners in communities across the globe. .

"Lawyers Beyond Borders is based on partnership. The program encourages individuals to become members of the program and organisations to become partners. It's through these partnerships that Lawyers Beyond Borders will work towards developing a peaceful and just world."

Visit Lawyers Beyond Borders to become a member and gain exclusive member benefits such as access to professional development courses, newsletters and access to the members website. Costs are:

- Student Membership: \$20
- Professional Membership: \$80

For more information on how you can be involved or participate in upcoming training initiatives and events of Lawyers Beyond Borders visit www.LawyersBeyondBorders.com.

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