

# Communiqué No. 13

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## INTRODUCTION

Dear all

Trust you are staying safe.

From our previous communique in January 2020, to the present period in this second quarter of a rather unprecedented year, much has taken place due to the outbreak of Covid-19 which has of course drastically affected us here in South Africa and around the globe. Given its impact on not only the unfortunate loss of lives and the health risks posed, it has detrimentally impacted on the greater economy and employment for so many. In this regard, it is foreseen that our pro bono advice offices may even see a greater demand by virtue of the crisis's effect on job security.

With the positivity held at the start of the year (pre Covid-19 crisis in SA), we are nonetheless hopeful and indeed optimistic going into the future, especially with the continued functioning of our pro bono advice offices.

On this note, I am glad to inform that our pro bono advice offices were still able to function remotely throughout all SASLAW chapters in the various provinces in assisting and providing pro bono advice through our online project. This benefitted individuals with access to internet, telephone, etc., but it is also a reality that a lot of the indigent individuals, that normally visit our advice offices at the Labour Courts, do not necessarily have access to these means (or it is otherwise limited), especially during the national lockdown. See below for further information.

On behalf of SASLAW, I would like to thank our valued pro bono attorneys, national and chapter administrators, and all of those who have been a part of this initiative during this difficult period. This has greatly assisted us.

I wish you all the best in this uncertain time and stay safe.

Regards,

Venolan Naidoo

SASLAW National Committee, Pro Bono Portfolio

## SASLAW Pro Bono project - Online

A decision was made in mid-March to continue with running the Pro bono project online as far as possible, while maintaining standards and the professional approach to assisting clients. Notices were put up at the four Labour Courts informing clients of this change in operations. In addition, the Court staff was informed, and this information was loaded onto the SASLAW social media platform, and on the website.

The administrators regularly contact the registrars, to see if there are clients to assist, and the national manager has kept in contact with the pro bono departments of the large law firms, to offer extra assistance as required. Thank you to those attorneys who have responded quickly to the administrator's requests. Your assistance at the time is greatly appreciated.

The administrators have been compiling a list of questions that we have been receiving recently, that they are unable to answer. The Directors will run a short guidance session with all the administrators to assist them with answering these COVID-19 related questions, to perform a further screening, in anticipation of a large number of clients expected in the offices in the months ahead.

## ADVICE OFFICE UPDATES

### **1. CHAPTER OFFICE REPORT BACK**

- Johannesburg - Helen Sithole

The Johannesburg office has managed fairly well during this lockdown. We have been receiving enquiries via email mostly. Clients are screened via email or phone call to assess if they meet the requirements to be assisted by the office. If they meet the requirements their email together with supporting documents are forwarded to the attorney on duty. The attorneys in turn copy the Admin in all their correspondence with clients thus database is kept up to date. So far things have run smoothly. Though there is always that one client even after having read the email from attorney wants things explained via a 30-minute phone call. The upside about working remotely is that the clients who email their matters are serious and willing to see things through and one does not have

to deal with those who just want to vent their frustrations.

The SASLAW pro bono project at the Labour Courts serves to deliver a quality advisory service and defined Labour law legal services to those who otherwise do not have access to justice

Directors: Richard Maddern, Nick Robb, Shamima Gaibie; Ludwig Frahm-Arp; Ebrahim Abrahams;  
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- Permanent Attorney - Jacqueline Keet

Since the temporary closure of the pro bono offices in Johannesburg until the nationwide lock down, I could attend to numerous clients drafting and enquiries, as they all still had access to internet cafes etc. I requested Helen to send me the excel copy of the names and contact details of clients we attended to since January 2020 until our temporary closure. I also made use of the list compiled since last year June - December 2019 and send SMS's to all the clients to enquire if they needed assistance with drafting, advise or just general enquiries.

I requested them to either email or WhatsApp me copies of their documents. The clients battled during the month of April as all the internet cafes were closed and they did not have access to WhatsApp. But I could assist those who had the means to send the documents to me.

- Durban - Diane Cochran

The KZN Probono office has been offering services to clients remotely via telephone and email since the current lockdown was put in place. The situation is not ideal as the demographic of the majority of our clients do not have access to email to send through documentation to review. We are working with the registrar in Durban who is aware that we can still try and assist where possible and to send any clients to us should they contact them.

From the end of March to now we have had very few Probono clients making contact with us for assistance. In the interim we are following up on prior cases seen and doing what we can to assist those to move forward.

- Port Elizabeth - Stacey Lee Bell

The Pro Bono office was running well in Port Elizabeth prior to lockdown with attorneys in attendance on Mondays and taking on matters. Since the lockdown the office has been rather quiet as one cannot see potential clients in person but rather only communicate via email or phone. However, an attorney is made available for any queries for the whole week which they are rostered. We are keeping in contact with the

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Registrar as to new developments and anything that we are able to assist with. Ms Gerber is very grateful for this service.

We have also continued to be in contact with clients that have open matters with attorneys to try give them ease of mind on any new developments.

We continue to work hand in hand with Legal Aid as required.

- Cape Town - Fatima Rustin

The SASLAW Pro-office has operated without any challenges since the opening in January this year but physically closed in the middle of March. Since then, we have e-mailed all the participating pro-bono attorneys and have set up a virtual pro-bono advice process. Attorneys are still rostered each week and all client matters which we receive via telephone call and e-mail are sent for response to the attorney rostered for that week.

For the past month we have been able to roster three attorneys and have been able to respond to 16 client matters via e-mail. We have notified the Labour Court that clients may email their matters and a notice has been placed on the SASLAW webpage.

We shall continue to follow up and provide as many clients with remote advice support as possible in this time until the office resumes normal operations. We would like to thank our attorneys for their support during this time.

## STATISTICS

### SASLAW PRO BONO STATISTICS - NATIONAL February 2011 - April 2020

Region	Cape Town	Durban	Johannesburg	Port Elizabeth	Total
Clients seen	4032	3342	16 185	752	24301

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Hours spent in office	1676	2619	11570	982	16847
No of attorneys	42	56	168	16	282
No of firms	25	32	99	11	167
No of matters taken on by attorneys	710	671	730	81	2192
No of matters taken on by Legal Aid	204	224	893	3	1324
No of new clients seen by the Permanent Attorney in the Johannesburg Advice Office since January 2017			652		652

### SUCCESS STORY - Johannesburg office

*Good morning all*

*I would like to express my sincere gratitude once again for all your help in everything you have done to ensure that I get proper representation. The lawyer and advocate represented me with great professionalism.*

*The judge ruled in my favour and it's all thanks to your team. I'm eternally grateful.*

Thank you for your wonderful contributions in time and energy to the project around the country. If you have any questions, **wish to participate in the project, or make a donation and receive a Section 18A certificate**, please contact Clare.

Directors

SASLAW Pro Bono NPC

May 2020

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[www.saslawprobono.co.za](http://www.saslawprobono.co.za); 011 678 1906



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