



SASLAW NATIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MICROSOFT TEAMS

16TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Pro bono Report

INTRODUCTION

It is with pleasure that I report to you at the SASLAW 2020 AGM taking place at SASLAW's National Conference in Johannesburg.

The 2019/2020 period has undoubtedly become an unprecedented time for us all given the Coronavirus pandemic. Its impact on both work and personal life has been profound, needless to mention the adverse effects on our economy. One can only presume, in light of the effects on job security, the ever need for pro bono advice by indigent individuals.

We are glad to inform that our pro bono advice offices have continued to function via remote means during the present lockdown at the various chapters.

Although the provision of pro bono advice were not exactly comparable with previous years in a Pre-Coronavirus world, as many individuals do not necessarily have access to technological means, given the current circumstances I think SASLAW's advice offices throughout all chapters have done a sterling job with the remote program.

SASLAW's Canadian sponsored student program has also continued albeit partially remote in South Africa. Fortunately, the students were able to physically attend a few law firms in Canada in conjunction with our program. We hope they will be able to visit us in South Africa in January 2021.

On behalf of the National Committee, we wish to express gratitude to our volunteering attorneys and those involved at SASLAW's pro bono advice offices. We wish to also thank those who have involved themselves with our Canadian sponsored program for offering their assistance. This is a great initiative.

STATISTICS

SASLAW PRO BONO STATISTICS - NATIONAL 4 February 2011 - 11 September 2020					
Region	Cape Town	Durban	Johannesburg	Port Elizabeth	Total
Clients seen	4182	3353	16 738	803	25076
Hours spent in office/online	1824	2719	11677	1148	17368

No of attorneys	45	56	168	17	286
No of firms	26	32	99	12	169
No of matters taken on by attorneys	725	686	763	89	2263
No of matters taken on by Legal Aid	209	229	910	3	1351
No of new clients seen by the Permanent Attorney in the Johannesburg Advice Office			793		793

OFFICE REPORTS

Durban Office

The KZN Probono office has offered services to pro bono clients remotely i.e. via telephone and email since the lockdown. It has worked closely with the Durban Labour Court's registrar. The situation is not ideal as the demographic of the majority of the Durban office clients do not have access to email to send through documentation to review.

From the end of March 2020, the Durban office has had very few pro bono clients in respect of making contact for assistance. In the interim, the office is following up on prior cases seen and doing what we can to assist those to move forward.

The KZN chapter has embarked on a Virtual Court Hearings project whereby through sponsorship from some members / firms we have been able to setup the necessary technical platforms to conduct matters virtually (in accordance with applicable court directives). The on-site Durban Labour Court Probono Office has been setup and is now fully ready to offer such a service to those litigants who do not otherwise have access to this technology. The KZN Chapter is driving donations for the on-site office as well as seeking volunteer members to offer their premises/ facilities for this purpose. All the necessary process documents have been drawn up and approved.

Johannesburg Office

The Johannesburg office has managed fairly well during the lockdown. It has received mostly email enquiries from pro bono clients. 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.

The registrar and the Judge van Niekerk have requested that the Joburg office remains closed until further notice. The online system of working has been going well, but numbers of pro bono clients are down. The attorneys have been very responsive and quick to handle cases. The permanent attorney, Jacqueline, has a full diary of appointments for drafting, and is also doing well.

Pro bono judges were selected by the Labour Court and assisted for 2 weeks during the July 2020 recess. Johannesburg based members have been very generous with donating to the family of Juliette Dakada. Some funds were used to buy refreshments and flowers for the Labour Court service. The balance will be given to the family and to Juliette's granddaughter to assist her with continuing her law studies at Wits. Clare spoke on behalf of the Society and the Pro Bono Directors at the service held at the Labour Court.

Cape Town Office

The SASLAW Pro bono office has operated without any challenges since the opening in January 2020 this year, but physically closed in the middle of March 2020. Since then, it has e-mailed all the participating pro-bono attorneys and has 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.

It has rostered 3 attorneys per pro bono sitting and has been able to respond to pro bono client emails. The Cape Town office has notified the Labour Court that clients may email their matters and a notice has been placed on the SASALW webpage.

It will continue to follow up and provide as many clients with remote advice support in this time. The Cape Town office will not be opening any time soon. PPE equipment has been shipped and Fatima requires purchasing a few more items. Fatima is running her project online very smoothly and she rosters attorneys for a full week, so that they have more time to spend on reviewing matters and giving advice. This is working very well.

The Cape Town office thanks its attorneys for their support during this time.

Port Elizabeth

The Pro Bono office was running well in Port Elizabeth prior to the 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.

Nevertheless, an attorney is made available for any queries for the whole week in which they are rostered. The Port Elizabeth office is in contact with the registrar in respect of new developments and anything that the office is able to assist with. Ms. Gerber is very grateful for this service.

The office will also continue to work hand in hand with Legal Aid as required.

Although the number of cases is low in Port Elizabeth, the attorneys are still very helpful and prompt with assistance.

CANADIAN STUDENT PROJECT- 2020

Due to COVID-19, the 3 students who were due to arrive in South Africa in early June 2020 were naturally unable to. Clare Fincham organised an online fellowship programme was created. The students attended an online LabourNet course during June 2020. We thank LabourNet for offering that course for free.

The students have participated in a research project with the Legal Resources Centre ("LRC") on a land reform and education project. From 17 to 31 July 2020 they worked on a Lawtons Africa project and attended an online course on employment equity with LabourNet. In early August 2020, they physically visited Le Clair & Associates offices in London, Ontario, Canada. In mid-August 2020, the students also visited Fasken and Norton Rose's offices in Toronto, Canada.

We certainly hope that they will be able to visit South Africa for a month in January 2021. The fellows were accommodating, flexible and enthusiastic and we thank them for their participation.

For more information on the details of the student fellows and the LRC projects, please visit this site:

<https://www.saslawprobono.co.za/canadian-fellowship-programme/>

PRO BONO AWARDS

The Directors would like to honour the following, for their extraordinary work in the offices:

Port Elizabeth

The individual award goes to **Adv Peter Kroon SC**, and the firm award goes to **Kirchmanns Inc** for their ongoing support and commitment to the Port Elizabeth office and clients.

Johannesburg

The Individual award goes to **Sean Jamieson, from Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr** for serving the most hours in the Johannesburg office this year.

The Firm award goes to **Webber Wentzel** for their extraordinarily generous donation to funding the cost of the Permanent Attorney in the Johannesburg office for 2020.

Durban

The Firm award goes to **Farrell Inc** for their contribution towards the initiation and implementation of the Durban Labour Court Virtual Hearings Project in 2020.

The Individual award goes to **Sanelisiwe Nyasulu from Garlicke & Bousfield** for serving the most hours & her commitment to the Durban office this year.

Cape Town

Abubakr Salie – Salie Attorneys

Abubakr is an independent attorney. He has over the past years shown complete dedication to SASLAW and the Pro-Bono office and always makes a way to assist the office when we ask him. He goes beyond duty to assist clients when needed.

Jason Whyte – Norton Rose Fulbright

Jason Whyte is a long-standing member of SASLAW and has served as president for the SASLAW Western Cape. Jason and his team also always dedicated to assist SASLAW when required.

CHALLENGES

The 2020 year has been challenging for South Africa and the globe. This, of course, has impacted on SASLAW's pro bono advice offices in respect of the usual process of advising pro bono clients. Fortunately, with technological means, these offices throughout our chapters were still able to service clients. A more particular challenge is the need for further funding towards our pro bono programme. We are hopeful this can still be achieved. As per the introduction of this report, SASLAW indeed expresses gratitude to all our sponsorships, including the present funding from Canada through our student program.

PLANS FOR 2021

Given the precarious period of Covid-19, it is expected that our current program in providing remote pro bono services may continue going into 2021. Having said that, and dependant on the pandemic's status next year, we are hopeful that our program may resume a level of normality in relation to the physical operation of our advice offices. The use of technological means has certainly demonstrated the benefits and effectiveness to still provide pro bono advice. Going forward, one can consider a multitude of ways to reach pro bono clients even beyond the business centres of South Africa.

We will keep you informed in time to come.

I wish you all the best for the remaining 2020 year ahead, stay safe!

Venolan Naidoo
Pro Bono Portfolio
9 September 2020