



2018 Pro Bono Partner of the Year Award: Committed to Justice for the Individual

19 JUNE 2018

Heidi Nash Smith, Partner at W+K, has been awarded the prestigious Lawyers Weekly Pro Bono Partner of The Year Award last Friday evening.

Chosen from an exceptional list of pro bono candidates, when Nash-Smith was asked what set her apart from the other finalists; she replied “The key objective for our pro bono work is about access to justice for vulnerable individuals - it’s the foundation of our program, and embedded in our work culture,” she added, “we aren’t a large firm with extensive resources, however we are committed to make a difference, one person at a time.”

Since 2012, Heidi has been responsible for growing the pro bono program from 12 lawyers to 68 this year, which accounts for more than half of the firm’s lawyer workforce. Targeting the most marginalised groups in the community, the collective volunteered hours are focussed on refugee case work, senior’s rights, and supporting self represented litigants. Pro bono hours have increased by 67.5% over the past year.

The positive effect the firm’s pro bono work has made in a relatively short period of time is notable, and has been achieved from building strong relationships and collaborating with key industry bodies.

Over the course of the 2017, W+K's work in conjunction with the Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC) stopped the deportation of at least 9 people back to certain harm on Manus and Nauru, and contributed to the safety of over 400 men, women and children who remain in Australia.

Daniel Webb, Director of Legal Advocacy at HRLC advised "We know that when there are very sensitive matters, especially concerning very vulnerable women, your team have the expertise to act quickly and discreetly. One particularly important aspect of your work with this group of clients had been the holistic support that you have provided them."

This holistic support is one that Nash-Smith attributes to the high levels of cultural engagement of the W+K pro bono team and ongoing support and prioritisation of pro bono work by the firm's partnership.

David Kearney, Chief Executive Partner of W+K, attributes much of the success of the program to Heidi's passion and drive to educate and engage with staff. "Heidi has worked tirelessly from day one to establish our Community Footprint Program. We are proud of the incredible impact we are having against the size of our firm, especially given over 50% of our lawyers staff are volunteering to be involved," he added, "I couldn't think of a more deserving candidate to win this distinguished award."

For more information on Wotton + Kearney's Pro Bono and Community Footprint Program or to contact Heidi, please visit:

<http://www.wottonkearney.com.au/pro-bono/>

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