

Free legal services for people affected by cancer

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Health professional



“I see such a change in people’s level of stress and an improvement in their ability to cope – which equates to better health outcomes.”

Client



“It was a great experience and really made me feel that I had someone in my corner.”

“This is an amazing program which really helps people during an extremely difficult time. I’m honoured to be able to help.”



Lawyer

Cancer Council Pro Bono Program

Increasing cancer incidence, decreasing mortality and increasing survival trends means more people are now living with a cancer diagnosis, placing a greater focus on the intense financial, emotional and practical consequences associated with living with cancer. An estimated 60% of people affected by cancer face distress from legal and financial challenges in addition to health concerns.

Why is the program needed?

The cost of cancer is high. In a report prepared for Cancer Council, Access Economics estimated the average cost of a cancer diagnosis to be almost \$50,000. A person affected by cancer may require assistance with a variety of legal issues. These may include:

- advice around insurance claims or disputes to access funds to manage everyday expenses;
- managing employment law issues;
- dealing with creditors; and
- preparing wills or power of attorney documents.

These legal needs often arise as a result of a person’s diagnosis, and they are unable to access services due to cost, illness or other barriers. The sequelae of these unmet needs are higher levels of stress and worry, financial burden and poorer wellbeing. In recognition of this, Cancer Council NSW established a National Pro Bono Program.

How does the program work?

People affected by cancer are referred to the program by oncology health professionals, including doctors, nurses and social workers, from cancer treatment centres and hospitals. The Pro Bono Program assesses the means of clients and connects those who are unable to afford the cost of advice with lawyers in their community who volunteer their time and expertise.

What is the impact of the program?

The Pro Bono Program was evaluated to investigate the impact of providing pro bono services on the wellbeing of people affected by cancer.

After receiving assistance, participants reported that they experienced significantly lower levels of stress and worry; and were less burdened financially. They were also significantly more informed about the issues affecting them; had a better understanding of available options; and felt more in control.

Research showed that the program provides information and psychological, emotional and material benefit to people affected by cancer and this has a significant impact on their levels of distress.

How to contact the Cancer Council Pro Bono Program

Email probono@cancercouncil.org.au
Call 1300 856 199

