



Voluntary Assistance Scheme

of The Bar Council of Ireland

Voluntary Assistance Scheme Update

DIANE DUGGAN BL

VAS is operated by the Bar Council of Ireland and accepts requests for legal assistance from NGOs, civic society organisations and charities acting on behalf of individuals who are having difficulty accessing justice. Please contact us for further details or see the Law Library website under 'Bar Council and You'.

European Pro Bono Nomination

In April and May 2013, thirty-three barristers volunteered with Mr. Justice Quirke on the Magdalen Commission to assist him in conducting a needs assessment of women who had spent time in the Magdalene Laundries. The volunteers dedicated a huge amount of time speaking to these women. The Voluntary Assistance Scheme and the Magdalen Commission Volunteers were recently listed among the top four pro bono projects shortlisted for PILnet's 2014 European Pro Bono Award for Partnership in the Public Interest.

PILnet is the Global Network for Public Interest Law, an international *pro bono* organisation. The project was nominated by Ireland's Public Interest Law Alliance (PILA). Earlier this year, the Magdalen Commission volunteers received an Honorary Human Rights Awards at the 2014 Irish Law Awards.

The thirty-three volunteers were inspirational in their task; demonstrating enormous skill, compassion and integrity

in carrying out their work. VAS were incredibly proud to be associated with the project and are delighted that this experience is being recognised in the European context of partnership in pro bono law.

Legislative Drafting Committee

Over the past number of months, a legislative drafting committee has been formed to look at the possibility of producing a piece of legislation at the request of Ana Liffey Drug Project. The committee is chaired by Emily Egan SC and its members include Bernard Condon SC, Rebecca Broderick BL, Rebecca Graydon BL, Marcus Keane BL and Brendan Savage BL. These members are providing an enormous amount of time and expertise to a worthwhile project. If you have experience in legislative drafting and would like to get involved in future projects, please get in touch with VAS.

Get Involved

VAS has been incredibly busy since the beginning of the legal year with new requests for assistance frequently being made. VAS continue to provide help to NGOs and their clients on an advisory basis. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch with us by contacting either Diane Duggan at dduggan@lawlibrary.ie or Jeanne McDonagh at jmcdonagh@lawlibrary.ie. ■