

australian
volunteers
international



LAWYERS BEYOND BORDERS

Concept Paper

March 2009

1. CONTEXT

The world we live in is changing before our eyes. In the midst of this rapid and unpredictable change we naturally seek reassurance in those things which are familiar to us and upon which our society is built: the rule of law, free elections, democracy and, of course, the guiding principles of natural justice. We take these things for granted and even assume that they are fundamental values which are universally shared, at least in our part of the world.

Yet we are a nation of plenty surrounded by millions of people for whom the principles described above are foreign and currently unattainable. From our north to the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean to Australia's east lie nations where development is stalled and injustice entrenched because of capacity restraints and a basic lack of resources. Those nations want to change, develop and prosper - and Australian lawyers want to help. They can change the course of nations and change the lives of those who share our common destiny in this largely remote hemisphere.

Injustice knows no boundaries, which is why we've developed *Lawyers Beyond Borders*¹.

2. KEY AIMS

Lawyers Beyond Borders (LBB) is an exciting initiative developed by Australian Volunteers International (AVI), Australia's most trusted name in the management of people-centred development projects and programs in a wide range of countries both in our region and around the world. We know Australian lawyers are passionate about their work and are committed to meaningful pro-bono work here at home.

AVI has considerable experience in facilitating the placement of lawyers into developing countries through our existing programs, but demand from the legal fraternity has markedly increased in recent years. We have developed LBB to meet this increasing demand and match the experience and expertise of Australia's legal sector with the needs expressed by developing communities for assistance in strengthening sustainable and just legal frameworks, policies and practices. LBB will provide a coordinated response to requests from developing communities for long term relationships with the Australian legal sector and provide a mechanism for the Australian legal sector to engage with lasting and positive impact in these countries.

LBB will offer Australia's legal, justice and paralegal fraternity access to a new, highly-integrated, operational framework providing a wide range of options to share expertise across the region². This program will be of interest to law firms, community legal organisations, law faculties, government agencies, peak bodies and courts, as well as individuals, policy-makers and community organisations involved in all areas of legal practice.

This paper outlines the establishment of a truly exciting program - the first of its kind in Australia - which seeks to consolidate existing successes and provide a

¹ *Lawyers Beyond Borders* is a registered trademark.

² Initially in the Pacific Islands, PNG, Indonesia and Timor Leste.