

Arnold Bloch Leibler
Lawyers and Advisers

Level 21
333 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Australia
Telephone 61 3 9229 9999
Facsimile 61 3 9229 9900

Level 24
Chifley Tower
2 Chifley Square
Sydney NSW 2000
Australia
Telephone 61 2 9226 7100
Facsimile 61 3 9226 7120
www.abl.com.au



media release

Arnold Bloch Leibler lawyer wins top Human Rights Award

December 7, 2006

Arnold Bloch Leibler Partner, Peter Seidel has been awarded the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's 2006 Human Rights Award in the Law category.

The award recognises significant contributions to the promotion and advancement of human rights in Australia through the practice of law.

As the head of Arnold Bloch Leibler's public interest law practice, Peter Seidel co-ordinates the firm's pro bono efforts to which all staff are encouraged to contribute. He channels the firm's knowledge and resources to defend or assert rights, develop the law or improve the administration of justice in the public interest.

Arnold Bloch Leibler's Senior Partner, Mark Leibler AC, congratulated Peter Seidel, praising his unwavering commitment to the advancement of human rights.

"Peter's commitment, enthusiasm and dedication are a driving force and inspiration to both the firm's staff and clients," he said.

"His collaborative approach to public interest work is greatly respected by his clients and is emulated by his colleagues. Peter approaches his practice from the viewpoint that the organisations and groups with whom he works are at the coalface of issues and know what outcomes they need, and that the role of the firm is to empower them to get to there."

During the past financial year, under the guidance of Peter Seidel, Arnold Bloch Leibler worked on nearly 100 public interest matters of varying sizes and undertook more than 4,000 hours of such work, which means averaged out across the firm each professional spent approximately 50 hours on public interest law matters over the course of the year. In financial terms alone, the equivalent of in excess of \$1.5 million worth of public interest law work was carried out by ABL in 2005/6.

Peter Seidel has assisted numerous clients associated with Indigenous, environmental, social justice, cultural and medical research causes. They include long-term clients, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Voiceless, the Fund For Animals and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Over the last few years, he and his team have carried out a significant amount of work for the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation, the Children's Cancer Institute of Australia and Greening Australia.

It is through his 13 year continuing relationship with the Yorta Yorta native title warriors of the mid- Murray region of northern Victoria and southern NSW that Peter Seidel has made his greatest contribution to public interest law.

This work has been complemented more recently by his advisory work with important peak bodies like Reconciliation Australia.

ABL's long and strong commitment to Indigenous causes is also highlighted by the firm's seminal work with the grand master artists of Jirrawun Arts, as together they build a cutting edge Gija cross cultural economy in the East Kimberley.

More recently the firm has partnered the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law and Thamarrurr Regional Council, the local Indigenous Council for the unjustly maligned peoples of Wadeye, exposing serious and systemic Government education funding inequities in the region.

Peter Seidel said the award "honours the importance of my clients' causes and I accept it with humility on their behalf and on behalf of the partners and staff of ABL, who have entrusted to me the privilege of coordinating the firm's legal efforts to improve civil society".

Fundamental to his approach is the basic principle that there is no distinction between paid and non-paid work.

"Public interest law has never been and will never be regarded by us at ABL as the after the hours stuff we do after the real work is done; it is no mere 'feel good' adjunct unrelated to our core business".

"Sure we do the work because it's the right thing to do, but we are also very mindful of its many intangible benefits, such that it is integral to our business plan, inextricably linked to our culture and identity as a firm.

"We treasure our public interest law clients. We feed off their passions. And we commit to them for as long as it takes to bring about change for the better", he said.

Peter Seidel is on the Boards of the Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH), the Victoria Law Foundation, the Wantok Musik Foundation and the Melbourne Workers Theatre.

For further information or to organize an interview with Peter Seidel please call David Pleydell on (03) 9229 9839