

IJGlobal ESG Legal Adviser Pro-Bono, APAC – Ashurst

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Ashurst wins the IJGlobal ESG Legal Adviser Pro-Bono Award for the APAC region thanks to its work in the Pacific Islands which was described by one judge as being “genuinely proactive, unique and impactful”, “supporting communities in a region that faces significant challenges”.

Another of the IJ judges said: “This is a great initiative based on action and focusing on a region in need of support from both a climate change and the ESG perspective.”

Ashurst is the only law firm with a Pacific Islands pro bono practice – co-run by 2 women expert lawyers from Papua New Guinean and Australian.

This places Ashurst at pro bono's cutting edge, noting the growing prominence of Pacific issues and trend towards promoting leadership by people with lived experience.

The submission states: “Our approach is Pacific-led, demand-driven, collaborative, flexible and iterative. With Pacific Islands and Australian lawyers working together, we start small, focus on opportunities, and seek to build trust and impact over time.”

The practice is jointly led by:

- Emma Minimbi – a PNG lawyer, pro bono consultant, advocate for gender equality and inclusive development
- Dr Nicole Dicker – Brisbane lawyer, pro bono consultant and international development professional with experience designing and managing projects, leading teams and advising clients including the Australian government (foreign aid program), United Nations, and legal sector actors across Australia, the Indo-Pacific and the Americas

Ashurst's Pacific Islands pro bono practice is overseen by Sarah Morton-Ramwell, global pro bono and social impact partner at Ashurst, as well as its office managing partner in Port Moresby.

The practice benefits from the technical input and support of lawyers across the firm, including at the most senior levels.

The submission states: “Such partners are at the forefront of our ESG commercial offerings and believe in the benefit of aligning our global pro bono practice with commercial ESG agendas in order to promote the creation of ‘shared value’ for maximum social impact.”

Popular pro bono

The Pacific Islands region faces significant challenges including the existential threat of climate change and gender



inequality, and particularly high rates of violence against women.

However, there is a dearth of quality pro bono (free) legal support available.

With a longstanding office in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Ashurst was already invested in the region and is responding to these problems by addressing unmet legal needs.

The submission states: “Ashurst's Pacific Islands pro bono practice provides pro bono support to promote access to justice, gender equality and effective responses to the climate crisis.

“When we first started to scope and build the project and determine our priority focus areas and approach, we conducted almost 200 consultations with eminent legal professionals and senior government, private sector, international organisation and civil society stakeholders from across the Pacific.

“This extensive consultation process informed our Pacific Islands pro bono strategy which guides our work, and gave us the confidence to know we are responding to demand and addressing unmet legal needs.”

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