

**Speech by the Hon Rimsky Yuen, SC, JP,  
Secretary for Justice  
at the 2014 Law Society  
Pro Bono and Community Work Award Ceremony  
on 5 December 2014 (Friday)**

Mr. Justice Ma [Chief Justice], Mr. Stephen Hung [President of the Law Society], Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to join you at the *Pro Bono* and Community Work Award Ceremony 2014 this evening. Just now, we have witnessed that a total of 101 lawyers and 11 law firms received awarded this year. I am very pleased to see this encouraging result and may I express my warmest congratulations to them.

2. The promotion of *pro bono* legal services is now a worldwide trend. By way of example, *pro bono* work is increasingly popular among various jurisdictions in the Asia Pacific region including Australia, Singapore, India and the Mainland. Going beyond the Asia Pacific region, the Law Society of England and Wales recently published its 2014 survey on *pro bono* work of solicitors<sup>1</sup>, which reveals the breadth and impact of *pro bono* work. According to the survey, the total estimated value of *pro bono* work across all private practice solicitors is around £601 million, equivalent to approximately 2.8 per cent of the total turnover generated by solicitor firms.

3. In Hong Kong, many lawyers are also very generous with their professional time and offer to provide *pro bono* services. Hong Kong is blessed with one of the world's most mature legal systems. While we stress that the rule of law is a fundamental core value of our society as well as the bedrock of Hong Kong's success, it is of utmost importance to remind ourselves that access to justice is an indispensable element of the rule of law. The provision of *pro bono* services brings immense benefits not only to those who require assistance, but also the community as a whole as such services enhance access to justice.

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<sup>1</sup> "Pro bono up as solicitors fill legal aid void" , The Law Society Gazette, UK, 3 November 2014 (<http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/practice/pro-bono-up-as-solicitors-fill-legal-aid-void/5044779.fullarticle>)

4. The Hong Kong SAR Government encourages and supports *pro bono* legal services. We have been implementing various measures in promoting such *pro bono* services. For example, the Home Affairs Bureau launched the Two-year Pilot Scheme to Provide Legal Advice for Litigants in Person in early 2013, and has recently launched another round of Recognition Scheme for Provision of *Pro Bono* Legal services. The latter is now open to receive nomination for recognition of services during the period from October this year to September next year. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all of you to join.

5. Before closing, may I express my gratitude to the Law Society of Hong Kong for organizing the *Pro Bono* and Community Work Recognition Programme in the past four years. The interest in this critical issue of social justice now runs more than deep enough to sustain the Programme. Support for *pro bono* in Hong Kong has been on the rise and is now at the heart of the legal profession. I hope all the awardees can keep up with your *pro bono* work and spread your passion to the other members of the legal profession.

6. Thank you.