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**By: Sarah Elks**  
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# Star appeal added to law firm's fight

**Sarah Elks**

ERIN Brockovich may jokingly describe lawyers as "blood-sucking back-stabbing bastards" but the high-profile legal activist yesterday announced a partnership with an Australian law firm to unearth environmental cover-ups down under.

Ms Brockovich, whose work was immortalised on film by Julia Roberts in 2000, will act as a consultant to Queensland-based Shine Lawyers, focusing mostly on environmental issues.

It's her first formal partnership with a non-US law firm and although she did not detail exactly what her duties would be, Ms Brockovich said she wanted to be a conduit between ordinary people and lawyers.

Ms Brockovich said she wanted to travel here regularly and was often contacted by Australians seeking legal advice.

She had taken particular interest in lead poisoning at Esperance in Western Australia, the Moreton Bay oil spill off the Queensland coast earlier this year and the battle between the Irwin family and mining company Cape Alumina over land on Cape York.

There were "absolutely" environmental cover-ups to be exposed in Australia, as she had done in the US.

"These problems already ex-



**Conduit:** Brockovich yesterday

ist," she said in Brisbane yesterday. "This is why I feel my work is so important ... working in conjunction with a law firm, because (people) need legal advice, and they don't always know where to go."

Ms Brockovich and Shine Lawyers began working together two years ago, when they launched legal action against aluminium giant Alcoa in Western Australia.

Simon Morrison, a partner at Shine Lawyers, said the firm had a reputation for "acting for the little guy (and) for taking on the big end of town", for which Ms Brockovich was renowned.

*Erin Brockovich*, for which Roberts won an Oscar, depicts Ms Brockovich almost single-handedly proving that a utilities company was poisoning a Californian town's water supply.