

STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Legal Costs

1.1 Fees

Unless a fixed quote or other basis of charging has been agreed, our legal fees are based primarily on the time spent by our professional staff in acting on your behalf. Time is recorded in 6 minute units. The hourly rate depends on the seniority and expertise of the person who carries out the work and varies from \$100 to \$500 per hour inclusive of GST. Full details of hourly rates are available on request. However, the final amount for costs is subject to variation to take into account any extraordinary factors which may affect the figure because the record of time spent on its own does not reflect the skill, care and responsibility exercised by our firm: for example, urgent attention or complex issues.

It is your right to negotiate a costs agreement with the law practice and be notified of any substantial change to the matters disclosed.

1.2 Disbursements

In addition to our professional fees, you will be responsible for payment of out of pocket expenses which we incur on your behalf. This may include charges for such things as expert reports; photocopying; facsimile charges; courier fees; travel expenses; court filing fees; stamp duty; agents' fees (including amounts charged by service providers for filing documents and attending settlements, etc) and FDT charges. GST normally applies.

In some cases, particularly in litigation, it may be necessary to brief counsel. By instructing us you authorise us to retain barristers, including senior

counsel, to advise, draw and settle and appear on your behalf as an advocate in court.

Should a barrister or other such legal representative be employed by us, their legal services will be charged in accordance with an agreed hourly rate that may typically be between \$200 and \$400 an hour or alternatively pursuant to a court scale. Senior counsel will charge at a higher rate. Please note that counsel fees may not always be fully recoverable from the other party in the event of a costs order in your favour.

2. Queries

We strongly recommend that you should prepare a note of your queries or concerns before you attend any appointment at our office or before you make any telephone calls. This will ensure that you raise all of your concerns at the appropriate time. You will save additional expense on attendances by us in person or telephone.

3. Telephone Calls

If the person you call is unavailable and your query must be answered by that person you may:

- (a) leave a message for the call to be returned. We always attempt to return calls on the same day; this can be delayed if your line is unattended or engaged;
- (b) leave a short message with an assistant or our receptionist so that your query can be answered promptly. This can avoid delays particularly where solicitors are engaged in Court and are only at the office at the start and end of the day during the days of a hearing.

Please note that under normal circumstances, you will be billed for ALL phone call inquiries to our

office, whether they are to a lawyer or their support staff.

4. Correspondence

We will provide you with copies of any significant correspondence with other parties so that you will have a full record of our letters. Unless you specifically request it, we will not send copies of every letter received or sent on the file.

5. Disputes as to Our Legal Costs

Should you have any query about, or are dissatisfied with our legal costs, please contact us immediately. We will be happy to answer your questions and explain how the total cost was calculated.

In the event that there is a dispute or complaint in relation to legal costs the following avenues are open to you:

- (a) seek a costs review by the Taxing Master under Division 7 of Part 3.4 of the Legal Profession Act 2004 within 12 months after the bill is given to you or the law practice requests payment of costs or you pay the costs (whichever is earlier or earliest); or
- (b) make a complaint to the Legal Services Commissioner of Level 9, 330 Collins Street, Melbourne.

Failing settlement of a dispute of costs that do not exceed \$25,000, the client or the legal practitioner may refer the dispute to the Legal Services Commissioner where conciliation will be attempted and if not successful an order may be obtained.

6. The Setting Aside of a Costs Agreement

If you have entered into a costs agreement, you may apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for an order that the costs agreement be set aside. VCAT may set aside a costs agreement if satisfied that the

agreement is not fair or reasonable. If the costs agreement is set aside, VCAT may order the legal practitioner to pay your costs of the hearing. If the costs agreement is not set aside, VCAT may order you to pay the legal practitioner's costs of the hearing. There is not time limit for making this type of application.

7. Requesting Funds on Account

We have a policy of seeking funds from clients in advance. These funds are necessary to cover the disbursements which may be incurred on your behalf from time to time, in addition to our professional fees as they accrue.

We will assume upon receipt of such funds, your authority to draw on the money paid for expenses and our professional fees, as they become due.

We shall also assume your authority is given for any moneys which we receive on account of costs to be paid directly to our trust account and to pay ourselves from this money immediately after sending you our bill of costs.

8. Billing

To ensure you are kept as fully aware as possible as to the extent of your liability for our professional fees and disbursements, we will forward an interim account from time to time in the matter, for example monthly, and a final bill of costs will be given at the conclusion of the matter.

You have the right to request a bill of costs from us, and to request an itemised bill within 30 days after receipt of a lump sum bill.

If you have any particular billing requirements, please ensure that you advise us as soon as possible, preferably in writing.

9. Reporting

Our practice is to keep you advised at reasonable intervals of the progress of the matter. This is the right given to you under the *Legal Professional Act 2004*. If at any time you need

more information you should contact us.

10. Payment and Charge

Our payment terms are normal trading terms of seven days from receipt of account. If you have any difficulty with meeting these terms please contact us immediately.

Interest may be charged on legal costs, at a rate not exceeding the Cash Rate Target, as fixed by the Reserve Bank of Australia, plus 2%, from the period beginning 30 days after payment is demanded until the legal costs are paid.

The Legal Profession Act provides for interest to be charged on accounts unpaid after 30 days. This interest will be added to any unpaid account unless other arrangements have been made.

If an interim account is unpaid after 45 days we will be unable to carry out any further work or incur further costs on your behalf until the account is paid.

Subject to compliance with the Consumer Credit Code (CCC), it is this firm's practice to insist upon the right to lodge a caveat over real estate to better secure payment of costs in situations where any of our accounts are unpaid after 30 days or where reasonable funds on account are not provided following our request. This requires agreement by you that any interest in real estate will be charged to better secure payment of amounts outstanding for costs and fees. By agreeing to these terms you are agreeing to charge your interest in any real estate in Australia with payment of our fees and costs owing from time to time if either of the above situations arise. These fees will include fees for registration and withdrawal of Caveat at the Land Titles Office, but will not include any professional costs for preparation of the Caveat. By agreeing to these terms you agree to execute forthwith upon request whatever further documents are reasonably required by us to secure this obligation.

11. Settlement Negotiations

By agreeing to these terms you specifically authorise Hicks Oakley Chessell Williams to enter into settlement negotiations on your behalf. We will not however settle any matter without instructions.

12. Our Expectations of You

We expect that we will be given full instructions in the matter and that you co-operate with us in preparing your matter and do all that we reasonably ask of you.

We expect that you will follow our reasonable legal advice, including advice as to settlement offers and that you continue your claim and not withdraw it, unless we advise discontinuance or withdrawal.

13. Change of Address/ Contact Number

Please note that it is your responsibility to keep us informed of your current residential street address, postal address, email address and contact telephone number. Your failure to do this may result in you not receiving important notification from us in relation to critical limitation dates.

14. Service

If you have any queries about any of the matters referred to in these conditions, or in relation to any scale of costs applicable to your matter, please contact us. We will be happy to discuss these queries with you at any time. Our aim is to provide a prompt and efficient service at reasonable cost.

If there is a complaint about provision of the legal services you may contact the Legal Services Commissioner of Level 9, 330 Collins Street, Melbourne.

15. File Retention, Archival and Destruction

After a file is completed it will be archived and held at our cost. You authorise us to destroy your file after seven years from its completion. If you request further work or information which requires the file to be retrieved from archives, we reserve the right to charge a retrieval fee at the applicable rate at the time retrieval occurs.