



Consumer guide – legal practitioners

It is unlawful for anyone to give immigration assistance in Australia if they are not a registered migration agent, legal practitioner or exempt person. Any person who gives unlawful immigration assistance in Australia should be reported using the [Border Watch Online Report](#) on the Department of Home Affairs' website. A person who provides immigration assistance is not able to guarantee that your application for a visa will be successful.

Legal practitioners

A legal practitioner is a lawyer who holds an Australian legal practising certificate (whether restricted or unrestricted) granted under a law of an Australian state or territory. Legal practitioners can provide immigration assistance in connection with legal practice. They do not need to be registered with the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority (OMARA).

You can find a legal practitioner by contacting your local law society or bar association. Contact details for each state and territory can be found [here](#).

Consumer concerns or complaints

You are entitled to high standards of legal advice and representation and your legal practitioner must act in accordance with a range of legal duties owed to clients. At the same time a successful legal practitioner/client relationship requires cooperation on both sides.

If you have a complaint about your legal practitioner's conduct, you should first try to resolve the dispute by talking with your legal practitioner, or with the firm's managing partner. Many complaints can be settled quickly this way.

If you have tried and cannot resolve the issue, or you do not want to talk first with your legal practitioner, you can make a formal complaint to the relevant state or territory legal profession regulatory body.

It is important to be aware that there are time limits which apply when making a complaint to a state or territory legal profession regulator.

The legal profession is regulated on a state and territory basis. While there can be variables in individual cases, disciplinary matters may involve issues that include, but are not limited to:

- poor advice and representation
- non-disclosure of costs
- delays in progressing a matter
- intimidating or bullying behaviour
- charging excessive legal costs
- acting despite having a conflict of interest
- mishandling money.

If your complaint does not involve a disciplinary matter, the state or territory legal profession regulator may attempt to resolve your complaint through communication and negotiation with both you and the legal practitioner.

Making a complaint

It is a good idea to first contact the state or territory legal profession regulatory body before lodging a formal complaint. While they cannot give you legal advice, they can help you understand the issues involved and what they can and cannot do.

If you decide to make a formal complaint about your legal practitioner, you must put your complaint in writing. You will find that most state or territory legal profession regulatory bodies have a complaint form on their website that will help you to provide the information they need.

The contact details are as follows:

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|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Australian Capital Territory | ACT Law Society ☎ (02) 6274 0300 |
| New South Wales | Office of the Legal Services Commissioner ☎ 1800 242 958 |
| Northern Territory | Law Society NT ☎: (08) 8981 5104 |
| Queensland | Legal Services Commission ☎ 1300 655 754 |
| South Australia | Legal Profession Conduct Commissioner ☎ 1800 337 570 |
| Tasmania | Legal Profession Board of Tasmania ☎ (03) 6226 3000 |
| Victoria | Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner ☎ (03) 9679 8001 |
| Western Australia | Legal Practice Board of Western Australia ☎ (08) 6211 3600 |

Ending an appointment

If you do not want your legal practitioner to continue to represent you in your immigration matter(s), complete [Form 956](#) to end the appointment, and provide the completed form to the Department.

Translating and Interpreting Service

Speak to an interpreter through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) www.tisnational.gov.au ☎ 131 450