

LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION ACT 2022**LEGAL PROFESSION (MAGISTRATES COURT) (CIVIL) REPORT 2024**

Made by the Legal Costs Committee under Division 1 of Part 6 of the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2022 (Act)*.

PART 1—PRELIMINARY**1 Citation**

- (a) This Report may be cited as the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Report 2024*.
- (b) The Determination set out in the Schedule to this Report is referred to in this Report as the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2024*.

PART 2—NOTICE AND INQUIRIES**2 Notice under section 278 of the Act**

The Legal Costs Committee (**Committee**) has complied with the notice provisions of section 139 of the Act.

3 Inquiries and submissions under section 139 of the Act

Before making the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2024* the Committee—

- (a) reviewed submissions received as a result of the notice given under section 139 of the Act;
- (b) consulted with the Magistrates Court of Western Australia;
- (c) considered all responses and comments made by legal practitioners in response to a survey prepared by the Legal Costs Committee for the 2024 review of Contentious Business Determinations;
- (d) considered the impact of changes in Australian Bureau of Statistics consumer price index and wage price index data for the period since 1 July 2022;
- (e) considered the comments and suggestions made at a seminar with members of the legal profession held on 5 February 2024;
- (f) had regard to relevant provisions of the *Magistrates Court Act 2004* and the *Magistrates Court (Civil Proceedings) Act 2004*, and in particular notes section 13(1) of that Act, which sets out the guiding principles for the conduct of civil proceedings in the Court;
- (g) the Committee also wishes to note that since the publication of the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2022*—
 - (i) Chair of the Committee, Ms Clare Thompson SC resigned with effect from 30 June 2023 and was replaced as Chair by Matthew Curwood SC (as his Honour then was);
 - (ii) Mrs Carolyn Meighan was appointed as a member of the Committee on 12 December 2023 to fill the vacant member position;
 - (iii) Chair of the Committee, his Honour Judge Matthew Curwood SC resigned with effect from 31 May 2024; and
 - (iv) Since 1 June 2024, Mr Craig McKie has acted as Chair of the Committee.

PART 3—REPORT OF LEGAL COSTS COMMITTEE'S CONCLUSIONS**4 Maximum hourly and daily rates changed—scale of costs amended**

- (a) The information gained as a result of the inquiries and submissions described in clause 3 satisfied the Committee that having regard to the provisions of the *Magistrates Court Act 2004* and the *Magistrates Court (Civil Proceedings) Act 2004*, it remains appropriate to determine hourly and daily rates and a scale of costs for legal work applicable to civil proceedings in the Magistrates Court.
- (b) It is the recommendation of the Committee that—
 - (1) as a result of the inquiries and submissions described in clause 3;
 - (2) having considered the impact of relevant Australian Bureau of Statistics data; and
 - (3) taking into account the incidental administrative implications of the calculation of the Goods and Services Tax,

the hourly and daily rates referred to in subclause 4(a) be varied from the hourly and daily rates used in the *Legal Practitioners (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination (No. 2) 2020*. Those amended rates are set out in Table A of the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2024*.

- (c) The Committee has concluded that the matters set out in section 13(1) of the *Magistrates Court (Civil Proceedings) Act 2004* properly informs the approach to the recovery of costs recommended in *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2020*. In particular the Committee notes—
- (1) the Magistrates Court is not a court of pleadings;
 - (2) there are substantial differences in practice and procedure between the Magistrates Court and other civil courts in this State;
 - (3) it is intended that the Magistrates Court be a low cost jurisdiction;
 - (4) actions where the quantum is less than \$10,000 do not attract an entitlement to party/party costs, without a special costs order; and
 - (5) the monetary jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court is presently \$75,000.
- (d) Having regard to the information gained as a result of the inquiries and submissions described in clause 3, the Committee has concluded it remains appropriate to—
- (1) order the scale to reflect the procedures utilised in the Magistrates Court and the flow of litigation;
 - (2) maintain consistency where practicable with the format of the *Legal Profession (Supreme and District Courts) (Contentious Business) Determination 2024*; and
 - (3) provide for hourly and daily rates applicable to Counsel and Senior Counsel.
- (e) It is the recommendation of the Committee as a result of the inquiries and submissions described in clause 3, the scale of costs be varied in the manner set out in Table B of the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2024*.
- (f) The Committee intends, because the Determination sets maximum hourly and daily rates and amounts and allowances that must not be exceeded, that the hourly and daily rates in Table A and the scale of costs in Table B will apply in circumstances requiring the determination of allowable and other costs in the minor cases procedure of the Magistrates Court.
- (g) The Committee intends that the Determination shall apply to all civil proceedings dealt with in the Magistrates Court, including civil jurisdiction conferred on the Court by a written law, including, for example, the *Dividing Fences Act 1961* and the *Restraining Orders Act 1997*.
- (h) The recommendations of the Committee are not intended to override any entitlement of a law practice to make a written agreement as to costs with a client under the Act or any similar legislation.

CRAIG MCKIE Acting Chair
JANICE DUDLEY Member
ANNETTE MORGAN Member
GREG RICKIE Member
CAROLYN MEIGHAN Member

Schedule

LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION ACT 2022

LEGAL PROFESSION (MAGISTRATES COURT) (CIVIL) DETERMINATION 2024

Made by the Legal Costs Committee under section 133 of the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2022 (Act)*.

1 Citation

This Determination may be cited as the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2024*.

2 Commencement

This Determination comes into operation on 1 July 2024.

3 Application

- (a) This Determination applies to the remuneration of legal practitioners, clerks and paralegals in respect of advice given by legal practitioners in or for the purposes of civil proceedings before the Magistrates Court and in acting in civil proceeding cases before the Magistrates Court including applications under part 21 of the *Magistrates Court (Civil Proceedings) Rules 2005*.
- (b) This Determination does not apply to the remuneration of legal practitioners based on costs incurred in respect of business carried out before the commencement of this Determination.

4 Definitions

In this Determination—

Act means the *Magistrates Court (Civil Proceedings) Act 2004*, as amended from time to time; and

Rules means the *Magistrates Court (Civil Proceedings) Rules 2005*, as amended from time to time.

5 No minimum charge

In no respect is this Determination to be seen as providing a minimum charge for any work other than the items referred to in clause 5. For example, item 2(c) provides for \$3,872 for the work involved. The figure of \$3,872 is a maximum, but on taxation less than \$3,872 might be allowed. Where there is a set cost or time or level of fee earner indicated, the purpose is to indicate to the Assessing Officer what reasonably may be expected in most cases.

6 Fixed items

Some items in this Determination have been fixed without any indication of how these items have been calculated. These items are 1, 2(a), 2(b), 4(a), 11(a), 12(c), 17(a)(2), 17(b), 18(a), 20 and 21. These have been fixed because, based on past practices, the Court staff require a fixed figure when completing the form of Entry of Judgment by Default and the like.

7 Time estimates

The reason for stating the number of hours estimated to be necessary to perform each of the items of work described in this Determination is to provide guidance to the Court when dealing with the question of costs so that the Court has some idea how much time is reasonably necessary to perform work in most cases. For example, in item 15(a), which relates to preparation for trial or getting up a case for trial by Counsel, the time indicated is that which can be expected in most cases. Some items reflect a number of hours that have been estimated so as to include work done with respect to the process of obtaining and considering evidence, documents, disclosures and the like, for example items 2(c), 4(b)-(d), 5, 7, 10 and 13. The hours referred to in this Determination will guide the Assessing Officer about the amount which should be allowed in a particular case.

8 Counsel

- (a) In items 14 and 15 of Table B, if independent counsel is not retained for the trial, this will be a factor to be considered by the Assessing Officer who might not then permit the full amount in the Determination for fee on brief under item 15(a), as well as a full getting up allowance under item 13. This is in line with the decisions of *Commonwealth v Magriplis* (1962) 3 FLR 47 and *Washbourne v SEC* (1992) 8 WAR 188.
- (b) All appearances allowed for in items 10, 15 and 22 of Table B are intended to be charged at the applicable counsel rate, and not at any higher rate that may be applicable to the actual practitioner by reason of the person undertaking the appearance otherwise being entitled to charge as a Senior Practitioner.
- (c) In this Determination a change has been made to item 15(i) of Table B to correct the anomaly in previous Determinations by which Senior Practitioner rates were recoverable for attendance on a reserved judgment.
- (d) Fees charged by practitioners who practise solely as barristers in accordance with Supreme Court Practice Direction 10.5 are only to be charged at the rates provided for counsel of their seniority in Table A and are not to be charged at rates applicable to a Senior Practitioner.
- (e) Recovery of daily fees for counsel on the taxation or assessment of a Bill of Costs is intended to apply only when a full day has been worked, either in Court or in Court and in preparation for a subsequent hearing day.

9 Settled proceedings

It is intended that item 13 should apply even if there is no trial. Therefore, if the case is settled before trial and the law practice can demonstrate that preparation for trial was carried out, costs may be recovered for that work and allowed on an assessment of costs.

10 Restricted Practitioner category

The amendments brought in by the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2016* remain in effect, other than clause 10(e) of that Determination.

11 Increase generally

- (a) The Committee is of the view that increases in the cost of practice over the past several years have justified an increase in the rates in Table A and Table B.
- (b) The Committee made no general increase in the 2020 review as a result of the uncertain economic climate at that time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given a period of significant inflation since 2022 and the fact that rate rises were modest in the decade of 2012 to 2022, the Committee determined it was appropriate to include a general increase.
- (c) In making its decision, the Committee is particularly cognisant of the increased costs to law practices occasioned by costs of subscriptions for legal resources, investment in technology and training for the purpose of cyber security, to enable legal practitioners and staff to work remotely, and investments made by law practices in staff well-being initiatives.
- (d) The increase in the rates in this Determination are not uniform but have been calculated, generally, on the basis of a 12% increase since 1 July 2022, with a rounding so that each amount is divisible by 11 in accordance with the long-standing policy of the Committee.

12 Maximum hourly and daily rates

- (a) The hourly and daily rates set out in Table A are the maximum hourly and daily rates, inclusive of GST, which the Committee determines shall be used to calculate the dollar amounts set out in Table B. Except for certain items, each item in this Determination specifies a dollar amount with reference to the fee earner.
- (b) The rates referred to in paragraph (a) were ascertained in the manner set out in clause 4 of the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Report 2022*.
- (c) The daily rates set out in Table A are intended to cover all work done on a hearing or trial day whether in or out of court including preparation of written submissions and are not intended to be supplemented in any way by additional hourly charges given that the maximum number of hours allowed for the daily rate is 10 hours per day.
- (d) The items in Table B are not intended to be calculated on the basis of a minimum 6 minute unit.

Table A

| Fee Earner | | Maximum allowable hourly and daily rates |
|---|-------------|---|
| Senior Practitioner (permitted to practise on his or her own account for 5 years or more) (SP) ¹ | hourly rate | \$484 |
| Junior Practitioner (permitted to practise on his or her own account for less than 5 years) (JP) ¹ | hourly rate | \$385 |
| Restricted Practitioner (RP) ^{1, 2} | hourly rate | \$275 |
| Clerk/Paralegal (C/PL) ³ | hourly rate | \$187 |
| Counsel fees charged as a disbursement to practitioners or charged by in-house Counsel: | | |
| Counsel (C) ⁴ | hourly rate | \$429 |
| | daily rate | \$4,290 |
| Senior Counsel (SC) ⁵ | hourly rate | \$616 |
| | daily rate | \$6,160 |

Notes—

- 1 The reference to Restricted Practitioner, Junior Practitioner or Senior Practitioner in this Determination includes all legal practitioners even if the services were rendered in another State or Territory. Where a local practitioner has held an interstate practising certificate, the length of unrestricted legal practice in that other jurisdiction is to be counted in assessing that practitioner's years of practice for the purposes of this Determination.
- 2 The reference to Restricted Practitioner in this Determination includes practitioners undertaking restricted legal practice for the purposes of obtaining the required experience set out in the Act and does not include a reference to an Australian legal practitioner who has a condition placed on their practising certificate by the Legal Practice Board, State Administrative Tribunal or otherwise, requiring them to practise under supervision for disciplinary, medical or other reasons.
- 3 The reference to Clerk/Paralegal in this Determination includes a law graduate prior to their admission to practise as an Australian lawyer.
- 4 The reference to Counsel in this Determination means a practitioner acting as a barrister other than a Senior Counsel, including, for the purposes of items 10, 11, 17, 22, 25 and 26, a practitioner appearing in court who does not practise in accordance with Supreme Court Practice Direction 10.5.
- 5 The reference to Senior Counsel in this Determination means a person within the meaning of item 5 or item 6 of Rule 9 of the Legal Profession Uniform General Rules 2015 (WA).

13 Costs

- (a) Subject to the provisions of the LP Act permitting a law practice to make a written agreement as to costs with a client, the costs of or in relation to a party to an action or other proceeding (inclusive of GST and counsel fees, but exclusive of other disbursements)—
- (1) recoverable by one party from another party; or
 - (2) payable by a party to that party's own law practice,
- shall not exceed the amounts set out in Table B except as otherwise provided in item 25 of Table B.
- (b) Allowances made under item 25 of Table B are only to be awarded as between a law practice and its client, and not between party and party unless the Court otherwise orders. The item is not intended to be used to claim increased allowances for items which should properly fit into another item in the Determination, for example item 10.

- (c) The Committee notes the impact of the decision in *Rodwell v Hutchinson* [2010] WASCA 197, and so no allowance is made in this Determination for an award of indemnity costs.
- (d) The Committee notes the comments of the court in *Defendi v Eden Hill Plasterers* [2008] WASCA 269 at [7] as to the importance of the proportionality principle in litigation in this Court, which arises in respect to all costs incurred in the Magistrates Court.

Table B
Magistrates Court Civil Scale of Costs 2024

| Item | | Time | Fee Earner | \$ |
|------|--|--|----------------------|--|
| 1. | Letter of demand issued prior to proceedings | | | 77 |
| 2. | Claim— (a) Claim, including instructions, but excluding Statement of Claim (b) For each additional defendant (c) Statement of Claim including preparation and lodgement | 8 hours | SP | 484 55 3,872 |
| 3. | Appointment of litigation guardian | 2 hours | RP | 550 |
| 4. | Response— (a) Lodgement of a response to a claim (b) Statement of defence (c) Reply to defence (d) Defence and counterclaim, including instructions and statement of claim in the counterclaim and all other necessary documents (e) Defence to counterclaim | 8 hours 1.5 hours 8 hours 2 hours | SP SP SP SP | 275 3,872 726 3,872 968 |
| 5. | Third party claim, including instructions and list of documents | 8 hours | SP | 3,872 |
| 6. | Particulars— (a) requesting particulars (b) providing particulars | 1 hour 2 hours | JP JP | 385 770 |
| 7. | Disclosure— (a) Providing informal disclosure under Rule 30A (b) Giving additional disclosure where ordered by the Court or a Registrar | 2 hours 5 hours | RP RP | 550 1,375 |
| 8. | Status conference— Status conference conducted under rule 46 of the Rules, including preparation, attendance and reporting to client | 1.5 hours | SP | 726 |
| 9. | Interpleaders— Interpleader proceedings— (a) where uncontested (b) where contested | 1 hour | JP | 385 An allowance in accordance with item 10 |
| 10. | Application to the Court— (a) Applications and responses to applications made by the approved form prescribed by rule 109 of the Rules, including all documentation in preparation for hearing, and hearing (b) Applications made ex parte | 8 hours 2 hours | SP JP | 3,872 770 |
| 11. | (a) Application for entry of judgment of a liquidated sum by default without trial (b) Application for and entry for judgment for an unliquidated sum by default, including preparation of Form 13 application and affidavits and attendance at hearing if required | 3 hours | JP | 187 1,155 |

| Item | | Time | Fee Earner | \$ |
|------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 17. | Judgments and orders— (a) Settling and extracting judgment or order (1) with appointment (2) without appointment (b) Request for certified copy of judgment or order | 1 hour | RP | 275 275 187 |
| 18. | Enforcement— (a) Execution (b) If against land, an additional | 3 hours | RP | 209 825 |
| 19. | Proceedings in court pursuant to <i>Civil Judgments Enforcement Act 2004</i> for the following, including preparation— (a) Means Inquiry (b) Default Inquiry (c) Suspension of enforcement order application (d) Application to cancel or amend an order, or any other application under the <i>Civil Judgments Enforcement Act 2004</i> not otherwise provided for. | 1.5 hours | JP RP C/PL | 578 413 281 |
| 20. | Registration of judgments— Registration of judgments including those under <i>Service and Execution of Process Act 1992 (Cth)</i> | | | 220 |
| 21. | Assessment of costs including drawing bill— (a) Lodgement of bill of costs (b) Drawing bill of costs, copies and service (c) Making an objection to a bill (d) Assessment of costs (including the time spent in preparing for the assessment) | | JP JP JP JP | 66 770 385 770 |
| 22. | Appeals— An appeal to a Magistrate from a decision of a Registrar | | | An amount calculated in accordance with item 10 |
| 23. | Copies— Copies where necessary, including of documents for which allowance is otherwise made in this Determination | per page | | 0.20 |
| 24. | Accounts and inquiries— Attending on taking accounts, inquiries | | SP | An amount which is reasonable in the circumstances |
| 25. | Other work— (a) Time reasonably spent by a legal practitioner on work requiring the skill of a legal practitioner (of the standing indicated) but not covered by any other item or (b) Time reasonably spent by a legal practitioner, or by a clerk or paralegal of a legal practitioner, on work not covered by any other item or by paragraph (a) Note: Allowances under item 25 are only to be awarded as between a law practice and its client, and <i>not</i> between party and party unless the Court otherwise orders. | per hour per hour | SC C SP JP RP C/PL | |

| Item | | Time | Fee Earner | \$ |
|------|---|------|---------------|----|
| 26. | <p>Disbursements— In addition to the fees and charges allowed under this Determination—</p> <p>(a) As between a law practice and client, a law practice may charge and be allowed disbursements necessarily or reasonably incurred; and</p> <p>(b) As between party and party, a party may be allowed disbursements incurred by that party except insofar as they are of an unreasonable amount or have been unreasonably incurred, so that subject to the above exceptions, that party is fully reimbursed for its disbursements</p> | | | |
| 27. | <p>Allowances for witnesses— The amount of any costs to be paid in respect of work done by a legal practitioner in conducting any proceedings in a case may include a reasonable allowance for—</p> <p>(a) witnesses necessary to the case because of their professional, scientific or other special skill or knowledge; and</p> <p>(b) witnesses necessary to the case other than those covered in paragraph (a).</p> <p>In fixing an allowance for witnesses under paragraph (b), including the Claimant and Defendant, the Assessing Officer may have regard to the amount of salary, wages, or income (if any) actually lost by the witness.</p> <p>In fixing an allowance for witnesses under either paragraph (a) or paragraph (b), regard should be given to whether it was reasonable in all the circumstances to call a witness in person when the witness was able to give evidence by use of audio-link, video-link or similar technology.</p> | | | |
| 28. | <p>Travel—</p> <p>(a) As between party and party, minor travel as defined in the <i>Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2016</i>, is to be allowed as part of the costs awarded for an attendance at chambers or Court, without further order.</p> <p>(b) As between party and party, time spent travelling by a law practice which is not minor travel and which is required by reason of an order of the Court requiring the parties to attend at a location other than the location at which the proceedings is case managed, is to be charged at no more than one half of the rates set out in Table A, with a maximum of 8 hours in any one day, without further order.</p> <p>(c) As between a law practice and its own client, time spent travelling by a law practice, other than minor travel, is to be charged at no more than one half of the rates set out in Table A, with a maximum of 8 hours in any one day.</p> <p>Note: Allowances under item 28(c) are only to be awarded as between a law practice and its client, and <i>not</i> between party and party unless the Court otherwise orders.</p> | | | |

Made by the Legal Costs Committee on 13 June 2024.