

Looking for a solicitor?

You can find one via the Queensland Law Society referral service at qls.com.au or phone 1300 367 757.



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solicitors, barristers
and paralegals

understanding the legal profession

public information



What does a solicitor do?

The majority of legal practitioners, approximately 90 per cent, are solicitors.

A solicitor is the first 'port of call' for those seeking legal advice or assistance. Although most people turn to a solicitor if they have a legal problem, there are many other areas of life where solicitors are able to offer legal advice and guidance. For example, property transactions or disputes, drafting a will, or family issues and domestic relations.

Generally solicitors deal with any legal matter, but may engage a barrister to perform advocacy in court.

Solicitors are highly trained professionals who can guide you through difficult circumstances and are looking after your best interests. They understand the complexities and consequences of the law and can often find better alternatives which you may not have considered.

When should I see a solicitor?

This is a common question. Below are some general rules of thumb, but please be aware there are many other situations that may call for legal advice.

You should see a solicitor when:

- Preparing or before signing a legal document (eg contract)
- Preparing a will
- Buying or selling a home
- Setting up or changing your business
- Negotiating financial changes (eg increase or decrease in wealth)
- Changing insurance
- Experiencing domestic change
- When liable for, or the potential recipient of, compensation
- If you believe a good or service breaches the law.

Solicitors also provide an alternative method of dispute resolution to avoid going to court.

If you contact a solicitor they should be able to tell you whether your issue requires the help of a legal professional.

What does a barrister do?

Barristers provide advocacy services before Courts and Tribunals, and are also consultant legal advisors.

In Queensland, barristers practise as independent legal counsel. Although they can accept instructions directly from clients if they choose, they generally receive work through referral from solicitors and represent clients in court. They are instructed and retained on an ad hoc basis as specialist advocates and consultant legal advisors.

Barristers know about the rules of evidence and court procedure, and can determine the appropriate method and argument for presentation in court. Barristers can question and cross-examine witnesses called by the opposition, submit arguments on points of law during a trial and negotiate settlements to discontinue legal proceedings.

Judges and Magistrates are usually chosen from experienced barristers, although sometimes solicitors are appointed.

Other important legal roles

What is a paralegal?

'Paralegal' is a term used to define employees who assist lawyers in carrying out legal work. Often referred to as 'legal assistants', paralegals undertake common secretarial responsibilities, such as drafting letters, answering non-legal client queries, arranging appointments and organising and maintaining client files. They can also be called upon to prepare litigation documents and undertake research into case studies and legislation for a legal matter.

