

LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION ACT 2022

LEGAL PROFESSION (MAGISTRATES COURT) (CRIMINAL) 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) (Criminal) 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) (Criminal) Determination 2024*.

PART 2 – NOTICE AND INQUIRIES

2 Notice under section 139 of the Act

The Legal Costs 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) (Criminal) Determination 2024* the Legal Costs Committee:

- (a) reviewed submissions received as a result of the notice given under section 139 of the Act including those made by The Law Society of Western Australia (Inc);
- (b) considered the comments and suggestions made at a seminar with members of the legal profession held on 5 February 2024;
- (c) considered the impact of changes in relevant Australian Bureau of Statistics consumer price index and wage price index data for the period since 1 July 2022; and
- (d) 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;
- (e) the Committee also wishes to note that since the publication of the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Criminal) 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 Legal Costs Committee notes that the criminal jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court covers a wide range of summary criminal matters.
- (b) The Legal Costs Committee considers that as a consequence of the position stated in subclause 4(a), it is appropriate for a general scale of fees based on hourly rates to continue to apply to the time reasonably taken to perform the services provided by a law practice in, or for the purposes of contentious business in the criminal jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court.
- (c) It is the recommendation of the Legal Costs 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;
 - (3) having considered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its projected impact on the Australian economy; and
 - (4) taking into account the incidental administrative implications of the calculation of the Goods and Services Tax,
- the appropriate hourly rates referred to in subclause 4(b) be varied from the hourly and daily rates used in the *Legal Practitioners (Magistrates Court) (Criminal) Determination 2022*. Those rates are set out in Table A of the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Criminal) Determination 2024*.
- (d) It is the recommendation of the Legal Costs Committee that the hourly rates charged by law practices under the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Civil) Determination 2024* should be adopted as the basis for costs for the supply of legal services covered under the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Criminal) Determination 2024*.
- (e) It is further recommended that Table B of the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Criminal) Determination 2024* be adopted as the basis for costs for the supply of those legal services itemised in that Table.
- (f) The recommendations of the Legal Costs 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 successor 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) (CRIMINAL) DETERMINATION 2024

Made by the Legal Costs Committee under section 139 of the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2022 (Act)*.

1 Citation

This Determination may be cited as the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Criminal) 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 criminal proceedings in the Magistrates Court.
- (b) This Determination does not apply to the remuneration of legal practitioners based on costs incurred in respect of work carried out before the commencement of this Determination.

4 Travel

- (a) For the purposes of this Determination, minor travel means incidental travel associated with attendance at court for a hearing where that travel is of a minor duration. Examples of minor travel include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) a practitioner walking from their usual place of business to a court;
 - (2) a practitioner walking from a carpark to a court; or
 - (3) a practitioner walking or taking public transport from one centrally located court to another centrally located court.
- (b) As between a law practice and its own client, time spent travelling 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.
- (c) In making its decision in this Determination, the Legal Costs Committee has taken note of the Law Society of Western Australia's Standard Costs Agreement, which contains a provision that a law practice will charge travel at 50% of the agreed hourly rates.
- (d) The Legal Costs Committee has also considered an informal policy of the Legal Profession Complaints Committee that travel should not ordinarily be charged at a rate of more than 50% of a law practice's normal hourly charge-out rate.
- (e) Whilst the Legal Costs Committee recognises that during a travel period a law practice may not necessarily utilise legal skill and knowledge, there is a recognition of a loss of opportunity for the time spent travelling.
- (f) The Legal Costs Committee notes that, having regard to the above:
 - (1) it is the responsibility of a law practice to allocate the cost of time spent on travel fairly and reasonably where the travel is necessary to service more than one client on the day of travel; and

- (2) whilst nothing contained in this Determination prevents a law practice from charging time spent on a client matter or client matters in the course of travel (air travel by way of example), the law practice is not entitled to charge a client or clients for both time spent on a client matter (regardless of whether that time relates to the client for whom the travel is being undertaken) and the amount for travel allowed in this Determination.

5 Restricted Practitioner category

The amendments brought in by the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Criminal) Determination 2016* remain in effect, other than clause 5(e) of that Determination.

6 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.

7 Maximum hourly and daily rates

- (a) The hourly rates set out in Table A below are the maximum hourly rates, inclusive of GST, which the Legal Costs Committee determines shall be used to calculate the remuneration of law practices in respect of time reasonably taken to perform services in or for the purposes of work undertaken by law practices in respect of criminal proceedings before the Magistrates Court.
- (b) The Rates referred to in paragraph (a) were ascertained in the manner set out in clause 4 of the *Legal Profession (Magistrates Court) (Criminal) Report 2024*.
- (c) The daily rates set out in Table B below 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).

8 Costs

- (a) Subject to the provisions of the Act permitting a law practice to make a written agreement as to costs with a client, the costs of or in relation to a prosecution of an accused (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.
- (b) Each item of the Scale of Costs specifies a dollar amount. The purpose is to indicate the maximum amount for the work indicated in the item, but on assessment, less might be allowed. In no respect is the Scale to be seen as providing a minimum charge for any work. The reason for stating the number of hours estimated to be necessary to perform each of the items of work described in the Scale is to provide guidance to the Assessing Officer when dealing with the question of costs so that the Assessing Officer has some idea how much time is reasonably necessary to perform the work in most cases.

- (c) Work undertaken by Senior Counsel shall be allowable in accordance with the rates in the Table A of this Determination.

Table B
Magistrates Court Criminal Scale of Costs 2024

Item		Time	\$
1.	(a) Subject to paragraphs (b) and (c), allow for one adjournment only	1 hour	484
	(b) Costs for additional adjournments to be awarded on application to, and at the discretion of, the presiding Magistrate		
	(c) Each Court ordered adjournment	1 hour	484
2.	(a) Preparation for, and appearance at, initial bail application and/or application for bail in respect of serious offences set out in the <i>Bail Act 1982</i> (WA)	3.5 hours	1,694
	(b) Preparation for, and appearance at, application to vary bail conditions	1.5 hours	726
3.	Directions hearing, including preparation	4 hours	1,936
4.	(a) Preparation of case and half day trial, including counsel fee		9,537
	(b) Second half day		1,078
5.	Second and each successive day of trial		4,290
6.	Allowance for preparation where the trial does not proceed or the prosecution offers no evidence		An amount which is reasonable in the circumstances
7.	Counsel fee for attending court for remand appearance, directions hearing, status conference, mention, callover, reserved decision or other appearance not otherwise accounted for	3 hours	1,287
8.	(a) Short Plea in mitigation, including preparation (plea of up to 30 minutes)		825
	(b) Long Plea in mitigation, including preparation (plea in excess of 30 minutes)		2,464
9.	Copies where reasonably necessary, including documents for which allowance is otherwise made in this Determination	per page	0.20

Made by the Legal Costs Committee on 13 June 2024.