



COSTS DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Office of the Legal Services Commissioner (OLSC) may assist clients in resolving disputes with their lawyers over costs. The term 'costs' refers to the bill a consumer receives for legal services and covers fees charged by the lawyer and disbursements.

If there is a dispute over a lawyer's bill the client can try and resolve it by:

- (i) negotiating directly with the lawyer;
- (ii) seeking the OLSC's help to resolve the dispute; or
- (iii) applying for the costs to be formally assessed at the Supreme Court of New South Wales. [See OLSC Fact Sheet on **Costs Disputes**]

What is costs dispute resolution?

The officers of the OLSC assist parties in the process of trying to reach a resolution of any dispute over legal costs. The officers cannot give legal advice.

Why use our costs dispute resolution service?

- Costs dispute resolution is usually quicker than formal costs assessment;
- The OLSC does not charge a fee;
- If the client and lawyer reach agreement about costs, they may enter into a written enforceable settlement agreement.

How do I request costs dispute resolution at the OLSC?

- (1) Fill in a complaint form. A complaint may be made by the person charged with, or liable to pay, a lawyer's costs or anyone acting on their behalf.
- (2) Provide a copy of the bill of costs and a list of the main objections and concerns in your complaint. [**Send copies not originals**]
- (3) Send the above to the OLSC:

The Office of the Legal Services Commissioner
 Level 9, 75 Castlereagh Street
 SYDNEY NSW 2000
 GPO BOX 4460
 SYDNEY NSW 2001

What will happen during the costs dispute resolution process?

- Both parties will be contacted by telephone and/or by letter by an officer to discuss the dispute;
- The officer will ask for offers and suggestions for possible resolution from the parties; and
- If necessary the officer may arrange a formal face-to-face meeting with the parties.