

A WORD ON LEGAL COSTS....

The broad range Estimates of fees are required to be given to you by the Uniform Law and are based on our experience and understanding of the costs generally incurred in family law disputes. While we strive to work within these estimates, our experience tells us that there are cases where the costs can exceed the estimate. We cannot control the behaviour of the other party or their legal advisers or your matter is before the Court, the availability of Judges, Court scheduling and the number of matters before the Judge on the day your matter is listed before the Court.

HOW TO MAXIMISE VALUE & KEEP CURB LEGAL COSTS

01

Read the whole email before responding so you capture everything requested of you the first time around,

02

Attend to tasks yourself if you can. Ask your lawyer to allow you to do any tasks which you are able to do (eg: calling your accountant to obtain copies of your tax returns). If you do not have time and prefer your lawyer to attend to those tasks, you will be charged for the time your lawyer spends on those tasks.

03

Do your homework. Make sure that you have the necessary materials or information. Eg: secure finance before you negotiate to buy out the family home. Many people spend a lot of money negotiating and investigating a property only to discover that they cannot borrow enough money to follow through.

04

Tell your lawyer the full details. If you leave out a detail or provide the wrong details, your lawyer will be required to revise your documents and possibly your case. Again, the additional time spent on revisions will increase your fees.

05

Batch communications. Lawyers charge in minimum time units comprising 6 minutes per unit. It is cheaper to have one six-minute chat rather than six one-minute chats. Gather your material together and send one email at the end of the week rather than daily. **Lawyers charge for text messages.** Email is more efficient to batch information and request a response. Don't call your lawyer daily to ask if they have received a reply from the other side. Instruct your lawyer to contact you as soon as a reply is received.

06

Follow the advice provided by your lawyer. Your lawyer will advise you as to the best way in which to prepare your matter. If you don't understand the reason for the advice, ask! However, if you do not follow the advice, it may not only jeopardise your matter, it will almost certainly increase your legal fees if you lawyer has to later fix the problem caused by your failure to follow advice. Remember, you are paying good money for advice so why ignore it?

07

Long term gain. Look at the likely total fees rather than the immediate costs. Pursuing lengthy but unproductive negotiations in the hope of avoiding Court may be much more expensive than simply lodging your claim and forcing the other party to reconsider their position.

08

Providing information and instructions quickly will avoid delays and reduce costs as you will be charged if your lawyer has to constantly chase you for outstanding information and instructions.

09

Act early regarding issues with your lawyers. If you are unhappy with your lawyer, raise those issues and you'll be surprised at the result. Most lawyers will bend over backwards to accommodate their clients and will usually accommodate your requests. If the issue cannot be resolved and you have lost confidence in your lawyer, instruct another lawyer as quickly as possible. The later into your matter, the greater the cost to you to move your matter to a new lawyer as there is a cost for your new lawyer to read your file and bring themselves up to date.