

**LEGAL ETHICS &
PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
SUMMARY**



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS 1

TABLE OF CASES..... 7

TOPIC 1. GENERAL CONCEPTS..... 11

1.1. THE UNIFORM LAW 11

 1.1.1 What Won't Change Under the Uniform Law 14

 1.1.2 What Will Change Under the Uniform Law 15

1.2. ETHICS AND MORALITY 15

 1.2.1. Ethics and Morality 15

 1.2.2. What are ethics? 16

1.3. CODE OF ETHICS..... 16

1.4. CORE VALUES OF ACTING ETHICALLY 17

1.5. A PROFESSION 18

1.6. SOURCES OF PROFESSIONAL RULES..... 20

 1.6.1. Common law 20

 1.6.2. Statute 21

 1.6.3. Professional Rules 22

1.7 FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES 22

TOPIC 2. ADMISSION TO PRACTICE..... 25

2.1. PREREQUISITES FOR COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATES 25

2.2. CHARACTER-BASED REQUIREMENTS..... 26

 2.2.1. Factors relevant to good fame and character..... 27

 2.2.2. Mitigating Factors 31

2.3. READMISSION 33

TOPIC 3. TRUST ACCOUNTING 35

3.1. DEFINITION OF TRUST MONEY 35

3.2. IRREVOCABLE AUTHORITIES..... 36

3.3. LAWYER'S OBLIGATION RELATING TO TRUST MONEY 36

3.4. DUTIES RELATED TO ACCOUNTING FOR TRUST MONEY 38

 3.4.1. Dealing with trust money 38

 3.4.2. Records to be kept 39

 3.4.3. Duty to give account on request..... 39

3.4.4.	Trust account not to be overdrawn	39
3.4.5.	Duty to report defalcations	40
3.3.6.	False names in trust account	40
3.3.7.	Use or withdrawal of trust moneys without authority	40
3.4.	VERIFICATION OF TRUST ACCOUNTS	41
3.4.1.	Audit of trust accounts	41
3.4.2.	Confidentiality and privilege	41
3.5.	EXTERNAL INTERVENTION OVER TRUST ACCOUNTS	42
3.5.1.	Receivers	42
3.5.2.	Supervisors	43
3.5.3.	Managers	43
3.6.	FAILURE TO ACCOUNT	44
TOPIC 4.	DUTY TO THE CLIENT	45
4.1.	RETAINERS	45
4.1.1.	Disclosure of information	45
4.1.2.	Terms of the Retainer	46
4.1.3.	Parties to the retainer	47
4.1.4.	Proof of the Retainer	48
4.2.	AUTHORITY OF LAWYERS	50
4.2.1.	Agency relationship	50
4.2.2.	Actual authority	50
4.2.3.	Ostensible authority	52
4.3.	LAWYER'S ACCEPTANCE OF WORK	52
4.3.1.	Counsel/ Barrister	52
4.3.2.	Solicitors	54
Ethical Issues	56
4.4	MAINTAINING DUTY TO THE CLIENT	60
4.5.	TERMINATION OF LAWYER-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP	61
4.5.1.	Doctrine of entire contract	61
4.5.2.	Duties of lawyers on termination of retainer	63
4.5.3.	Return of brief by Counsel	63
4.5.4.	Ownership of documents on termination of retainer	64
TOPIC 5.	LAWYER'S DUTY IN TORT	65
5.1.	OVERVIEW	65
5.1.2.	Identifying the client's Interests and Objectives	65
5.2.	SCOPE OF DUTY OF CARE	66

5.2.1.	Scope of duty in the retainer	66
5.2.2.	Liability arising outside the scope of retainer	66
5.2.3.	Nature of the client	67
5.2.4.	Circumstances in which advice is given	70
5.2.6.	Disclosure of Relevant Information	71
5.2.7.	Financial advice.....	72
5.2.8.	Non-Legal advice	73
5.2.9	Duty to third parties?.....	74
5.3.	STANDARD OF CARE	75
5.3.1.	Relevant standard	75
5.3.2.	Expert evidence.....	75
5.3.3.	Knowledge of the law and procedure	75
5.3.4.	Standard not informed by extraordinary foresight	75
5.3.5.	Standard not informed by hindsight.....	76
5.3.6.	Raising the standard of care	76
5.3.7.	Reducing the standard of care	76
5.3.8.	Giving Settlement advice.....	77
5.3.9	Giving unqualified advice	78
5.4.	BARRISTER'S IMMUNITY FROM NEGLIGENCE.....	79
5.4.1.	General rule.....	79
5.4.2.	Justifications for the immunity	79
5.4.3.	Justifications against the immunity	80
5.4.4.	Scope of the immunity.....	80
5.5.	LIMITING LIABILITY – PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS REGIME	83
TOPIC 6.	CONFLICT OF INTEREST	84
6.1.	PROHIBITION AGAINST LAWYER-CLIENT CONFLICT	84
6.1.1.	General principle	84
6.1.2.	Scope of proscription.....	84
6.1.3.	Informed client consent	85
6.2.	TRANSACTIONS DEALINGS WITH CLIENTS	86
6.2.1.	General rule.....	86
6.2.2.	Borrowings from clients	86
6.2.3.	Lending to clients	87
6.2.4.	Lawyer's investment in client's enterprise	88
6.2.5.	Lawyer buying from or selling to a client	88
6.2.6.	Dealings with other than current clients	89

6.3.	Making a Secret Profit	90
6.3.1.	General fiduciary principle.....	90
6.3.2.	Undisclosed referral fees and commissions.....	90
6.3.3.	Criminal responsibility	90
6.4.	UNDUE INFLUENCE	91
6.4.1.	Presumption of undue influence.....	91
6.4.2.	Gifts from client to lawyer.....	91
6.5.	LAWYER-CLIENT SEXUAL RELATIONS	92
TOPIC 7.	CONCURRENT CONFLICTS	93
7.1.	NATURE OF CONFLICT	93
7.2.	SCOPE OF PROSCRIPTION	93
7.3.	CONTENTIOUS WORK.....	98
7.4.	NON-CONTENTIOUS WORK	98
TOPIC 8.	ACTING AGAINST FORMER CLIENTS	101
8.1.	INTERESTS THAT IMPACT ON DECISION TO DISQUALIFY	101
8.2.	THRESHOLD FOR JUDICIAL INTERVENTAION	102
8.3.	NO PRIOR CLIENT-LAWYER RELATIONSHIP	107
8.4.	DISQUALIFICATION EXTENDING TO THE FIRM	108
8.5.	APPLICATIONS AS ABUSES OF PROCESS.....	110
TOPIC 9.	RECOVERY OF COSTS	111
9.1.	INFORMATION.....	111
9.2.	COST AGREEMENTS.....	112
9.3.	CONDITIONAL COST AGREEMENTS.....	118
9.4.	BILL OF COSTS.....	120
9.5.	ASSESSMENT (TAXATION) OF LEGAL COSTS	121
9.6.	SECURING THE RECOVERY OF COSTS	123
TOPIC 10.	SOLICITOR'S LIEN	128
10.1.	GENERAL PRINCIPLES	128
10.2.	RETAINING LIEN	128
10.3.	PARTICULAR LIEN.....	132
TOPIC 11.	DUTY TO THE COURT	134
11.1.	LAWYER'S DUTY AND ENFORCEMENT	134
11.2.	INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT	135
11.3.	CANDOUR IN THE PRESENTATION OF THE LAW	136
11.4.	CANDOUR IN THE PRESENTATION OF THE FACTS.....	137

11.5. DEALING WITH WITNESSES.....	138
11.6. ABUSE OF PROCESS	139
11.7 DISCOVERY	141
TOPIC 12. DUTY TO OBEY AND UPHOLD THE LAW	143
12.1. GENERAL PRINCIPLE	143
12.2. CLIENT WHO BEHAVES UNLAWFULLY	143
12.3. APPROACH TO GIVING ADVICE	144
TOPIC 13. CONDUCT OF PRACTICE	145
13.1. LAWYERS ADVERTISING.....	145
13.2. CONDUCTING ANOTHER BUSINESS.....	147
13.3. MEDIATION BY LAWYERS	148
13.4. SUPERVISION AND ATTENDANCES.....	148
TOPIC 14. RELATIONS WITH THE PROFESSION AND THIRD PARTIES	149
14.1. LEGAL DUTIES TO THIRD PARTIES IN TORT.....	149
14.2. LEGAL DUTIES TO THIRD PARTIES IN CONTRACT	151
14.3. LEGAL DUTIES TO THIRD PARTIES IN EQUITY	151
14.4. LEGAL DUTIES OF THIRD PARTIES UNDER STATUTE	152
14.5. PROFESSIONAL DUTIES OWED TO OTHER LAWYERS.....	152
14.6. PROFESSIONAL DUTIES OWED TO THIRD PARTIES.....	154
14.7. PROFESSIONAL DUTIES OWED TO UNREPRESENTED PARTIES...155	
TOPIC 15. DISPUTES AND DISCIPLINE	156
15.1. OVERVIEW.....	156
15.2. PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT	157
15.3. DISCIPLINARY ORDERS	160
TOPIC 16. TYPES OF MISCONDUCT	162
16.1. MISCONDUCT IN THE COURSE OF PRACTICE	162
16.1.1. Courts and tribunals	162
16.1.2. Other lawyers or third parties.....	162
16.1.3. Professional bodies	163
16.1.4. Trust accounting irregularities	163
16.1.5. Lawyer-client conflict	163
16.1.6. Client-client conflict	163
16.1.7. Overcharging.....	163
16.1.8. Failure to properly supervise	164
16.2. MISCONDUCT OUTSIDE PRACTICE	164

16.2.1.	Criminal convictions	164
16.2.2.	Convictions for sex offences	166
16.2.3.	Drug related convictions.....	166
16.2.4.	Conviction for minor offences.....	166
16.2.5.	Tax indiscretions	166
16.2.6.	Making misleading statements in court	167
TOPIC 17.	CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVILEGE	168
17.1.	CONFIDENTIALITY	168
17.2.	PRIVILEGE	170
TOPIC 18.	LAWYER-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP	176
18.1.	THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION	176
18.2.	INTERVIEWING SKILLS	180
TOPIC 19.	SOCIAL ISSUES CONCERNING LAWYERS	187
19.1.	HEALTH.....	187
TOPIC 20.	REGULATION AND REFORM OF THE LEGAL INDUSTRY	189
TOPIC 21.	NEGOTIATION	194
21.1.	ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION.....	194
TOPIC 22.	ACCESS TO JUSTICE.....	198
22.1.	RIGHT OF REPRESENTATION.....	198
22.2.	PRO BONO.....	199
TOPIC 23.	THE ADVERSARY SYSTEM.....	202
23.1.	THE ROLE OF ADVOCATES	202
23.2.	PROSECUTOR'S DUTY.....	205
23.2.	THE DEFENCE LAWYER'S DUTY	207

TABLE OF CASES

<i>Al-Kandari v JR Brown & Co (a firm)</i> [1988]	150
<i>Allinson v General Council of Medical Education & Registration</i> [1894]	158
<i>Amadio Pty Ltd v Henderson</i>	71
<i>Arthur JS Hall & Co v Simons</i> [2002]	81
<i>Attorney-General (NSW) v Milat</i> (1995)	200
<i>Attwells and Another v Jackson Lalic Lawyers Pty Ltd</i> (2016)	82
<i>Austrust Pty Ltd v Astley</i> (1993)	71
<i>Badenach v Calvert</i> [2016]	74
<i>Baker v Campbell</i>	173
<i>Batistatos v RTA</i>	203
<i>Blythe v Northwood</i> (2005)	90
<i>Bolger v Bolger</i> (1985)	133
<i>Bolster v McCallum</i> (1966)	130
<i>Bullivant</i>	173
<i>Carindale Country Club Estate</i>	169
<i>Carindale Country Club Estate Pty Ltd v Astill</i> (1993)	103
<i>Carradine Properties Ltd v DJ Freeman & Co</i> [1999]	67
<i>Casanda</i>	61
<i>Chamberlain v Law Society of ACT</i> (1993)	155
<i>Chancliff Holdings Pty Ltd v Bell</i> [1999]	77
<i>Clyne v NSW Bar Association</i> (1960)	160
<i>Cockburn v GIO Finance Ltd</i>	68
<i>Cousins v Cousins</i> (unreported, CA(NSW), 18 December 1990)	73
<i>D & J Construction</i>	110
<i>D'Orta-Ekenaike v. Victoria Legal Aid & Anor</i> (2005)	82
<i>Davies v Camilleri</i>	68
<i>Dietrich</i> (1992)	199
<i>Dominion Metals Pty Ltd v Shemmessian</i> (1993)	178
<i>Donellan v Watson</i> 1990 (NSWCA)	81
<i>e a Practitioner</i> [2004]	167
<i>Esso Australia Resources Limited v Commissioner of Taxation of the Commonwealth of Australia</i> (1999)	171, 172
<i>Evatt v NSW Bar Assoc. CA (NSW)</i>	34
<i>Ex Parte Leneham</i> (1948)	31
<i>Ex parte Lenehan</i> (1948)	26
<i>Ex parte Patience</i> (1940)	133
<i>Expense Reduction Analysts Group Pty Ltd and Others v Armstrong Strategic Management and Marketing Pty Ltd and Others</i> (2013)	142
<i>Finch v The Heat Group (No 3)</i> [2017]	135
<i>Finch v The Heat Group (No 3)</i> [2017] FCA 64	135
<i>Frost & Sutcliffe v Tuiara</i> [2004]	71
<i>Fruehauf Finance Corp Pty Ltd v Feez Ruthning (a firm)</i> [1991]	105
<i>Fruehauf Finance v Feez Ruthning</i>	111
<i>Frugtniet v Board of Examiners</i>	32

<i>Garrard (t/a Arthur Anderson and Co v Email Furniture P/L</i> (199.....	19
<i>Garrard (t/a Arthur Anderson and Co v Email Furniture P/L</i> (1993).....	19
<i>Giannarelli v Wraith</i> (1988)	79, 81
<i>Giffin v Council of the Law Society of NSW</i> [2016]	161
<i>Gillam & Gillam</i> [2017]	107
<i>Goldsworth v Brickell</i> [1987]	92
<i>Gosling v Gaskell</i> [1987]	152
<i>H Stanke & Sons Pty Ltd & Cape Banks Processing Company Pty Ltd v Von Stanke</i>	169
<i>Hall v Foong</i>	79
<i>Hedley Byrne & Co Ltd v Heller & Partners Ltd</i> [1964]	150
<i>Heydon v NRMA Ltd</i> (2000).....	77
<i>Hill (t/a R F Hill & Associates) v Van Erp</i> (1997).....	150
<i>Hoffman v Musk</i> (1990).....	19
<i>Holdway v Acuri (No 2)</i> [2007]	77
<i>Holman v Doel</i> [1979]	19
<i>Hugo v R</i> (2000).....	206
<i>In the Marriage of Griffiths</i>	169
<i>Jaques v KPMG Peat Marwick</i>	110
<i>Jennings v Zilahi-Kiss, Zilahi-Kiss & MK Tremaine & Co Pty Ltd</i> (1972).....	76
<i>Keefe v Marks</i> (1989).....	81
<i>Kennedy v Council of the Incorporated Law Institute of New South Wales</i> (1939) .	140
<i>Kennedy v Council of the Incorporated Law Institute of NSW</i>	204
<i>Kennedy v the Council of the Incorporated Law Institute of NSW</i> (1939).....	160
<i>Kooky Garments Ltd v Charlton</i> [1994].....	137
<i>Kotowicz v the Law Society of NSW (No 2)</i>	34
<i>Law Society of New South Wales v Harvey</i> (1979)	86
<i>Law Society of NSW v Harvey</i> [1976].....	87
<i>Leroux & Leroux and Ors</i> [2015].....	106
<i>Lewis v Ogden</i>	204
<i>Lo Pilato (Trustee) v Kamy Saeedi Lawyers Pty Ltd, in the matter of Adzic (Bankrupt)</i> [2017]	21
<i>Lonstaff v Birtles</i>	90
<i>Maguire v Makaronis</i>	89
<i>Mallesons Stephen Jaques v KPMG Peat Marwick</i>	110
<i>Marriage of Kossatz & Kossatz</i>	109
<i>May v Mijatovic</i>	70
<i>Mellifont v Queensland Law Society Inc</i>	203
<i>Morrissey v The NSW Bar Association</i> (2006).....	30
<i>Morton v Bolinda Publishing Pty Limited</i> [2017]	142
<i>New England Educational Service Inc v Silver Street Partnership</i>	178
<i>O'Reilly v Law Society of New South Wales</i> (1988)	87
<i>O'Reilly v Law Society of NSW</i> (1988).....	88
<i>O'Rourke v Darbishire</i>	173
<i>Orzulak v Hoy</i> (1989).....	72
<i>P and P and Legal Aid Commission of NSW</i>	69
<i>People v Belge</i>	170

<i>Prothonotary v Del Castillo</i>	33
<i>Queensland Law Society Inc v Stevens</i> (1996)	136
<i>Queensland Trustees Ltd v Drysdale Hendy & Co</i>	203
<i>R v Bathgate</i> (1946)	206
<i>R v Birks</i> (1990)	60
<i>R v Callaghan</i> (1994)	206
<i>R v Cox and Railton</i> (1884)	173
<i>R v Frawley</i> (1993)	200
<i>R v Glover</i> (1987)	206
<i>R v Grant-Taylor; Ex parte Johnson</i> (1980)	206
<i>R v Lucas</i> (1973)	207
<i>R v McLoughlin and Isaacs</i> (1985)	61
<i>R v Miras</i>	204
<i>R v Neil</i>	99
<i>R v Noble</i> (2000)	140
<i>Re a Barrister and Solicitor</i> (1979)	133
<i>Re a Firm of Solicitors</i> [1992]	99, 103
<i>Re B</i>	32
<i>Re Bell</i>	28
<i>Re Davis</i>	30
<i>Re Farmer</i> (1997)	76
<i>Re Gruzman</i> (1968)	138
<i>Re Hampton</i>	29
<i>Re Julius</i> [1941]	31
<i>Re Nelson</i>	203
<i>Re Owen</i>	32
<i>Re R, A Practitioner of the Supreme Court</i> [1927]	160
<i>Re Sawley</i> (1894)	163
<i>Re v Veron; Ex parte Law Society of NSW</i> (1966)	159
<i>Re Van Beelen</i> (1974)	207
<i>Re Veron</i> (1966)	164
<i>Robins v Goldingham</i> (1872)	131
<i>Rogers v Whitaker</i> (1992)	75
<i>Rosin v MacPhail</i>	104
<i>Ross v Caunters</i> [1980]	150
<i>Saif Ali v Sydney Mitchell & CO</i> (1980)	79, 80
<i>Seamez (Australia) Pty Ltd v McLaughlin</i> [1999]	78
<i>Sent v John Fairfax Publication Pty Ltd</i> [2002]	105
<i>Shand v MJ Atkinson Ltd (in liq)</i> [1966]	132
<i>Siskamanis v Pandeli Barbayannis & Co</i> (unreported FC(Vic), 25 March 1993)	77
<i>Soia v Bennett</i> [2003]	132
<i>Southern Cross Commodities Pty Ltd (in liq) v Crinis</i> [1984]	173
<i>Southern Law Society v Westbrook</i> (1910)	73
<i>Spaulding v Zimmerman</i> (1962)	23
<i>Spector v Ageda</i> [1973]	72
<i>State ex rel Wal-Mart Stores Inc v Kortum</i> (1997)	105
<i>Taylor v Schofield Peterson</i>	101

<i>The Council of the Law Society of New South Wales v Foreman (1994)</i>	125
<i>The Queen v Robyn Bella Kina (1993)</i>	181
<i>Thomas v Legal Practitioners Admission Boar</i>	30
<i>Thomas v Legal Practitioners Admissions Board [2005]</i>	27
<i>Veghelyi v Council of the Law Society of New South Wales</i>	164
<i>Vegheyi v The Law Society of New South Wales SCNSW Unreported</i>	126
<i>Wan v McDonald (1992)</i>	103
<i>Wentworth v NSW Bar Association</i>	27
<i>XY v Board of Examiners</i>	29
<i>Yamaji v Wespac Banking Corp (No 1) (1993)</i>	102
<i>Yates Property Corporation v Boland (1998)</i>	77
<i>Zhang v VP302 SPV [2009]</i>	177
<i>Ziems v Prothonotary of the Supreme Court of New South Wales (1957)</i>	166

Sample

TOPIC 1. GENERAL CONCEPTS

1.1. THE UNIFORM LAW

- The *Legal Profession Act* is a national model that was adopted by all States and Territories to facilitate a national practice.
- However, from 1 July 2014 the *Legal Profession Act 2004* is repealed and replaced by the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014*, or 'Uniform Law' in Victoria and from 24 November 2015 in NSW. The Uniform Law package includes *Legal Profession Uniform Rules* (or Uniform Rules).
- Victoria and New South Wales are the first states to adopt and implement the Uniform Law and Uniform Rules.
- The Legal Profession Act will continue to operate in the other States and Territories until they implement the Uniform Law.
- The Uniform Law Framework is made up of a Legal Profession Uniform Law; Uniform General Rules; Uniform CPD, Legal Practice and Professional Conduct Rules for solicitors; Uniform CPD and Professional Conduct Rules for Barristers; and Uniform Admission Rules.
- Specifically, for solicitors the Rules include the:
 - Law Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules 2015;
 - Legal Practice (Solicitors) Rules 2015; and
 - Continuing Professional Development (Solicitors) Rules 2015.
- For barristers, the Rules include the:
 - Legal Profession Uniform Conduct (Barristers) Rules 2015.
- An inter-jurisdictional Legal Services Council has been established to oversee and promote a uniform approach to regulating the legal profession and the delivery of legal services across New South Wales and Victoria, together with a Commissioner for Uniform Legal Services Regulation.
- Day-to-day regulation will remain the responsibility of the existing New South Wales and Victorian regulatory bodies.
- The objective of the reforms is to create a common legal services market across New South Wales and Victoria underpinned by a uniform regulatory system.
- The Uniform Law governs matters such as practising certificate types and conditions, maintaining and auditing of trust accounts, continuing professional development requirements, complaints handling processes, billing arrangements and professional discipline issues.

- The Uniform Law Framework preserves the existing rights of legal practitioners from other States and Territories to practise in New South Wales and Victoria.
- This is an important step towards a national legal profession. For the first time there will be a common market for legal services across NSW and Victoria, encompassing 70 per cent of Australia's legal practitioners.
- It will extend to law practices elsewhere when more States and Territories join the scheme.
- The Uniform Law harmonises regulation of the legal profession, cuts red tape and creates a single system to govern legal practice. The scheme also promotes informed consumer choice and has strong consumer protection measures.
- A legal practising certificate issued by one State or Territory will be recognised by all the others. This will elevate the issue of having to be admitted in each State that a practitioner wishes to undertake practice.

Objectives of the Uniform Law

To promote the administration of justice and an efficient and effective Australian legal profession through:

- Consistency between States in the law applying to the Australian legal profession;
- Ensuring legal practitioners are competent and maintain high ethical and professional standards;
- Enhancing the protection of clients and the public;
- Empowering clients to make informed choices about their legal options;
- Efficient, effective, targeted and proportionate regulation; and
- A co-regulatory framework with an appropriate level independence for the legal profession.



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