The Law Society
OF NEW SOUTH WALES
Professional Standards

Professional Standards Department

Annual Report 2026

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Introduction

The Annual Report of the Professional Standards Department of the Law Society of New South Wales encapsulates the important work of the Law Society of New South Wales in performing its statutory functions, including the education, compliance and ongoing improvement of the legal profession in New South Wales. Through its co-regulatory role with the New South Wales Legal Services Commissioner, the Law Society upholds the highest professional standards and is committed to ensuring access to justice and protecting the public.

Utilising powers under the *Legal Profession Uniform Law (NSW)* (Uniform Law) and subordinate regulatory instruments, Professional Standards advises the Council of the Law Society of New South Wales (Council) and its delegates and undertakes a range of regulatory functions in relation to solicitors. The Law Society works closely with the Office of the Legal Services Commissioner to provide a system for handling complaints about solicitors and developing appropriate regulatory policies to positively impact the legal profession.

Specifically, Professional Standards does the following:

- Conducts preliminary assessments and investigations of complaints under Chapter 5 of the Uniform Law about solicitors who are referred to the Council by the Commissioner, and by Courts and Tribunals. Recommendations of appropriate action will be made to the Professional Conduct Committee depending on the circumstances of each case.
- Provides educational support and guidance to the legal profession.
- Assesses disclosures made by solicitors pursuant to the Uniform Law and recommends appropriate action to the Disclosure Committee and Council. This includes assessing Automatic Show Cause Events and Designated Show Cause Events. Where solicitors fail to disclose as required under Uniform Law, those matters are also reviewed.
- Advises Council on matters that identify significant 'fitness' issues in relation to solicitors. These include matters arising from trust account investigations, matters transferred from other areas of the Law Society, and those referred by external parties. Action that may be taken includes, but is not limited to:
  - suspension, variation or cancellation of practising certificates
  - making complaints to the Commissioner
  - recommending external intervention in a law practice
- Conducts litigation on behalf of Council, including disciplinary proceedings in the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Tribunal) and various Courts.
- Investigates allegations about persons who engage in legal practice when they are not entitled to do so, referred to as Unqualified Legal Practice. These matters are criminal in nature and are prosecuted in the Local Court.
- Conducts trust money investigations to determine mishandling of trust money or failures to comply with trust accounting requirements.
- Safeguards client and public interest if a principal solicitor is incapacitated, passes away or faces regulatory/disciplinary issues through appropriate External Intervention.
- Compensates eligible persons suffering a pecuniary loss due to defaults by law practices through the operation of the Fidelity Fund and the applicable provisions under the Uniform Law.

Our Mission

The mission of Professional Standards is to:

- Promote and improve standards within the legal profession
- Regulate solicitors
- Implement the law relating to professional standards and educate legal practitioners
- Protect members of the public
- Provide timely and practical guidance to the profession
- Conduct timely and impartial investigations

Our Values

Professional Standards embodies the Law Society values in its work, namely:

- Service
- Integrity
- Teamwork
- Personal and professional effectiveness
- Achievement

Many Chapter 5 complaints dealt with by Professional Standards involve serious and complex conduct issues. Complaints and other matters are reported to and considered by the Law Society's Regulatory Committees. These include Council, the PCC, the Disclosure Committee, the Ethics Committee, the Costs Committee and the Fidelity Fund Committee.

In undertaking its statutory functions, Professional Standards acts objectively and impartially, ensuring that all complaints are dealt with as efficiently and expeditiously as possible.

In 2023, the Law Society released its Statement of Regulatory Approach. The document describes the risk-based, outcomes-focused approach to the exercise of our regulatory functions. It explains the regulatory decision-making process, with a focus on the importance of the administration of justice, and appropriate action to be taken where there is a serious risk of harm posed to the public.

The regulatory work encompasses much more than dealing with complaints and other matters. Professional Standards also provides guidance, assistance and education to the legal profession through its Professional Support Unit.

This Annual Report is an overview of the work undertaken by the Law Society from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 (2025/2026). Where relevant, comparative data for previous years may be provided. The statistical information set out in this report, in conjunction with the Law Society Annual Report, complies with the reporting requirements of the legal profession legislation.

President's Report



Ronan MacSweeney
President,
The Law Society of New South Wales

The Law Society of New South Wales plays an important role in serving the legal profession, upholding the rule of law and advocating for improved access to justice. In the past twelve months, the number of legal practitioners in New South Wales has grown by 3.5% and now exceeds 45,000. Throughout my year as President, I have travelled throughout our state, meeting practitioners, and learning how the Law Society can provide education, resources and assistance to support the profession to meet new and complex challenges.

The Annual Report of the Professional Standards Department for 2026 provides information on the regulatory activities of the Law Society during the 2025-2026 financial year, highlighting the breadth and significance of this important work. Drawing on statistical data, investigations, case studies and disciplinary outcomes, this Report demonstrates that the Law Society maintains professional standards, protects the public, and supports the solicitor profession in New South Wales.

On 1 July 2026, the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing (**AML/CTF**) regime in Australia was expanded to include legal practitioners who provide a designated service. Supporting the profession through changes to Australia's AML/CTF framework has been a high priority for the Law Society.

We developed a comprehensive suite of practical guidance, tailored to firms of different sizes, including templates and case studies to help solicitors create and implement an appropriate AML/CTF program for their practice. We also provided guidance on navigating AML/CTF compliance alongside obligations arising under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the *Legal Profession Uniform Law* (NSW) (**Uniform Law**). This guidance was available at no cost to all NSW solicitors through our AML/CTF Hub, and was supplemented through an AML/CTF inquiry line.

Another challenge facing the profession is Generative AI (**Gen AI**), its risks and opportunities, and impacts on solicitors' ethical obligations, along with privacy and copyright issues. Professional Standards has contributed to the Law Society's AI for Professionals hub, and the updated *A Solicitor's Guide to Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence.* Our Ethics Committee continues to monitor the use of Gen AI, and has created FAQs summarising the professional implications and ethical issues it raises in legal practice. Most recently, an FAQ on how solicitors should approach a client's use of Gen AI has been added to our resources.

In addition to assisting solicitors to comply with the new AML/CTF regime, the Law Society's Professional Support Unit also provided timely, complimentary and confidential guidance in the areas of costs, ethics, and regulatory compliance. This guidance was provided to solicitors across metropolitan, suburban, regional and rural NSW, to assist them to understand and meet their obligations under the Uniform Law.

The co-regulatory framework established under the Uniform Law combines the role of the Office of the Legal Services Commissioner with the investigatory and complaints management role of the Law Society. Together, these responsibilities provide a transparent, fair, and rigorous process for the assessment and resolution of complaints concerning solicitors.

Each complaint referred to the Law Society is assessed and examined in accordance with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. Where investigations substantiate breaches of professional obligations, appropriate disciplinary action is taken.

"In addition to assisting solicitors to comply with the new AML/CTF regime, the Law Society's Professional Support Unit also provided timely, complimentary and confidential guidance in the areas of costs, ethics, and regulatory compliance. This guidance was provided to solicitors across metropolitan, suburban, regional and rural NSW, to assist them to understand and meet their obligations under the Uniform Law."

Our Statement of Regulatory Approach explains to the profession the principles, priorities and methods used by Professional Standards to administer the Uniform Law and oversee compliance. Its focus is on leading the profession, through education and guidance, to ensure the effective administration of justice.

The information provided in this report demonstrates the Law Society's ongoing commitment to fulfilling its role as a co-regulator of the legal profession, strengthening public confidence in the legal profession, and assisting solicitors to maintain the highest standards of professional practice.

Professional Standards

The Law Society has a statutory obligation to uphold and improve the standards of the legal profession in New South Wales. Professional Standards fulfils this obligation through key activities, detailed below.

Key Activities

Management

- Discharge responsibilities and accountabilities in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Develop and meet budgetary targets.
- Consult with relevant stakeholders in relation to legal profession legislation.
- Supervise staff to ensure quality outcomes within appropriate timeframes.
- Take appropriate action in relation to aged files.
- Review and update processes and policies to improve the function and operation of the Professional Standards.
- Manage complainant and solicitor expectations through education and communication.

Investigations

- Conduct timely and impartial preliminary assessments of complaints referred by the Office of the Legal Services Commissioner.
- Where appropriate, initiate investigations in relation to solicitors, unqualified practitioners and associates of legal practices.
- Conduct efficient investigations of disclosure, compliance and suitability matters within specific timeframes.
- Prepare reports and make recommendations on conduct and fitness issues to the Director, the Professional Conduct Committee (PCC), the Disclosure Committee and/or the Council of the Law Society of New South Wales (Council).
- Draft guidance notes to the profession.
- Prepare matters for the PCC.
- Refer appropriate matters to Council.

Litigation

- Institute and conduct, on behalf of Council, proceedings before the Tribunal and Courts.
- Respond, on behalf of Council, to various applications made before the Tribunal and Courts.
- Provide regular and informative reports to PCC and Council concerning proceedings in litigation matters.
- Recover costs from any successful disciplinary or other action taken against solicitors.
- Appoint Managers and other External Interveners to law practices as appropriate.

Education

- Professional Support Unit (PSU) provides confidential assistance and guidance to solicitors in relation to ethics, costs and regulatory compliance issues arising under the Uniform Law, helping to ensure solicitors understand their obligations and rights pursuant to the relevant legislation.

Costs

- Prepare matters for the Law Society's Costs Committee.
- Assist the Costs Committee to identify and respond to policy issues associated with the legal profession legislation, including the effectiveness of the Costs Assessment Scheme and issues associated with legal costs.
- Provide continuing professional development sessions related to costs and billing obligations arising under the Uniform Law.
- Prepare educational materials, including articles for the *Ethics and Standards Quarterly*, on costs.
- Updating the *Costs Guidebook*, a prime resource for practitioners on legal costs, including client engagement, disclosure and assessment.
- Answer enquiries from the legal profession in relation to costs.

Ethics

- Provide prompt guidance to solicitors consistent with established ethical and legal principles.
- Research and keep abreast of relevant ethical and legal developments.
- Submit timely and informative reports to the Law Society's Ethics Committee.
- Provide ethics remedial sessions as a result of work undertaken by the wider Professional Standards Department.
- Provide legal ethics education through various means, including the publication of articles in *Monday Briefs*, *The Law Society Journal* and *Ethics and Standards Quarterly*, addressing the profession and interested groups.

Regulatory compliance

- Assist and support solicitors dealing with issues involving compliance with the legal profession legislation.
- Educate solicitors in relation to changes introduced by new regulatory initiatives, including preparation of online material, FAQs, factsheets, and toolkits.
- Undertake research into appropriate compliance standards.
- Provide continuing professional development sessions to legal practitioners on matters relating to compliance with the Uniform Law and other legislation.

Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing (AML/CTF)

- Provide guidance to the profession on enquiries, including how to navigate their AML/CTF obligations.
- Creating timely AML/CTF resources for the profession, made available on the Law Society's AML/CTF Hub.
- Liaise with relevant stakeholders, including AUSTRAC and other relevant regulatory bodies, on the impact of regulatory obligations on NSW solicitors.
- Educate solicitors on their AML/CTF obligations, including how they intersect with other legal and ethical obligations.

Administration

- Maintain accurate data and timely information stored on the Law Society's databases.
- Provide administrative management and support to ensure the efficient running of the Department, including paralegal support, agenda preparation for the PCC and Disclosure Committees, high-level document and file management and financial records administration.
- Provide administrative support to the Director, Professional Standards and staff solicitors.

Disclosure

- Investigate show cause events and other disclosures.
- Prepare matters for the Disclosure Committee.
- Refer appropriate matters to Council.

Work undertaken by the Professional Standards Department	2025/2026	2024/2025
Ethics Queries	2,966	3,593
Regulatory Queries	3,041	3,359
Cost Queries	687	498
AML/CTF Queries	276	32
Complaint Files	1,128	844
Disclosure Files Opened	770	667
Litigation	42	21
Unqualified Practitioner Enquiries	128	102

Complaints

The Complaints Process

A complaint may be made by any person or body, including the Commissioner and the Law Society.

Under Chapter 5 of the Uniform Law, all complaints must be made to or by the Commissioner, who may then refer the complaint to Council for assessment. If appropriate, the Law Society may investigate the complaint pursuant to a delegation issued by the Commissioner. The Law Society may also make complaints to the Commissioner (discussed below).

Professional Standards has statutory obligations in relation to its handling of complaints, including ensuring that procedural fairness is afforded and that complaints are dealt with as efficiently and expeditiously as possible. All complaints are dealt with in an impartial and fair manner.

Professional Standards deals predominantly with those complaints identified as disciplinary matters. A disciplinary matter relates to conduct of a solicitor or law practice that would, if the conduct is established, amount to professional misconduct or unsatisfactory professional conduct.

In dealing with disciplinary matters, a preliminary assessment of the complaint is initially undertaken. Following that preliminary assessment, a determination is made either to close the complaint or to progress it to the investigation stage.

A brochure entitled "Complaints Process Information" has been prepared and addresses the complaints handling process. It explains the Law Society's role in dealing with complaints. A copy of this brochure may be sent to complainants and solicitors for their assistance and information. It is also available on the Law Society's website.

Referrals from the Legal Services Commissioner

In **2025/2026**:

- The Commissioner received a total of **4,106** written complaints about solicitors.
- The Commissioner referred a total of **1,128** complaints to Professional Standards.
- **10** findings of unsatisfactory professional conduct were made by the PCC and **15** matters were referred to the Tribunal for determination.
- During the year, **1,271** matters were closed in total, as follows: **641** complaints were closed by the PCC, **58** were closed by Disclosure Committee, **494** complaints were closed by the Director and Deputy Directors, **63** complaints were withdrawn, and **15** were referred back to the OLSC.
- At 30 June 2026, a total of **645** Chapter 5 complaints remained open.

Complaints made by the Law Society

Pursuant to section 266 of the Uniform Law, the Law Society may make its own complaints to the Commissioner about the conduct of solicitors.

Generally, complaints made by the Law Society arise from the following types of matters:

- The Trusts team identifies matters involving a solicitor's mishandling of trust money or failures to comply with trust accounting requirements.
- Issues surrounding a solicitor's practising certificate are referred by Licensing & Registry.
- The Disclosure Committee typically refers matters involving misconduct arising outside the practice of law.
- Judicial officer or court registrar referrals often involve conduct of a solicitor arising in the course of proceedings before a Court or Tribunal.
- Matters referred to Professional Standards by government and other regulatory agencies often involve the conduct of a lawyer/solicitor that came to light during the course of the agency's investigation.

Categories of Complaints

The following section provides a summary of the type and nature of complaints opened during 2025/2026.

Conduct most complained about

In **2025/2026**:

- "Ethical Matters" for example: misleading or dishonest conduct, acting in situations where a conflict of interest is present, acting without instructions, failure to comply with an undertaking or breach of confidentiality) was the category most complained about, making up 649 of the total complaints.
- "Communication" (for example: failing to respond or discourteous correspondence) was the second category most complained about, making up 229 of the total complaints.
- "Quality of Service" issues (for example: negligence, failure to supervise or delay) accounted for 72 of the total complaints.
- "Costs" issues (for example: failing to provide costs disclosures, overcharging or failing to pay a third party) accounted for 72 of the total complaints.
- "Trust Fund" issues (for example: refusing to release trust money, failing to account or breaching trust regulations) accounted for 64 of the total complaints.
- "Compliance Matters" (for example: failure to comply with a compulsive notice, breach of practising certificate conditions, or failure to comply with court orders) accounted for 38 of the total complaints.
- "Documents" (for example: failure to return a client's file or losing client documents) accounted for four of the total complaints.

Ethical Matters	649
Communications	229
Quality of Service	72
Costs	72
Trust Fund	64
Compliance Matters	38
Documents	4

Areas of law with the most complaints	
Other Civil	403
Family Law	152
Commercial / Corporations / Franchise	109
Probate / Family Provisions	70
Criminal	60
Wills/ Power of Attorney	58
Employment	53
Leases /Mortgages	46
Conveyancing	42
Strata / Corporate	38
Insolvency	26
Personal Injury	20
Building Law	16
Workers Compensation	11
Land and Environment	10
Immigration	9
Victim Compensation	3
Professional Negligence	2

Complaints by Solicitor Type	2025/2026	2024/2025
Principal of a law practice	678	443
Employee of a law practice	204	195
Law Practice	99	78
Not Practising	90	86
Government Legal Practitioner	39	18
Corporate Legal Practitioner	18	24

Complaints by solicitor type

In 2025/2026:

- 678 complaints were made against principals of a law practice (comprising 60.11% of the complaints made).
- 204 complaints were made against employees of a law practice (comprising 18.09% of the complaints made).
- From a geographical perspective, 50.26% of complaints made related to solicitors practising in suburban Sydney, 25.7% related to solicitors practising in Sydney's CBD, 15% were interstate and 18.35% were made against solicitors practising in rural New South Wales.
- 27.83% of complaints concerned female solicitors, 63.38% of complaints were made against male solicitors, with the remaining 8.79% complaints made against Law Practices.

Note: Percentages quoted are based on all complaints received but one solicitor may generate several complaints, either separately or in the same matter.

Categories of Complainants

In 2025/2026:

- The largest number of complaints were made by third parties on the opposing side who accounted for 42.29% of the total complaints.
- Complaints made by the client(s) or former client(s) of a solicitor or law practice accounted for 16.13% of the total complaints.
- Complaints made by a solicitor accounted for 3.99% of the total complaints.
- Complaints made by barristers accounted for 1.42% of the total complaints. These complaints often related to the non-payment of outstanding fees.

Categories of Complainants	2025/2026	2024/2025
3rd Party (Other Side)	477	361
Client/Former Client	182	148
Third Party	147	98
Solicitor	45	81
Beneficiary	50	40
Solicitor on behalf of Client	36	30
Non-Client	118	22
Barrister	16	17
Other	19	12
Government Department	7	10
Executor	11	8
Law Society	13	7
Administrator	4	3
Parliamentary Minister	0	3
Legal Aid Commission	0	2
Trust Account Inspector	1	1
Legal Services Commissioner	2	0

Finalisation of Complaints

In an effort to deal with the significant increase in the number of referred complaints under Chapter 5, Council broadened its delegations to streamline the complaints handling process. This included:

- Delegating the power to close complaints under section 277 to the Disclosure Committee, the Professional Standards Director and various Deputy Directors.
- Delegating the power to waive time under section 272.

Professional Standards closed a total of 1271 complaints in 2025/2026, which marks a 50% increase from 2024/2025 (in which 616 complaints were closed).

Complaints closed under the Uniform Law

Outcome	Number
209 No Further Investigation Required - (S277(1)(h)	848
205 Complaint Has Been Previously Investigated - S277(1)(d)	124
204 Failure/Inadequate Response To Request For Info - S277(1)(c)	86
200 Complaint Withdrawn - S273(1)	63
201 Misconceived/Lacking Substance - S277 (1)(a)	40
206 Complaint Better Dealt With By Law Enforcement/Investigatory Body - S277(1)(e)	32
202 Time Limit Not Waived Under S272(1) - S277(1)(b)	32
230 Initiate Tribunal Proceedings - S300(1)	15
235 Referred Back to the OLSC	15
224 Reprimand - S299(1)(b)	10
211 Public Interest Closure - S277(1)(j)	3
223 Caution - S299(1)(a)	3

Professional Conduct Committee Decisions

Under Chapter 5 of the Uniform Law, Council delegates certain functions to the PCC.

The PCC is one of the Law Society's largest committees and plays an essential role in relation to the regulatory functions of the Law Society. In 2025/2026, there were 39 members of the PCC, comprising 8 Councillors of the Law Society, 25 solicitors and 6 lay members.

Members of the PCC contribute many hours on a voluntary basis. The Committee is reflective of a broad range of legal expertise, insight and experience. It typically meets every two to three weeks to consider the reports and recommendations of the Department in relation to complaints.

Following its consideration of a complaint, the PCC may:

- Close the complaint.
- Initiate proceedings in the Tribunal against the solicitor.
- Find that the solicitor has engaged in unsatisfactory professional conduct and order that the solicitor:
  - Be cautioned
  - Be reprimanded
  - Apologise to the complainant
  - Re-do the work that is the subject of the complaint at no cost or waive or reduce the fees for the work
  - Undertake education, training, counselling or be supervised
  - Pay a fine of a specified amount not exceeding $25,000 to the Public Purpose Fund
- Recommend a specified condition be imposed on the solicitor's practising certificate.

In 2025/2026:

- Of the 1,271 matters finalised, 641 complaints were closed by PCC.
- Of the complaints closed:
  - Three caution and 10 reprimands were consequently ordered by the PCC.
  - 15 matters were referred to the Tribunal for the commencement of disciplinary proceedings.
- 91.66% were closed for one or more of the grounds provided under section 277 of the Uniform Law including that the complaint requires no further investigation (s277(1)(h)); the complaint was misconceived or lacking in substance (277(1)(a)); the complainant had not responded, or responded inadequately to a request for further information (277(1)(c)); the subject matter of the complaint had already been investigated (277(1) (d)); or that it was otherwise in the public interest to close the complaint (for example, in circumstances where the solicitor's name may already have been removed from the roll) (277(1)(j)).
- In August 2025, Council delegated the power to deal with certain complaints to the Director and Deputy Directors. In practice, they typically close complaints under the grounds specified in s277. During the year the Director closed 233 matters. Deputy Directors closed a total of 265 matters.
- In January 2026, Council delegated the power to deal with certain complaints to the Disclosure Committee. In total, the Disclosure Committee closed 58 complaints.

Complaint outcomes	2025/2026	2024/2025
Reprimand	10	9
Caution/Other Order	3	1
Solicitor referred to the Tribunal	15	9
Closed pursuant to s277	1,165	532
Referred back to OLSC	15	16
Complaint Withdrawn	63	47

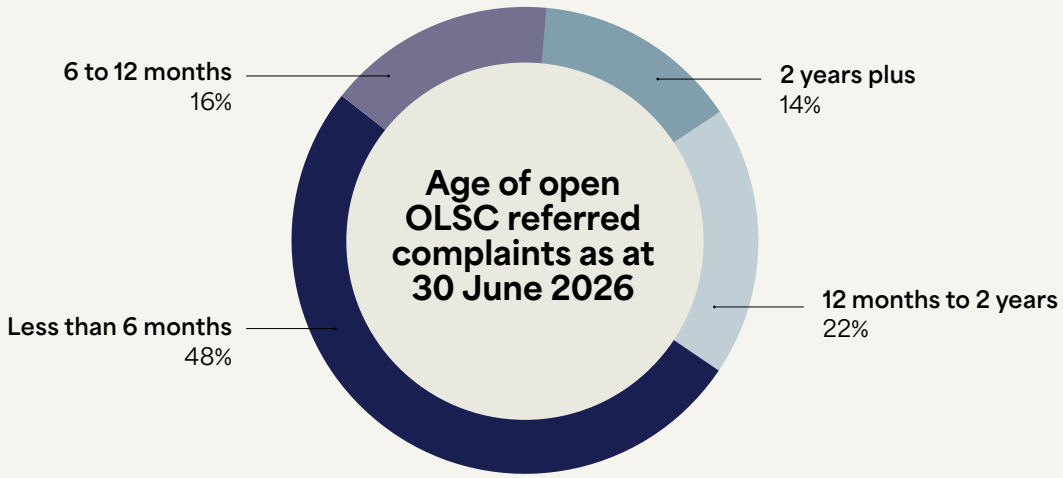
Complaints management

Staff practices and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure complaints are handled as efficiently and expeditiously as possible.

Professional Standards staff regularly liaise with the Commissioner concerning the status and progress of all complaints referred to the Law Society. The Law Society continues to improve its handling of complaints.

Progress of complaint investigations can be adversely impacted where the subject matter of the complaint is also involved in court proceedings related to the complaint.

In some circumstances, the Law Society may close the complaint because it is more appropriately dealt with by the court. Closure may also occur where another body, government agency or regulator (e.g. law enforcement) is more appropriately positioned to conduct an investigation.



Reviews by the New South Wales Legal Services Commissioner

The decisions and determinations of Council and its delegates in relation to complaints may be the subject of review. The avenue of review available under the legal profession legislation will depend upon the type of decision or determination made.

For example, in relation to a complaint which has been closed by the PCC under s277 of the Uniform Law, an application for review must be made to the Commissioner within 30 days of the date of notice of the decision.

The Commissioner has the absolute discretion to conduct an internal review of that decision if she considers it appropriate to do so.

Litigation and external intervention

New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal

If the PCC determines that the conduct of a solicitor may amount to unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct, proceedings in the Tribunal may be initiated in relation to that conduct.

Proceedings are commenced pursuant to section 300(1) of the Uniform Law. This is done by the filing of an Application for Disciplinary Findings and Orders on behalf of Council. Applications must be filed within six months of the PCC's decision.

Many of the matters referred to the Tribunal are complex and often involve multiple issues of alleged conduct.

The table commencing on page 15 sets out the types of conduct that the Tribunal considered in disciplinary proceedings that Council commenced, and the orders that the Tribunal made in those proceedings in 2025/2026.

Tribunal Orders for reprimands, fines or recommendations for removal from the Roll - FY2026 (as at 30 June 2026)

See below the trend of disciplinary outcomes, namely, reprimands, fines, and recommendations for removal from the Roll issued by the Tribunal over each financial year.

Year	Reprimand	Fine	Recommendations for removal from the roll
2025/2026	2	2	2
2024/2025	2	1	1
2023/2024	3	0	1
2022/2023	2	1	0
2021/2022	6	1	1
2020/2021	9	4	1
2019/2020	4	2	1

The Tribunal - Disciplinary proceedings

In 2025/2026:

- Council commenced six proceedings in the Tribunal in respect of six respondent solicitors, pursuant to section 300(1) of the Uniform Law.
- The Tribunal published decisions in relation to five disciplinary proceedings that Council had commenced in the Tribunal pursuant to section 300(1) in a previous period.
- Following an application to withdraw proceedings, the Tribunal dismissed one of Council's applications.

Outcomes of disciplinary proceedings in the Tribunal

Name of solicitor	Conduct	Finding(s)	Orders made	Date of orders
Jason Robert Moody (Stage 2)	Caused to be published, or knowingly authorised or permitted the publication of, an article (Article) on the website of Moody Law Pty Ltd (Law Practice), in circumstances where he knew, or ought reasonably to have known, that such publication may prejudice a fair trial or may be prejudicial to, or diminish public confidence in, the administration of justice. From at least about 25 November 2021 to about 2 February 2022, caused, or knowingly authorised or permitted, the Article to remain on the Law Practice's website, in circumstances where he knew, or ought reasonably to have known, that such publication may prejudice a fair trial or may be prejudicial to, or diminish public confidence in, the administration of justice.	Professional misconduct	Reprimand Fine Costs	22 July 2025
Nathan Andrew Buckley	Made public statements encouraging residents of certain local government areas in New South Wales to breach laws by deliberately providing false information to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission for the purpose of avoiding the effect of applicable public health orders, which was contrary to his paramount duty to the administration of justice as required under r3 of the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Australia Solicitors' Conduct Rules 2015* (Conduct Rules).	Professional misconduct and unsatisfactory professional conduct	Roll removal recommen-dation Costs	

Name of solicitor	Conduct	Finding(s)	Orders made	Date of orders
Nathan Andrew Buckley	Caused to be published on the Facebook platform comments which contained offensive and/or abusive language, and thereby engaged in conduct which, contrary to r5 of the Conduct Rules, was likely to a material degree to be prejudicial to, or diminish the public confidence in, the administration of justice and/or bring the legal profession into disrepute. Made public statements regarding or in connection with the judgment of Beech-Jones CJ at CL in *Kassam v Hazzard; Henry v Hazzard* [2021] NSWSC 1320, which was conduct contrary to his paramount duty to the administration of justice under r3 of the Conduct Rules. Endorsed public comments on the Facebook platform which was conduct contrary to his paramount duty to the administration of justice under r3 of the Conduct Rules. As part of raising funds to prosecute proceedings for judicial review of a proposed decision of the Council, he made public statements, which was conduct contrary to his paramount duty to the administration of justice under r3 of the Conduct Rules. Acted in a manner which, contrary to r 5 of the Conduct Rules, was likely to a material degree to be prejudicial to, or diminish the public confidence in, the administration of justice and/or bring the legal profession into disrepute. Posted, or caused to be posted, materials in relation to two fundraising campaigns, as part of which he engaged in marketing or promotion in connection with himself and/or the law practice known as G & B Lawyers (of which he was a partner) which was false or misleading or deceptive or likely to mislead or deceive, contrary to rr36.1.1 and 36.1.2 of the Conduct Rules.			

Name of solicitor	Conduct	Finding(s)	Orders made	Date of orders
Dominique Grubisa	Allowed a law practice, of which she was the principal to engage lay associates who were disqualified persons in contravention of the Uniform Law. Engaged a private investigator to investigate another lawyer to obtain information about potential litigation, authorised the investigators to engage in deceptive conduct and knew they were engaging in deceptive conduct. Acted for clients in circumstances where there was a conflict between her duty to the clients and her own interests. Represented that an entity was entitled to engage in legal practice when it is not entitled to do so in contravention of the Uniform Law. Failed to competently provide legal services to clients. Provided misleading submissions to the Law Society of NSW. Offered to assist an employee to create a false receipt. Failed to comply with disclosure obligations under the Uniform Law.	Professional misconduct and unsatisfactory professional conduct	Roll Removal Recommen-dation Costs	1 October 2025
Christopher Francis McCarron	Breached his obligations as a fiduciary by acting for a client, and represented his own interests in the same transaction, which amounted to a serious conflict of interest.	Professional misconduct	Reprimand Fine Costs	14 November 2025
Anne Kazas-Rogaris	Witnessed a mortgage for a client which was in breach of Court orders.	Professional misconduct and unsatisfactory professional conduct	To be determined by Tribunal	6 May 2026

Section 314 (appeal) proceedings

A person admitted to the legal profession against whom the PCC resolved to make disciplinary orders may, pursuant to section 314 of the Uniform Law, commence proceedings in the Tribunal against Council to seek review of that resolution.

In 2025/2026:

- the Tribunal published its decision in relation to one proceeding that a solicitor had commenced against the Council, as follows:
  - *HJJ v Council of the Law Society of New South Wales* [2025] NSWCATOD 150 - Decision published 7 November 2025. The PCC found HJJ engaged in unsatisfactory professional conduct in attempting to have a Costs Assessment stayed by suggesting to the Costs Assessor that there was "no doubt" as to his client's capacity, when this was not an accurate representation. The Tribunal found that HJJ had engaged in unsatisfactory professional conduct and affirmed the decision of PCC to issue a caution.

Court of Appeal - Roll Removal proceedings

The Council may commence proceedings in the New South Wales Court of Appeal (Court of Appeal) against a person who has been admitted to the legal profession in New South Wales to seek the following:

1. A declaration that the person is not a fit and proper person to remain on the roll of Australian Lawyers (Roll).
2. An order removing the person's name from the Roll, pursuant to section 23 of the Uniform Law.

In 2025/2026 the Court of Appeal delivered decisions in the following three disciplinary proceedings:

1. *Council of the Law Society of New South Wales v Sideris* [2025] NSWCA 159 - Decision published 18 July 2025 - The Court of Appeal made a declaration that Mr George Sideris is not a fit and proper person to remain on the Roll and made an order removing his name from the Roll.
2. *Council of the Law Society of New South Wales v O'Brien* [2025] NSWCA 215 - Decision published 22 September 2025 - The Court of Appeal made a declaration that Mr Mark Leo O'Brien is not a fit and proper person to remain on the Roll and made an order removing his name from the Roll.
3. *Council of the Law Society of New South Wales v Chalabian* [2025] NSWCA 255 - Decision published 28 November 2025 - The Court of Appeal made a declaration that Mr Sevag Chalabian is not a fit and proper person to remain on the Roll and made an order removing his name from the Roll.

Supreme Court proceedings

Some decisions of Council are subject to review by the Supreme Court of New South Wales.

In 2025/2026:

- Nine proceedings were commenced against Council seeking a review of its decisions by the Supreme Court, one of which was subsequently discontinued.
- Council commenced proceedings seeking urgent injunctive orders against an individual pursuant to s447 of the Uniform Law.
- The Court published (final) decisions in relation to two proceedings commenced against Council:
    1. *Odtojan v Law Society of New South Wales* [2026] NSWSC 22 - Decision published 4 February 2026. Ms Odtojan commenced proceedings in the Supreme Court against the Council seeking a judicial review of the Council's decision to:
        a. refuse to renew her practising certificate because the Council considered her not to be a fit and proper person for the purposes of section 45 of the Uniform Law; and
        b. appoint a Manager to her law practice.

        The Supreme Court ordered that Ms Odtojan's amended summons be dismissed, with costs.
    2. *Bryl v Law Society of New South Wales* [2026] NSWSC 23 - Decision published 4 February 2026. Mr Bryl commenced proceedings in the Supreme Court against the Council seeking a judicial review of the Council's decision to refuse to renew his practicing certificate because the Council considered him not to be a fit and proper person for the purposes of section 45 of the Uniform Law.

        The Supreme Court ordered that Mr Bryl summons filed 1 July 2025 be dismissed, with costs.

Other matters

In 2025/2026:

- Two applicants commenced proceedings against Council in the Tribunal in circumstances where the Tribunal did not have jurisdiction. Both applications were ultimately dismissed by Tribunal.
- Six applications were made to the Tribunal for approval as a lay associate pursuant to s121 of the Uniform Law. Council was granted leave to appear at the hearing and participate in these proceedings as an interested party.
- The Tribunal handed down five decisions relating to applications for approval as a lay associate pursuant to s121 of the Uniform Law which involved Council/ the Law Society.
- Council approved one application by a person seeking approval as a lay associate pursuant to section 121 of the Uniform Law.

Unqualified legal practice

The Law Society's role includes investigating queries about entities who are alleged to have breached ss 10(1) and/or 11 of the Uniform Law.

Where appropriate, Professional Standards will take action, including commencement of criminal proceedings in the Local Court.

Section 10 of the Uniform Law prohibits unqualified entities and individuals from engaging in legal practice in New South Wales.

Section 11 prohibits unqualified entities and individuals from holding themselves out as entitled to engage in legal practice.

In dealing with queries about possible breaches of sections 10 and 11, the Law Society will typically, in the first instance, attempt to address any alleged issues by liaising directly with the entity subject of the enquiry.

In 2025/2026:

- 128 enquiries about unqualified practice were reviewed, which constitutes an increase from 102 enquiries in the previous reporting period.
- 72 enquiries about unqualified practice were closed.

In 2025/2026, the Local Court found a person guilty of contravening ss 11(1) and 11(2) of the Uniform Law and imposed fines.

In 2025/2026 a person commenced an appeal in the District Court regarding a successful unqualified practice prosecution in the Local Court.

Disqualification of individuals

Council may commence proceedings in the Tribunal to seek an order, pursuant to section 119 of the Uniform Law, which renders a person (other than a legal practitioner) a 'disqualified person' for the purposes of the Uniform Law.

Grounds for disqualification include the following circumstances:

- The individual has been convicted of a serious offence.
- The individual is not a fit and proper person to be employed or paid in connection with the practice of law, or to be involved in the management of a law practice.
- The individual was formerly an Australian legal practitioner who has been guilty of conduct that constituted unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct.
- The individual has been guilty of conduct that, if the person were an Australian legal practitioner, would have constituted unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct.

In 2025/2026, the Tribunal handed down the following decision:

- *Council of the Law Society of New South Wales v Li* [2025] NSWCATOD 114 - Decision published 28 August 2025 - The Tribunal made an order disqualifying Mr Zhewen Li indefinitely pursuant to s 119(1) of the Uniform Law.

External intervention

In certain circumstances, Council may initiate external intervention in relation to a law practice to appoint a manager, a supervisor, a receiver and/or an external investigator. The circumstances in which external intervention may be warranted are outlined in section 326 of the Uniform Law and include:

- Where a solicitor ceases to hold a practising certificate.
- Where a law practice or an unincorporated legal practice has been wound up or dissolved.
- Where the Law Society believes on reasonable grounds that a law practice is not dealing with trust money adequately or where there has been a serious irregularity in relation to trust money.
- Where a solicitor is in prison.
- Where a solicitor has failed to comply with the requests of an investigator or external examiner duly appointed.
- Where a solicitor ceases to be engaged in legal practice without making provision for properly dealing with trust money or not properly winding up the affairs of the law practice.

Managers

Council may resolve to appoint a manager to a law practice under section 334 of the Uniform Law. Managers are generally appointed to ensure the orderly conduct of the matters of a law practice, for example, upon the death or ill health of a sole practitioner. A manager must hold a Principal of a Law Practice practising certificate and will take over all duties and responsibilities of a solicitor's law practice and dispose of the law practice.

In 2025/2026:

- Council appointed a total of 18 managers
- The Director, Professional Standards:
  1. Appointed a total of 19 managers
  2. Re-appointed 19 managers
  3. Terminated six manager appointments

Supervisors

Council may resolve to appoint a supervisor of trust money to a law practice pursuant to section 329 of the Uniform Law. The supervisor has the powers and duties of a law practice in relation to all trust money, that is, to receive trust money into a law practice, to open and close trust accounts and to make payments to entitled parties.

In 2025/2026:

- Council appointed 2 supervisors of trust money
- 2 appointments were terminated
- the Director re-appointed 1 supervisor

Receivers

Council may resolve to apply to the Supreme Court of New South Wales for the appointment of a receiver to a law practice pursuant to the grounds set out in the Uniform Law, including where a solicitor has ceased to hold a practising certificate, is mentally or physically infirm, has abandoned his or her practice, or has died, or when a client cannot obtain trust property.

A receiver's powers are extensive and include taking possession of all trust property and winding up the law practice.

In 2025/2026, Council commenced one proceeding in the Supreme Court of New South Wales seeking the appointment of a receiver to a law practice.

Investigators

Council may also appoint an external investigator if there is a suspicion of improper conduct or irregularity by a solicitor's law practice with their trust account obligations under Chapter 4 of the Uniform Law. The external investigator may be either a solicitor or an accountant and is tasked to examine the affairs of the law practice.

In 2025/2026, Council appointed external investigators to two law practices.

Disclosure, compliance and fitness matters

Disclosures

The legal profession legislation requires applicants for, and holders of, practising certificates to disclose certain matters to Council. These are as follows:

1. **"Automatic show cause events"** - Part 3.5 of the Uniform Law sets out the procedures for dealing with "automatic show cause events" that solicitors must disclose to the Law Society. "Automatic show cause events" are defined in section 86 of the Uniform Law and include a bankruptcy-related event, conviction for a serious offence (indictable offences) or conviction for a tax offence.
2. **Matters requiring disclosure under section 51 of the Uniform Law** - Such matters include a charge or conviction for a serious offence, a tax offence or conviction of an offence specified in rule 15 of the *Legal Profession Uniform General Rules 2015* (**General Rules**), or disciplinary proceedings brought against a solicitor in a foreign country.
3. **Matters referred to in Rule 13** - At the time a solicitor renews or applies for a practising certificate, they are required to disclose each of the matters referred to in rule 13(1) of the General Rules for the Law Society to determine whether or not they are fit and proper to hold a practising certificate.

Applicants for the grant of a practising certificate are also required to make the same disclosures when they apply, including for events occurring prior to admission such as academic dishonesty, criminal convictions and any other matters that may impact on their fitness.

Compliance outcomes

Professional Standards will open a file where:

- The Tribunal orders that a solicitor take certain steps (such as complete education or pay a fine).
- PCC makes orders that a solicitor completes certain obligations (such as an apology to a complainant, completing an educational requirement or payment a fine.
- Conditions are placed on a solicitor's practising certificate requiring their compliance (for example, further supervision, medical or financial reporting, further education). These can be imposed either by Council, a delegate, or in voluntary agreement with the solicitor.

Professional Standards monitors solicitor compliance with orders and conditions. Non-compliance may be referred to the Disclosure Committee or Council.

Other fitness issues

Issues concerning whether a person is fit and proper to hold a practising certificate and/or engage in legal practice, may arise, such as:

- Matters referred by Courts and Tribunals
- Matters referred by another regulatory body or government department
- Notifications of a trust account irregularity under s 154 of Uniform Law
- Referrals from other parts of the Law Society, for example the Licensing Department

These matters are assessed. If appropriate, recommendations are made to Council, the Professional Conduct Committee or the Disclosure Committee.

Disclosure Committee

The Disclosure Committee, under delegation of Council, deals with certain matters that solicitors are required to disclose to the Law Society. These matters include preadmission conduct and show cause events such as convictions involving a serious offence, bankruptcy-related events and convictions of summary offences.

The Disclosure Committee does not have the power to make a determination to cancel or suspend a practising certificate, or to refuse an application for a practising certificate. That power is reserved for Council. The Disclosure Committee can, however, impose conditions on practising certificates.

In 2025/2026, there were 18 members of the Disclosure Committee, comprising of three Law Society Councillors, 11 solicitors, one Australian Lawyer and three lay members.

The Disclosure Committee meets monthly.

"The Law Society expects that all relevant persons engaging, or seeking to engage, in legal practice in New South Wales are aware of, and comply with, mandatory disclosure obligations."

Disclosures received by the Law Society

This year, the Annual Report distinguishes the disclosures made by current solicitors from those made by new applicants.

In 2025/2026 327 solicitors holding current practicing certificates disclosed matters. Of the disclosures received:

- 67 involved serious offences which may include: aggravated break and enter, affray, larceny, destroying and damaging property, indecent assault, common assault (domestic violence related), stalking and intimidating, assaulting police and resisting/ hindering arrest, breaching domestic apprehended violence orders, recklessly dealing with the proceeds of crime, accessory after the fact to murder, child pornography offences, obtaining financial advantage by deception, fraud, conspiracy to defraud, breaching security regulation and participating in a criminal group.
- 97 involved summary offences consisting predominantly of the following: driving offences (such as drink- driving, negligent driving, driving without a licence, traffic and parking infringements), possession of prohibited drugs, academic misconduct, Centrelink overpayments, disorderly behaviour, failure to attend jury duty, failure to vote, failure to leave licensed premises, drinking in public, public nuisance, jaywalking, possessing a knife in public, failure to submit to breath test, behaving in an offensive manner, breaching biotechnology regulations, breaching customs regulations and using false identification.
- 15 disclosures were notifications of bankruptcy or insolvency matters.
- One related to tax offences.
- Five related to health issues of the practitioner.
- 164 other matters were disclosed under Rule 13 of the General Rules.

Disclosures made to the Law Society - solicitors with practising certificates	
Summary Offence	97
Rule 13 - LPUL	164
Serious Offence	67
Tax Offence	1
Bankruptcy	15
Health	5

For new applicants, 427 disclosed matters. Some applicants listed more than one category in their disclosures. These matters ranged from serious offences to relatively minor events such as Centrelink overpayments, parking fines and minor traffic offences, and are set out below.

Disclosures made to the Law Society - new applicants	
Summary Offence	263
Rule 13 - LPUL	224
Serious Offence	24
Tax Offence	21
Bankruptcy	18
Health	27

Compliance matters

During the 2025/2026 year, Professional Standards opened 39 new compliance files and closed 50 in total. Most matters were closed because the solicitor complied with their obligations. However, a small number resulted in further regulatory action being taken against the solicitor for non-compliance.

Other fitness matters considered by the Department

During the year, Professional Standards opened 161 fitness files which came to its attention from the following sources:

Fitness matter	Number
External referral	62
Licensing referral	35
Trust referral	64

Regulatory actions

Council and its delegates make a range of decisions in dealing with the matters set out above. The most serious actions involve refusal, suspension or cancellation of a practising certificate. Those decisions are solely within the purview of Council. Other actions that may be taken include:

- Imposing conditions on a practising certificate
- Appointing a manager or supervisor
- Issuing warnings or advisory letters
- Making complaints to the OLSC

The overwhelming majority of matters result in no further action. This is because the matters disclosed or identified do not impact on a solicitor's fitness to practice, or because another event has occurred (e.g. charges are withdrawn).

In 2025/2026, the following significant regulatory actions were taken to respond to disclosures and suitability matters:

Action taken	Number
PC Refusal	17
PC Cancelled	4
PC Application Withdrawn	12
Conditions Imposed on PC / PC Variation	39
PC Suspension	9
Further PC Restriction - S.94	3
Undertaking Given - No PC Condition	4
Director's advisory letter	6
Complaint Made	4

Professional Support Unit
Ethics

The Ethics Unit of the PSU and the Ethics Committee provide professional assistance and specialist services to the legal profession on a wide range of topics.

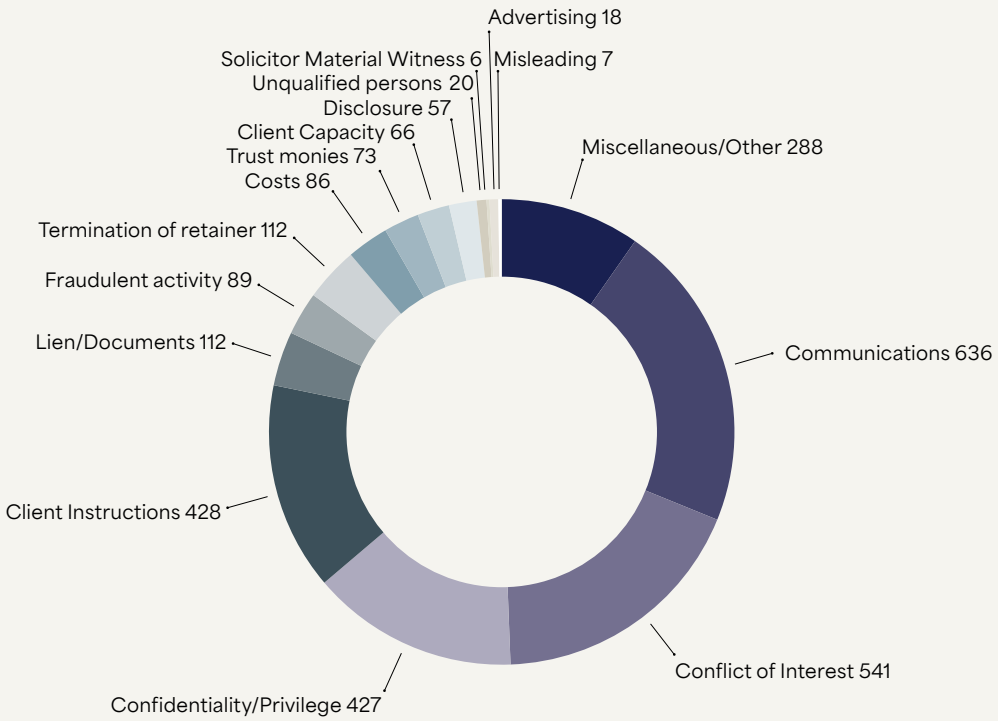
These activities have resulted in the enhancement of ethical and professional standards within the legal profession.

Overview

During 2025/2026 the Ethics Unit was heavily utilised by the NSW legal profession. Solicitors were provided with timely and practical information and guidance. The Ethics Unit assisted solicitors to ensure they were aware of ethical practices and appropriate professional conduct.

The Ethics Unit responded to questions from the NSW legal profession by telephone, written correspondence and also by personal attendance. Problematic and difficult issues were referred to the Ethics Committee for discussion and guidance.

The Ethics Unit received and resolved **2,966** questions arising from **2,519** individual enquiries. The number of enquiries remained steady from the previous year. The **2,966** questions received were related to the following areas:



The traditional services were maintained throughout the year by telephone enquiry line, an ethics email inbox and audio visual links to solicitors.

In addition to answering enquiries from the profession, the Ethics Unit contributed several new educational resources, primarily through the Law Society Journal and the Ethics and Standards Quarterly. Topics included:

- Formality and the online court - why tradition and ethics matter
- Protecting your clients' claims to client legal privilege
- The power of pastoral mentorship
- What can I do if another solicitor is being difficult
- Formality and the Court - a tale of tradition and ethics

The Ethics Committee and its functions

The Ethics Committee receives its functions from the Council, including a general delegation of powers to the Ethics Committee. The activity of the Committee is the subject of annual review by Council to maintain and promote the high ethical standards of the legal profession.

The members of the Ethics Committee provide a diverse pool of practical skills and experience, drawing on its membership of practitioners from government departments and private practice (large, medium and small practices) across a range of locations - city, suburban and rural. This provides a broad and comprehensive base of specialist expert guidance on ethical issues for solicitors.

There are currently 29 members of the legal profession on the Committee.

Regular meetings of the Ethics Committee are held each month to review a broad range of ethical matters affecting the legal profession.

The year in review - service and guidance

The 2025/2026 year continued to present interesting ethical issues for the legal profession, such as cyber security and regulatory burden, as well as supervisory challenges in the current workplace.

The educational program has been an ongoing and essential component of the services provided to the legal profession by Professional Standards and the Law Society. This financial year, 95 continuing professional development sessions were provided to assist solicitors in meeting their ethics requirements and to deepen their understanding of this topic of critical importance.

Professional Support Unit
Costs

The Costs Unit of the PSU provides specialist costs guidance and education to all solicitors in New South Wales regardless of their membership status, to ensure compliance with the legislation.

Over the 2025/2026 financial year, the Costs Unit provided costs guidance and education sessions to the legal profession. It also contributed the following educational articles to the Ethics and Standards Quarterly, including:

- What is the difference between a client retainer and costs agreement?
- When can a personal costs order be made against a solicitor?
- Things to consider before pursuing your client for unpaid costs.
- Artificial intelligence in legal practice - costs considerations.
- When might a Tripartite Deed come in handy?

The Costs Unit, in conjunction with the Costs Committee, has also been reviewing and updating the Law Society's updated *Costs Guidebook*, and precedent costs disclosure and costs agreement to incorporate AML/CTF obligations.

This year, the Costs Unit handled 687 questions arising from 452 enquiries. The most common problem faced by solicitors requiring assistance related to the proper billing practices required under the Uniform Law.

Enquiries relating to billing amounted to 24% of all enquiries, followed by costs disclosure (20%) and costs agreement (18%).

Education

The Costs Unit continues to provide CPD seminars in the areas most frequently requested (namely, costs disclosure, agreements, assessment and recovery). This financial year, the Costs Unit provided 15 seminars specific to costs law.

The Costs Unit has also been involved in regulatory policy issues, including providing feedback to the Legal Service Council's review into costs disclosure thresholds.

Other work

The Costs Unit plays a key role in providing legal and compliance information to the legal profession in relation to costs.

This year, it researched issues and provided seminars in person, online and interactive seminars on the following topics:

- Costs and client communication.
- The Uniform Law framework, definition of legal costs, costs disclosure, costs agreements and billing under the Uniform Law.
- Security on costs, costs disputes and resolving them through negotiation, costs assessments and/or court action.
- Determinations by the Legal Services Commissioner and compensation orders under the Uniform Law, and updates and analysis on recent cases on costs.

The Costs Committee

The Costs Committee consists of practitioners from a range of legal practice areas, with the following goals:

- Promoting understanding of costs among the legal profession
- Providing education and guidance to the profession on costs
- Monitoring and reviewing policy and legislation relating to costs
- Commenting on relevant or controversial cost issues

These activities aim to reduce the regulatory burden for solicitors, to simplify provisions in the relevant legislation and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of assistance to the legal profession.

The Costs Committee also produces resources such as the *Costs Guidebook*. The 8th edition of the *Costs Guidebook* was released in the 2024/2025 financial year, following review and amendments by the Costs Committee.

Cost enquiry topics for 2025/2026

Topic	Number of questions
Costs billing	165
Costs disclosure	136
Costs agreement	121
Costs assessment	70
Costs recovery	49
Regulated costs	35
Other	31
Costs trust account	30
Liens	29
File transfer	9
Third party costs	6
Party party costs	6

Professional Support Unit
Regulatory Compliance

The Regulatory Compliance Unit provides guidance to solicitors and other stakeholders on compliance issues related to the provision of legal services under the Uniform Law.

The Regulatory Compliance Unit (Compliance Unit) also provides complimentary continuing professional development (CPD) sessions and creates educational resources throughout the year for solicitors.

Overview

During the 2025/2026 financial year, the Compliance Unit handled and resolved **3,041** questions arising out of **2,052** enquiries.

The most common identifiable enquiry topics concerned the following:

- Practising certificates
- Supervised legal practice
- Establishment of a new law practice
- Practice management
- Principal's responsibility and liability

The Compliance Unit often liaises with other departments within the Law Society and, where necessary, seeks the views of designated local regulatory authorities from other Uniform Law jurisdictions to provide thorough and consistent regulatory guidance.

Regulatory compliance questions	
Practising certificate	607
Supervised legal practice	266
Other	258
Establishment of a new law practice	250
Practice management	161
Principal's responsibility and liability	158
File management	134
Professional indemnity insurance	118
Interstate practice	110
Closing or Selling of a practice	89
In-house legal practice	88
Show cause/Disclosures/ Fit and proper	74
Miscellaneous	71
Unqualified legal practice	70
Consultants and Independent contractors	62
Transfer or buying of a law practice	60
Certifying and witnessing documents	58
Conveyancing	49
Advertising and social media	47
Foreign legal practice	47
Complaint against a solicitor	42
Continuing professional development	40
Practice structures	38
Business names and titles	32
Succession	20
Migration	19
Cybersecurity	18
Loan documents	15
Business development	13
Volunteer and pro bono work	13
Remote working	8
Professional Standards Scheme	6

Educational resources

In 2025/2026, the Compliance Unit prepared a high volume of educational resources to support solicitors to meet their obligations under the Uniform Law, particularly in the management of their legal practice.

Educational resources produced by the Compliance Unit often reflect emerging issues and challenges faced by solicitors. This year, guidance material was created on the following topics:

- Interstate supervision
- What it means to engage in legal practice
- Management and storage of digital documents
- Disclosure obligations
- Principals for hire
- Legal practice structures under the Uniform Law

Supporting solicitors' Continuing Professional Development

During 2025/2026, the Compliance Unit provided 34 CPD seminars for solicitors in both metropolitan and regional NSW. CPDs were delivered face-to-face and online, depending on the needs of the audience.

Collaboration on licensing issues

The Compliance Unit continued to work closely with Licensing and Registry staff on regulatory issues, including the following:

- Incorporated Legal Practice
- Labour hire arrangements
- Supervised legal practice (including remote supervision)
- Principal place of practice
- Pro bono practice

Professional Support Unit
Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing

PSU is dedicated to providing education, support and guidance to solicitors navigating the changes and new obligations under Australia's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML/CTF) regime, brought about by the amended *Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006* (Cth).

Overview

Law Society President Ronan MacSweeney prioritised the provision of support and resources needed by solicitors to meet regulatory obligations, including compliance with the recent expansion of Australian's AML/CTF regime.

This included the AML/CTF Unit educating the profession about the AML/CTF reforms and steps that solicitors could take to prepare themselves and their practices for 1 July 2026, when obligations under the AML/CTF Act commenced for solicitors and law practices that provide a 'designated service'.

In addition, a dedicated support line continues to provide valuable assistance for enquiries about AML/CTF from the profession.

During 2025/2026, the AML/CTF Unit handled and resolved 276 questions arising out of 242 enquiries.

The most common identifiable enquiry topics concerned the following:

- Designated Services
- AML/CTF program
- Customer due diligence obligations
- AML/CTF training

The highest percentage of enquiries (46%) related to determining whether a legal practice provided a 'designated service' under the amended AML/CTF Act.

Demand for support increased significantly from the previous financial year as awareness of AML/CTF obligations increased.

Continuing professional development

The AML/CTF Unit delivered 49 continuing CPD seminars and courses in 2025/2026. These were delivered online as well as face-to-face throughout different regions in NSW. Topics included:

- Overview of requirements under the amended AML/CTF Act
- Knowing your AML/CTF obligations
- Getting your legal practice ready for AML/CTF compliance
- Strengthening your legal practice against money laundering and terrorism financing risks
- Money laundering and terrorism financing risk assessments for legal practices

The AML/CTF Unit also participated in numerous panel discussions and external CPD events, including in conjunction with AUSTRAC, Australia's AML/CTF regulator.

The AML/CTF Hub

During 2025/2026, the Law Society's dedicated AML/CTF Hub continued to expand resources provided to the profession. The Hub is a central repository of information about the AML/CTF reforms and obligations for captured legal practices. The Hub connects solicitors to educational and training material and includes the latest updates provided by AUSTRAC.

Educational resources and articles

During the 2025/2026 financial year, the AML/CTF Unit produced a raft of educational resources for NSW law practices to assist them to navigate their new AML/CTF and privacy obligations. The resources included the following:

- A new on-demand educational course to assist and train solicitors on their new AML/CTF obligations.
- Two AML/CTF Implementation Guides: one for sole practitioners and small practices, and another for medium to large practices.
- Privacy templates for practices that, as a result of becoming a reporting entity under AML/CTF legislation, became an Australian Privacy Principle (APP) entity under the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

Additional resources include updates to the Law Society's disclosure and costs agreement precedent, a client information sheet, AML/CTF FAQs and a library of AML/CTF and legal practice management articles.

The AML/CTF Unit hosted of participated in approximately 50 events and responded to 15 government consultations related to AML/CTF reforms during the financial year.

In addition to the AML/CTF Hub, a variety of articles and educational resources relating to AML/CTF were developed for the Ethics and Standards Quarterly, including:

- Suggested steps to prepare for AML/CTF reforms
- Introducing AUSTRAC's Starter Kits
- Understanding designated services
- Small law practices and privacy law
- Navigating AML/CTF obligations: a practical roadmap for NSW law practices

Trust Account Regulation

Protecting client money

Solicitors who hold client money carry significant professional obligations. Effective trust accounting is fundamental to protecting client money and maintaining public confidence in the legal profession.

Through monitoring, investigations and education, the Trust Accounts Department identifies risks, supports compliance and responds proportionately where obligations are not met.

A risk-based approach to regulation

Most law practices manage trust money appropriately. Where issues arise, they are usually administrative or accounting errors that are promptly corrected.

Our regulatory approach is intelligence-led and risk-based. We focus resources on matters that may place client funds at risk, indicate systemic governance failures or involve dishonesty or other serious misconduct.

In assessing trust account matters, we consider:

- Whether client money remains at risk
- The nature and seriousness of the breach
- Whether any deficiency has been promptly rectified
- The law practice's compliance history, including any previous complaints or regulatory action
- Indicators of fraud, theft or cyber-enabled crime

Depending on the circumstances, our response may include education and guidance, requiring rectification, a trust account investigation, referral for disciplinary action or referral to law enforcement.

Trust account oversight in 2026

1. External examinations

Annual reports from approved external examiners are a key source of information on trust account compliance, helping us identify risks and law practices requiring further regulatory attention.

We received 3,886 external examiner reports this year. Most identified minor administrative deficiencies; a small proportion raised concerns warranting further investigation.

2. Trust account irregularities

Law practices continue to notify us of trust account irregularities. Timely reporting allows us to assess risks to client funds, support prompt rectification and identify broader compliance trends.

In 2025/2026, we received 1,729 notifications of trust account irregularities, including 30 relating to cyber-enabled fraud or suspected cyber security incidents. Common issues included:

- Accounting and reconciliation errors
- Inadvertent intermixing of money
- Reporting and record-keeping deficiencies
- Delays in trust account processes
- Cyber-enabled fraud and fraudulent payment processes

Most matters were addressed through corrective action by the law practice. Early notification remains an important safeguard, allowing issues to be addressed before they escalate.

3. Trust account investigations

Where information indicates an elevated risk to client money or serious non-compliance, we undertake trust account investigations.

In 2025/2026, we commenced 49 trust account investigations, resulting in outcomes including:

- Improvements to governance and trust accounting systems
- Referrals for regulatory action
- Referrals to law enforcement agencies where criminal conduct was suspected

Investigations also provide important insights into systemic weaknesses and the safeguards required to protect client money going forward.

Appendix

Table 1 - Chapter 5 complaints referred by OLSC, by type of complaint

	2025/2026
Communication	229
Rudeness/ Threatening Behaviour	119
Poor/No Communication	39
Other	71
Compliance Matters	38
Failure to Comply with s371 Notice	0
Breach of PC conditions	3
Failure to Comply with Court Orders	1
Failure to assist Investigation	0
Other	34
Costs	72
No Disclosure	2
Inquiry bill	0
Failure to provide bill, includes itemised bill	1
Overcharged	19
Failure to pay third party	36
Other	14
Documents	4
Failure to transfer	2
Lost documents	0
Other	2
Ethical Matters	649
Pressure to settle	0
Fraud (not trust fund)	10
Misleading or dishonest conduct in Court	56
Misleading or dishonest conduct not in Court	54
Ceasing to Act	1
Conflict of Interest	35
Communicating with another solicitor's client	13
Failure to honour undertakings	3
Breach of confidentiality	13
Instructions not followed	1
Acting without instructions	5
Advertising	1
Capacity	26
Personal Conduct	126
Abuse of process	59
Other	246

Table 1 - Chapter 5 complaints referred by OLSC, by type of complaint (continued)

Quality of Service	72
Failure to supervise	3
Delay	14
Negligence	44
Other	11
Trust Fund	64
Refuse to release money	13
Failure to account for Trust Monies	40
Regulation breach/fraud	11
TOTAL	1,128

Table 2 - Number of complaints opened, by type of complainant

Complainant type	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Client/Former Client	116	115	179	134	115	116	80	83	95	111	148	159
Law Society	73	60	111	90	104	14	10	7	6	6	7	12
Solicitor	73	70	72	56	40	47	83	78	84	75	81	40
Third Party	69	70	69	80	103	74	152	63	64	82	98	56
Third Party (Other Side)	35	94	121	77	98	149	160	218	225	272	361	439
Barrister	22	20	22	16	9	14	23	20	27	14	17	15
Solicitor for Client	11	7	6	13	7	12	17	35	28	17	30	29
Legal Services Commissioner	4	7	11	3	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	2
Other*	2	6	5	9	16	24	24	8	19	16	30	119
Beneficiary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	33	45	40	49
Non-Client	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53	5	7	22	196
Trust Account Inspector	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Executor	2	0	2	3	1	0	0	3	3	9	8	11
Attorney General	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total number of complaints opened	408	449	600	481	498	450	550	606	589	654	844	1,128

Notes: * Other includes Legal Aid Commission, Government Department and Judge

Table 3 - Complaints opened, by solicitor type

Solicitor type	Number of complaints	Complaints as % of total active sols	% of total complaints
Principal of Law Practice	678	- 1.50%	60.11%
Employee of Law Practice	204	0.45%	18.09%
Complaints Against Firms	99	0.22%	8.78%
Not Practising/Ceased Practising	90	0.20%	7.98%
Government Legal Practitioner	39	0.09%	3.46%
Corporate Legal Practitioner	18	0.04%	1.60%
Total number of complaints opened	**1,128**		

Notes: At 30 June 2026, total number of active solicitors: 45,208

Table 4 - Complaints opened, by practice region

Region	Number of complaints
Suburban	567
Sydney City	290
Regional/Rural	207
Other	47
Interstate	13
Overseas	4
Total number of complaints opened	**1,128**

Table 5 - Number of complaints closed, by result, 2025/2026

Outcome	Number
209 No Further Investigation Required - (S277(1)(h)	848
205 Complaint Has Been Previously Investigated - S277(1)(d)	124
204 Failure/Inadequate Response To Request For Info - S277(1)(c)	86
200 Complaint Withdrawn - S273(1)	63
201 Misconceived/Lacking Substance - S277 (1)(a)	40
206 Complaint Better Dealt With By Law Enforcement/Investigatory Body - S277(1)(e)	32
202 Time Limit Not Waived Under S272(1) - S277(1)(b)	32
230 Initiate Tribunal Proceedings - S300(1)	15
235 Referred Back to the OLSC	15
224 Reprimand - S299(1)(b)	10
211 Public Interest Closure - S277(1)(j)	3
223 Caution - S299(1)(a)	3
Total	**1,271**

Table 6 - Number of Complaints opened and Complaints closed within the 2025/2026 reporting period

Complaint type	Opened	Closed
Act Without/Contrary Instructions	27	15
Borrowing From Clients	4	3
Breach Of Confidentiality	21	16
Breach Section 137 LPUL	1	1
Breach Section 138 LPUL	10	2
Causing A Deficiency In The Trust Account	17	1
Communication With Another Solicitors Client	17	13
Conflict Of Interest	84	85
Delay	24	40
Discourtesy	27	34
Fail To Carry Out Instructions	9	84
Failing To Pay Third Party	38	57
Failure To Account	38	41
Failure To Disclose	2	1
Failure To Provide Detailed Account	1	4
Failure To Respond To Correspondence	20	25
Failure To Supervise	4	4
Failure To Transfer Documents	5	10
False Swearing Docs	2	13
Handling Trust Money - Contrary To PC	0	0
Liens	4	3
Misappropriation	7	14
Misleading	102	94
Negligence	158	135
No Advice Progress	1	0
No Client Advice	1	1
No Communication	0	1
No Costs Disclosure	1	2
Non Compliance With Fiscal Obligation	4	6
Non Compliance With LPUL./Regs/Rules	161	222
Non Compliance With Undertaking	1	2
OLSC Enquiry	0	
Other	15	18
Other Trust Breaches	11	17
Overcharging	13	18
Practising Contrary To Practising Certificate	11	12
Practising Without A PC - Post Admission	6	11
Practising Without A PC - Pre Admission	1	1
Threatening Behaviour	45	70
Transfer Costs Without Authority	0	0
Undue Pressure	3	3
Unethical Conduct	243	267
Unsupervised Practice - Contrary To PC	0	1
Total	**1,128**	**1,271**

Table 7 - Practising solicitor statistics at 30 June

Gender of Solicitors	
Female	25,652
Male	19,555
No Data	1
Total	**45,208**

Category of Solicitors	
Employee of a Law Practice	20,140
Principal of a Law Practice	10,727
Corporate Legal Practitioner	9,042
Government Legal Practitioner	5,205
Volunteer	94
Total	**45,208**

Location of Solicitors	
City	21,734
Suburban (Sydney)	11,910
Rural	4,620
Overseas	2,030
Interstate	710
No Location Data	4,204
Total	**45,208**

Table 8 - Amounts expended by the Public Purpose Fund and Fidelity Fund on Regulation, 2025/2026

Expense Description	Recoverable From	Total
Professional Standards Department / General Regulatory Expenses	Public Purpose Fund	$13,484,069
External Interventions	Public Purpose Fund	$634,209
Trust Account Inspections / Investigations	Public Purpose Fund	$3,635,058
Fidelity Fund Administration	Fidelity Fund	$920,075
Total Regulatory Costs		**$18,673,411**
Total Paid From Public Purpose Fund		**$17,753,336**
Total Paid From Fidelity Fund		**$920,075**

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