

Media release

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LSC Consumer Survey probes costs disclosure

The Legal Services Council (LSC) has published an Australian consumer survey report which focuses on what information consumers expect to be given about their legal costs.

The *Legal Services Council Consumer Survey 2017* was conducted by Piazza Research on behalf of the LSC in December 2016. Its accompanying report was completed in February 2017. The report contains responses from more than 2,000 consumers in every State and Territory in Australia.

“The research provided valuable feedback on what consumers want to know about their legal costs and how they want that information to be presented to them. It also gives us useful information about other issues regarding costs disclosure,” said LSC CEO and Commissioner for Uniform Legal Services Regulation, Dale Boucher.

“When we looked into the responses, some very interesting data emerged. One of the strongest messages was that the overwhelming majority of consumers (88%) want written advice about fees always or at a low threshold. Of these, half of Australian legal consumers (51%) think lawyers should *always* inform them of their fees in writing regardless of the level of fee involved.

“The responses showed us that written costs disclosure is important to consumers, not just in choosing a lawyer, but it also influences their level of satisfaction with their lawyer - and whether they seek legal help at all,” he said.

Mr Boucher added a third of surveyed consumers indicated they were not told by their lawyer, barrister or solicitor, how much their work was likely to cost before it started. Sixty per cent said they were told only orally and almost half of surveyed consumers (46%) understood only a little of what their costs were likely to be, or did not understand the likely costs at all.

“For lower priced work, giving clients detailed information about costs can be time consuming, cumbersome and counterproductive because lengthy disclosures are not always easily understood by consumers. For these reasons, the Legal Services Council developed a simple costs disclosure form in NSW and Victoria for matters under \$3,000. Lawyers can use this to keep their clients easily and clearly informed of costs,” Mr Boucher said.

This research is an important part of the Legal Services Council’s consultative process. It will inform the work of the Council as it continues to monitor costs disclosure requirements for law practices under the Legal Profession Uniform Law in NSW and Victoria.

Both the *Legal Services Council Consumer Survey 2017 and Costs Disclosure Forms* for solicitors and barristers are available on the LSC website at: www.legalservicescouncil.org.au.

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For more information on the *Legal Services Council Consumer Survey 2017* or to request an interview with Dale Boucher, please call 02 8293 5900 or email lsc@legalservicescouncil.org.au.