

## What is Legal Aid Queensland?

Legal Aid Queensland is a government agency that provides free legal help to people who cannot afford to pay for a lawyer. We can help you with:

- legal information
- legal advice
- representation in court.

You can phone Legal Aid Queensland for legal advice and information. This is a free service that will provide you with legal information and advice over the phone or face to face.

To apply for representation in a legal matter, you need to complete an application form. Application forms are available from our offices throughout Queensland or from lawyers who do work for Legal Aid Queensland.

We can provide legal advice about:

- domestic violence
- child support
- divorce
- parenting arrangements for your children
- property settlement
- criminal matters and
- anti discrimination matters.

Legal Aid Queensland has specialist lawyers who can help you with legal problems, including the Violence Prevention and Women's Advocacy team and our family lawyers. We can also refer you to community legal centres or other community services that might be able to help.

For more information, phone our Client Information Service on **1300 65 11 88** (for the cost of a local call from a landline in Australia). If English is your second language, you can contact us through the Translating and Interpreting Service on **13 14 50**. You can also visit our website [www.legalaid.qld.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.qld.gov.au)

## Your local Legal Aid Queensland office

### BRISBANE

44 Herschel Street  
BRISBANE Q 4000

### BUNDABERG

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
WIN Tower  
Cnr Quay & Barolin Streets  
BUNDABERG Q 4670

### CABOOLTURE

Ground Floor  
Kingsgate  
42 King Street  
CABOOLTURE Q 4510

### CAIRNS

Level 2  
Cairns Square  
42-52 Abbott St  
CAIRNS Q 4870

### INALA

Level 1  
Inala Commonwealth Offices  
20 Wirraway Parade  
INALA Q 4077

### IPSWICH

Level 7, 117 Brisbane Street  
IPSWICH Q 4305

### MACKAY

Ground Floor  
17 Brisbane Street  
MACKAY Q 4740

### MAROOCHYDORE

Ground Floor  
M1 Building  
1 Duporth Avenue  
MAROOCHYDORE Q 4558

### MOUNT ISA

6 Miles Street  
MOUNT ISA Q 4825

### ROCKHAMPTON

Ground Floor  
35 Fitzroy Street  
ROCKHAMPTON Q 4700

### SOUTHPORT

Level 2  
7 Bay Street  
SOUTHPORT Q 4215

### TOOWOOMBA

1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
154 Hume Street  
TOOWOOMBA Q 4350

### TOWNSVILLE

Level 4  
Northern Securities Building  
22 Walker St  
TOWNSVILLE Q 4810

### WOODRIDGE

1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Woodridge Place  
Cnr Ewing Road & Carmody St  
WOODRIDGE Q 4114



1300 650 143 [www.legalaid.qld.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.qld.gov.au)



# Our legal system

Information for women



## How does the legal system work in Australia?

- In Australia, laws are made by the government.
- These laws are used by courts and tribunals to make decisions.
- Police officers make sure the laws are obeyed.
- Lawyers can help you with the law and your rights and obligations.

## What is a lawyer?

A lawyer is a person with legal training. They may choose to work in different areas of law such as criminal, family or civil law. In Australia, lawyers are also called solicitors or barristers.

## When do I need a lawyer?

It is important to speak to a lawyer if you have a legal problem because they can:

- provide you with legal advice
- explain your rights
- help you in court or in a tribunal
- talk to police or other people involved in your legal problem on your behalf.

## Which courts can I go to?

The family law courts and state Magistrates Courts assist with family law disputes.

You should get legal advice if you are not sure which court to use.

## When do I go to the family law courts?

- The family law courts can make decisions about all types of family law matters, including divorce and cases about property and children.
- The courts will try to help parties reach an agreement before having a final trial.
- The courts have registrars and judges (called “Your Honour”) who make decisions.

## What do I need to do before I start family law proceedings?

In most cases you will need to attend a family dispute resolution conference and try to resolve your family law problem before going to court. If you do not reach an agreement, you may be given a certificate you can use to show the court you attended the conference. You should get legal advice about this.

## When do I go to the High Court of Australia?

This court is the final appeal court about Australian laws.

## When do I go to a tribunal?

A tribunal is an independent body to hear and decide disputes. They can review decisions made by some government departments. There are different tribunals that can help you, for example:

- If you disagree with a decision made by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, you can appeal to the Migration Review Tribunal, Refugee Review Tribunal or Administrative Appeals Tribunal.
- If you disagree with a decision made by Centrelink, you can appeal to the Social Services and Child Support Division, Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

- If you have a dispute about tenancy, building, anti-discrimination, consumer or debt disputes, you can go to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT).

The person who makes decisions in these tribunals is called a “member”. Time limits may apply. You should get legal advice about this.

## I need to speak to the police but I can't speak English. What should I do?



If you need to speak with the police urgently and you don't have a friend or relative who can help you, you can:

- phone the police on **000** and tell them the language you speak; the police should then organise an interpreter for you
- phone the Translating and Interpreting Service on **13 14 50** and ask for an interpreter to help you contact the police. This is a free and confidential service. If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment you can contact us using the National Relay Service. Visit [www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au) and ask for 1800 998 980 (our legal information line). These are free services.

