

## Other legal services available:

### Private Lawyers:

See the phone book or phone the Law Society on **8981 5104** for a list of firms. Private lawyers do not all charge at the same rate, so phone them to inquire about their charges.

### Aboriginal Legal Aid Services:

Darwin **8982 5100**

Nhulunbuy / Gove **8987 1300**

Alice Springs **8950 9300**

Katherine **8972 1133**

Provide free legal services to people of Aboriginal descent.

### Darwin Community Legal Service:

Provides a range of free legal services. Legal advice is given at weekly sessions held at various locations. Also has an 'Aged and Disability Rights' service for advice on rights of older people in nursing homes and hostels and people with disabilities, a 'Welfare Rights' service for assistance with Centrelink, Austudy and Abstudy problems, and a Tenancy Advice Service for tenants requiring advice throughout the NT. For more information, locations and session times call **8982 1111** or TOLLFREE **1800 812 953** or TTY **8982 1177**.

### Women's Legal Services:

#### Top End Women's Legal Service:

Darwin **8982 3000** or TOLLFREE **1800 041 998**

#### Central Australian Women's Legal Service:

Alice Springs **8952 4055** or TOLLFREE **1800 684 055**

#### Katherine Women's Information Legal Service:

Katherine **8972 1712** or TOLLFREE **1800 620 108**

### Family Violence Services:

#### Domestic Violence Legal Service:

Darwin **8999 3000** or **1800 019 343**

#### Domestic Violence Legal Service:

Alice Springs **8952 1391** or **1800 684 055**

#### Atunypa Wiru Minyma Uwankaraku Domestic Violence Service:

Alice Springs **8950 5420** or **1800 180 840**

#### Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit:

Alice Springs **8953 6355** or **1800 088 884**

#### Katherine Aboriginal Families' Support Unit:

Katherine **89723200**

#### North Australian Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service:

Darwin **8923 8200** or **1800 041 998**

In an emergency, please telephone the Police.

### The Public Trustee's Office:

Darwin **8999 7271**

Alice Springs **8951 5493**

Prepares low cost wills.

## More information on the Commission

The Commission has a wide range of written information on a variety of legal topics. Staff are also available to give information sessions to community groups, schools, etc., and conduct workshops and seminars which can be tailored to meet your specific needs.

For further information about any of the services offered by the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission please contact one of the Commission offices, or visit our website at [www.ntlac.nt.gov.au](http://www.ntlac.nt.gov.au).

## Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

### In Darwin:

6th Floor

Tel: (08) **8999 3000**

9 -11 Cavenagh Street, Darwin, NT

Fax: (08) **8999 3099**

Locked Bag 11, Darwin, NT 0801

### In Palmerston:

Shop 6, 25 Chung Wah Terrace,

Tel: (08) **8999 4750**

Palmerston NT

Fax: (08) **8999 4747**

Locked Bag 11, Darwin NT 0801

### In Alice Springs:

77 Hartley Street, Alice Springs, NT

Tel: (08) **8951 5377**

PO Box 969, Alice Springs, NT 0871

Fax: (08) **8951 5378**

### In Katherine:

20 Second Street, Katherine, NT

Tel: (08) **8973 8704**

PO Box 145, Katherine, NT 0851

Fax: (08) **8973 8551**

### Tennant Creek Legal Resource Centre

61 Patterson Street, Tennant Creek NT Tel: (08) **8962 1985**

PO Box 749, Tennant Creek, NT 0861 Fax: (08) **8962 1945**



# About the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission



Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

[www.ntlac.nt.gov.au](http://www.ntlac.nt.gov.au)

## How does legal aid work?

NT Legal Aid is an independent statutory Commission. There are separate Commissions in each State and Territory. Legal Aid in the NT usually only assists in matters that are before the Courts in the NT, but help can be given to apply for aid from a Commission in another State.

The Commission employs lawyers and also keeps a list of private lawyers who will accept legal aid cases. If the lawyer who assists you is employed by the Commission you have to pay your contribution to the Commission. If you are referred to a private lawyer you pay your contribution directly to that lawyer who then sends their bill to the Commission. If you have to pay a further contribution at the end of the case you pay it directly to the Commission.

## What sort of help is available?

### Free Legal Information by Phone

Call **1800 019 343 (toll free)** and an operator will help with any initial inquiries you may have about your problem. They can send you written information to help you understand your situation, help you work out what to do next and tell you the best place to go if you need further assistance.

### Free Initial Legal Advice in Person

Free initial legal advice is provided to anyone on any matter. Call **1800 019 343 (toll free)** to make an appointment to see a lawyer. If you have a disability or live in a remote area a lawyer can advise you by phone.

### Free Initial Legal Advice in Criminal Matters

The Commission provides initial legal advice and representation at court in criminal matters, (e.g. bail applications, simple pleas of guilty, first adjournments, etc). This duty lawyer service operates every day at Darwin and Alice Springs Magistrates Courts. Duty lawyers regularly attend other sittings of the Magistrates Court in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy.

### Free Family Law Duty Lawyer Service

A Duty Lawyer is available to provide minor assistance to people who do not have a lawyer, in the Family Court of Australia and Federal Magistrates Court. The service is available in both Darwin and Alice Springs.

For further information contact the court registry in Darwin on **8981 1488** or Alice Springs on **8952 8222**.

## Domestic Violence Legal Service

The Domestic Violence Legal Service is incorporated within the Family Law Section at Legal Aid in Darwin. The service provides advice, assistance and representation to anyone who is a victim of domestic violence. The service is free and confidential and appointments can be made by telephoning **8999 3000** or tollfree **1800 019 343**.

## A Grant of Ongoing Legal Aid

The Commission provides ongoing legal aid by providing a lawyer to run cases for people with significant legal problems (e.g. serious criminal charges and family law matters).

## Family Law Conferencing Program

The Commission can provide grants of legal assistance for people to attend a family law conference. Parties to a family law dispute gather at the conference which is chaired by a senior legal practitioner. The program is designed to resolve family law conflict and avoid costly court proceedings. If agreement can be reached, the parties can have consent orders drawn up to settle their dispute on both an interim and final basis.

## Ongoing Aid Through the Contingency Legal Aid Fund

This provides limited financial assistance if you cannot afford the initial (non lawyer) costs of preparing and running your court case in civil matters (e.g. expert medical witnesses, special reports, etc). To get assistance from the fund you must have a reasonable chance of succeeding with your case and be likely to receive a substantial cash settlement or have your costs awarded to you. Any financial assistance received from the Contingency Fund has to be repaid with interest at the end of your case.

## How do I apply for ongoing legal aid?

You should attend a free advice session at the Commission or contact a private lawyer who does legal aid work to complete an application form. Forms are available from the Commission or your lawyer. Post or deliver the form to the Commission for assessment.

Assessment is made by three tests which are applied to everyone. If you do not meet these tests then you will not be eligible for ongoing aid:

### The means test:

Determines whether you can afford a private lawyer. If you can, you will not be eligible for ongoing aid.

### Guidelines test:

Determines whether your problem is in one of the identified Legal Aid 'priority' categories, and whether your matter meets all Guideline requirements.

### Merit test:

Determines whether you are likely to succeed in your case and whether providing aid to you will achieve what you want.

You will be advised of the outcome by mail (in non urgent cases), usually within 10 working days.

All applicants are given a guide which provides more information about the conditions applying to ongoing aid.

## What do I pay if I get a grant of ongoing legal aid?

Everyone who is granted ongoing legal aid pays a minimum initial contribution of \$55. This can be paid off in installments if necessary. The contribution is worked out on a sliding scale based on your financial position and the likely cost of the case. At the end of your case your contribution will be reassessed. If you have received a cash lump sum or a significant amount of property then your contribution may be increased. The money you pay makes legal aid available to other people.

## What if I don't agree with a decision?

If your application for aid is refused you can have the decision reconsidered. To do this you must make a written request to the Director of the NT Legal Aid Commission within 3 months of receiving notice of the decision. It is then reconsidered by another lawyer at the Commission.

If you do not agree with the second decision you can have it reconsidered by the Legal Aid Review Committee. The Committee has three members, two of whom are not Commission staff. You (or your solicitor) can talk to the Review Committee and if they agree, the decision can be changed. To apply to the Review Committee you must make a written request to the Director of the NT Legal Aid Commission within 3 months of receiving notice of the results of the first reconsideration.