

**RHYS ELLISON LAW**

**TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT**

**1 General**

- 1.1 These Standard Terms of Engagement (“Terms”) apply to any current engagement and also to any future engagement, whether or not we send you another copy of them. We are entitled to change these Terms from time to time, in which case we will send you amended Terms. Our relationship with you is governed by New Zealand law and New Zealand courts have exclusive jurisdiction. Our current terms can be viewed on our website: [www.ellisonlaw.co.nz](http://www.ellisonlaw.co.nz).

**2 Services**

- 2.1 The services we are to provide for you (“the Services”) are outlined in our letter of engagement along with any further instructions that you provide to us in writing (or that we record in writing).
- 2.2 In order to provide you with efficient advice and services and to provide the most cost-effective service, it may be that part, or all of your instructions will be delegated to other professionals in our firm.
- 2.3 Employees of our firm have a range of skills and knowledge. From time to time, you may receive communications from different members of our firm.

**3 Communications**

- 3.1 We will obtain from you contact details, including email addresses, postal addresses, and telephone numbers. We may provide documents and other communications to you by email (or other electronic means). You will advise us if any of your contact details change.
- 3.2 We will report to you periodically on the progress of any engagement and will inform you of any material and unexpected delays, significant changes or complications in the work being undertaken. You may request a progress report at any time.
- 3.3 You agree that we may provide you from time to time with other information that may be relevant to you, such as newsletters and information bulletins. At any time, you may request that this not be sent to you.

## 4 Financial

- 4.1 **Fees:** The basis upon which we will charge our fees is set out in our Client Care Information Form.
- a If the Client Care Information Form specifies a fixed fee, we will charge this for the agreed scope of the Services. Work which falls outside that scope will be charged on an hourly rate basis. We will advise you as soon as reasonably practicable if it becomes necessary for us to provide services outside of the agreed scope and, if requested, give you an estimate of the likely amount of the further costs.
  - b Where our fees are calculated on an hourly basis, the hourly rates of the people we expect to undertake the work are set out in our Client Care Information Form. Any differences in those rates reflect the different levels of experience and specialisation of our professional staff. Time spent is recorded in six-minute units.
  - c Hourly fees may be adjusted (upwards or downwards) to ensure the fee is fair and reasonable to take into account matters such as the complexity, urgency, value and importance of the Services. Full details of the relevant fee factors are set out in Rule 9 of the Lawyers and Conveyancers Act (Lawyers: Conduct and Client Care) Rules 2008 (Rules).
  - d You may also be charged an Administration & Storage Fee of \$80 - \$120 plus GST, in particular to cover file opening, printing, postage and storage costs.
  - e Transactions of a high value, eg. Conveyancing transaction over \$1 million will incur an extra charge of \$100.
  - f If your matter requires urgent legal work, then you may also be charged an urgency fee of \$150 over and above our advertised fixed fees. Urgent legal work means any matter that must be completed within 3 working days from when you first instruct us yourself. Ideally you will give us 5-10 working days' notice of any legal work you would like us to complete on your behalf.
- 4.2 **Disbursements and Third-Party Expenses:** In providing the Services we may incur disbursements and payments to third parties on your behalf. You authorise us to incur these disbursements (which may include such items such as search fees, LINZ fees, court filing fees, registration fees and travel and courier charges) which are reasonably necessary to provide the Services. You also authorise us to make payments to third parties on your behalf which are reasonably required to undertake the Services (which may include items such as experts' costs or counsel's fees). These will be included in our invoice to you, shown as "disbursements" when the expenses are incurred (or in advance when we know we will be incurring them on your behalf).
- 4.3 **Office Service Charge Fee (Administrative expenses):** In addition to disbursements, we may charge a fee of up to \$80 to cover out of pocket costs which are not included in our fee and which are not recorded as disbursements. These include items such as substantial photocopying and printing, binding, couriers/postage and international phone calls.
- 4.4 **Anti Money Laundering and OIA statements:** In addition to disbursements we will charge a fee of up to \$150.00 for obtaining the information that we are legally bound to collect on behalf the Department of Internal Affairs. This fee may be charged to you each time you engage our services as the AML requirements mean this is required to be undertaken on each new matter.

- 4.5 **Accountant Requests:** If your Accountant requests additional information from any transaction that has gone through our Law Firm, we reserve the right to charge time engaged at \$150.00 per hour plus GST. We will endeavour to contact you to inform you before starting this work.
- 4.6 **GST:** Our services will usually attract Goods and Services Tax (GST). If this is the case, GST is payable by you on our fees and charges.
- 4.7 **Invoices:** We will send interim invoices to you, usually monthly or on completion of the matter, or termination of our engagement. We may send you invoices more frequently when we incur a significant expense or undertake a significant amount of work over a shorter period of time. Majority of our invoices for residential conveyancing transactions are paid by deduction.
- 4.8 **Payment:** Invoices are payable within 7 days of the date of the invoice, unless alternative arrangements have been made with us.
- a You authorise us to deduct our fees and other expenses from funds held in our trust account on your behalf on provision of an invoice to you, unless those funds are held for a particular purpose.
  - b If you have difficulty in paying any of our accounts, please contact us promptly so that we may discuss payment arrangements.
  - c If your account is overdue, we may:
    - i require interest to be paid on any amount which is more than 14 days overdue, calculated at the rate of 10 % above the overdraft rate that our firm's main trading bank charges us for the period that the invoice is outstanding;
    - ii stop work on any matters in respect of which we are providing services to you;
    - iii require an additional payment of fees in advance or other security before recommencing work;
    - iv recover from you in full any costs we incur (including on a solicitor/client basis) in seeking to recover the amounts from you, including our own fees and the fees of any collection agency.
  - d Payment may be made by direct credit to the **RHYS ELLISON LAW LIMITED TRUST ACCOUNT NO: 01 0315 0223030 02**
- 4.9 **Fees and disbursements in advance:** We may ask you to pre-pay amounts to us, or to provide security for our fees and expenses. We may do this, on reasonable notice, at any time.
- 4.10 **Estimates:** You may request an estimate of our fee for undertaking the Services at any time. If possible, we will provide you with an estimate (which may be a range between a minimum and a maximum amount or for a particular task or step). An estimate is not a quote. Any significant assumptions included in the estimate will be stated and you must tell us if those assumptions are wrong or change. We will inform you if we are likely to exceed the estimate by any substantial amount. Unless specified, an estimate excludes GST, disbursements, and expenses.

4.11 **Third Parties:** Although you may expect to be reimbursed by a third party for our fees and expenses, and although our invoices may at your request or with your approval be directed to a third party, you remain responsible for payment to us in accordance with these Terms if the third party fails to pay us.

4.12 **Trust Accounting:** We operate a trust account. All money received from you or on your behalf will be held to your credit in our trust account.

a Payments out of the trust account will be made either to you or to others with your authority. Written authorisation from you (and if we are acting for more than one of you, from all of you) will be required when payment is to be made to a third party. Before making a payment to another account we will require verification of the account details by provision of (for example) a copy of a deposit slip, cheque or bank statement showing the account number, a signed authority from you including the bank account details, or a signed letter from the relevant financial institution providing bank account details.

b A full record of our trust account is kept at all times. A statement of trust account transactions detailing funds received and payments made on your behalf will be provided to you periodically and at any time upon your request.

c **Interest Bearing Deposit:**

Unless otherwise instructed by you in writing, where we consider it to be appropriate we will place any sum held on your behalf on call on Interest Bearing Deposit (**IBD**) with a bank registered under section 69 of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand Act 1989.

Funds held for a short term or of low value may not be put onto IBD and will simply remain in our trust account, this accrues no interest.

For this service a 5% commission will be charged on the gross interest earned in regard to each Interest Bearing Deposit (**IBD**).

You must also notify us of your Tax Rate in writing or we will be obliged to place the sum on IBD at the highest rate.

We will account to you at least every 12 months or when the sum comes off IBD for the interest accrued, less the RWT and our administration fee, whichever happens earlier.

## 5 **Confidentiality and Personal Information**

5.1 **Confidence:** We will hold in confidence all information concerning you or your affairs that we acquire during the course of acting for you. We will not disclose any of this information to any other person except:

- a to the extent necessary or desirable to enable us to carry out your instructions; or
- b as expressly or impliedly agreed by you; or
- c as necessary to protect our interests in respect of any complaint or dispute; or
- d to the extent required or permitted by law.

- 5.2 Confidential information concerning you will as far as practicable be made available only to those within our firm who are providing legal services for you.
- 5.3 Employees of our firm may from time to time, be required to work from their homes, your information and files may be accessed electronically via a VPN connection.
- 5.4 Our employees are bound to confidentiality provisions within their employment.
- 5.5 **Personal information and Privacy:** In our dealings with you we will collect and hold personal information about you. We will use that information to carry out the Services and to make contact with you about issues we believe may be of interest to you. Provision of personal information is voluntary but if you do not provide full information this may impact on our ability to provide the Services.
- 5.6 Subject to clause 5.1, you authorise us to disclose, in the normal course of performing the Services, such personal information to third parties for the purpose of providing the Services and any other purposes set out in these Terms.
- 5.7 We may disclose your name and address to third parties such as credit agencies to perform a credit reference or to undertake credit management or collection processes if it is reasonable to do so.
- 5.8 The information we collect and hold about you will be kept at our offices and/or at secure file storage sites (including electronic file storage sites) elsewhere. If you are an individual, you have the right to access and correct this information. If you require access, please contact us.

## **6 Anti-Money Laundering**

- 6.1 **Verification of identity:** The Financial Transactions Reporting Act 1996 & more recently the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Act 2009 requires us to collect from you and to retain information required to verify your identity.
- 6.2 You will be required to provide us with your verification documents. These documents include: Your drivers licence, your passport, any citizenship or residency information, proof of your residential address, proof of your IRD number. Depending on what documents you provide, we may need to ask for additional information to satisfy the requirement. We will retain certified copies of these documents both in our physical files and electronically.
- 6.3 If your transaction relates to a Company, Trust or other entity, you will also need to provide verification documents for all related persons.
- 6.4 We may also request you to provide proof of funds. This includes bank statements, gift statements and electronic payment reports.
- 6.5 We are required to assess the risk of each matter/transaction that is undertaken by our firm. Should we be dissatisfied with the evidence provided or we consider that the matter/transaction is of high risk, we reserve the right to decline to act for you. We will confirm this in writing to you.

## **7 Documents, Records and Information**

- 7.1 We will keep a record of all important documents which we receive or create on your behalf on the following basis:
- a We may keep a record electronically and destroy originals (except where the existence of an original is legally important such as in the case of wills and deeds).
  - b At any time, we may dispose of documents which are duplicates, or which are trivial (such as emails which do not contain substantive information), or documents which belong to us.
  - c We are not obliged to retain documents or copies where you have requested that we provide them to you or to another person and we have done so, although we are entitled to retain copies for our own records if we wish to do so.
- 7.2 We will provide to you on request copies or originals (at our option) of all documents to which you are entitled under the Privacy Act 1993 or any other law. We may charge you our reasonable costs for doing this.
- 7.3 Where we hold documents that belong to a third party you will need to provide us with that party's written authority to uplift or obtain a copy of that document.
- 7.4 Once we have concluded your matter the physical files and records may be stored at our offsite storage facility.
- 7.5 Unless you instruct us in writing otherwise, you authorise us and consent to us (without further reference to you) to destroy (or delete in the case of electronic records) all files and documents in respect of the Services (7 years after our engagement ends (other than any documents that we hold in safe custody for you or are otherwise obliged by law to retain for longer). We may retain documents for longer at our option.
- 7.6 We may, at our option, return documents (either in hard or electronic form) to you rather than retain them. If we choose to do this, we will do so at our expense.
- 7.7 We own copyright in all documents or work we create in the course of performing the Services but grant you a non-exclusive licence to use and copy the documents as you see fit for your own personal or commercial use. However, you may not permit any third party to copy, adapt or use the documents without our written permission.

## **8 Conflicts of Interest**

- 8.1 We are obliged to protect and promote your interests to the exclusion of the interests of third parties and ourselves as set out in the Lawyers and Conveyancers Act (Lawyers: Conduct and Client Care) Rules 2008 (Rules). This may result in a situation arising where we have a conflict of interest.
- 8.2 We have procedures in place to identify and respond to conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest. If a conflict of interest arises we will advise you of this and follow the requirements and procedures set out in the Rules. This may mean we cannot act for you further in a particular matter and we may terminate our engagement.

## **9 Duty of Care**

- 9.1 Our duty of care is to you and not to any other person. We owe no liability to any other person, including for example any directors, shareholders, associated companies, employees or family members unless we expressly agree in writing. We do not accept any responsibility or liability whatsoever to any third parties who may be affected by our performance of the Services or who may rely on any advice we give, except as expressly agreed by us in writing.
- 9.2 Our advice is not to be referred to in connection with any prospectus, financial statement, or public document without our written consent.
- 9.3 Our advice is opinion only, based on the facts known to us and on our professional judgement, and is subject to any changes in the law after the date on which the advice is given. We are not liable for errors in, or omissions from, any information provided by third parties.
- 9.4 Our advice relates only to each particular matter in respect of which you engage us. Once that matter is at an end, we will not owe you any duty or liability in respect of any related or other matters unless you specifically engage us in respect of those related or other matters.
- 9.5 Unless otherwise agreed, we may communicate with you and with others by electronic means. We cannot guarantee that these communications will not be lost or affected for some reason beyond our reasonable control, and we will not be liable for any damage or loss caused thereby.

## **10 Limitations on our Obligations or Liability (Optional)**

- 10.1 To the extent allowed by law, our aggregate liability to you (whether in contract, tort, equity or otherwise) in connection with our Services is limited to the amount available to be payable under the Professional Indemnity Insurance held by the firm.

## **11 Limited Scope Retainers**

- 11.1 It may be that we agree to limit the scope of our advice for a certain retainer, but that will be discussed with you in advance of us undertaking the work.

## **12 Termination**

- 12.1 You may terminate our retainer at any time.
- 12.2 We may terminate our retainer in any of the circumstances set out in the Rules including the existence of a conflict of interest, non-payment of fees, and failure to provide instructions.
- 12.3 If our retainer is terminated you must pay us all fees, disbursements and expenses incurred up to the date of termination.

### **13 Feedback and Complaints**

- 13.1 Client satisfaction is one of our primary objectives and feedback from clients is helpful to us. If you would like to comment on any aspect of the service provided by us, including how we can improve our service, please contact Rhys Ellison.
- 13.2 If you have any concerns or complaints about our services, please raise them as soon as possible with the person to whom they relate. They will respond to your concerns as soon as possible. If you are not satisfied with the way that that person has dealt with your complaint, please raise the matter with Rhys Ellison. We will inquire into your complaint and endeavour in good faith to resolve the matter with you in a way that is fair to all concerned.
- 13.3 If you are not satisfied with the way we have dealt with your complaint the New Zealand Law Society has a complaints service to which you may refer the issue. You can call the 0800 number for guidance, lodge a concern or make a formal complaint. Matters may be directed to:

Lawyers Complaints Service  
PO Box 5041  
Wellington 6140,  
New Zealand  
[www.lawsociety.org.nz](http://www.lawsociety.org.nz)  
Phone: 0800 261 801

