

DISTRICT COURT

Contact: Registry
Address: 86 Goulburn Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone: 02 9377 5555
Facsimile: 02 9377 5777
Website: <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/dc>

Fee Exemption: No.
Fee Waiver: Yes. Postponement and/or Waiver for pro bono schemes, community legal centre assisted parties and on application to the Registrar.

This section deals with civil proceedings. Please refer to the Criminal Procedure Regulations 2005 for criminal proceedings.

Fees of the District Court

Part 2 and schedule 1 of the *Civil Procedure Regulation 2005* sets out the fees payable in the Supreme Court, the District Court and a Local Court including filing, copying and service fees. Part 3 sets out hearing allocation and hearing fees.

Fees Not Payable

Regulation 4(5) of the *Civil Procedure Regulation 2005* sets out the circumstances where an application fee is not payable. Refer to the regulations for further information.

Fee Exemption

There are no categories of fee exemption in the District Court.

Fee Waiver/Postponement

In certain circumstances any fee payable may be postponed until after judgment, and depending on the judgment may not be payable at all. The relevant regulations are 12 and 13 of the *Civil Procedure Regulation 2005*.

The taking of fees is to be postponed until the judgement if the process is filed by or on behalf of:

- a "pro bono party" to the proceedings.
- a "legally assisted person" to the proceedings.

A "Pro Bono Party" is someone represented under a pro bono scheme administered by the Law Society of New South Wales, the NSW Bar Association, or under a pro bono scheme established by rules of court, where the solicitor or barrister;

- a. certifies, in writing, to the Registrar or clerk, that the party is being so represented, and
- b. undertakes, in writing, to pay the fee, if at the conclusion of the proceedings they are required under the regulation.

A "legally assisted person" is someone receiving legal assistance through a community legal centre within the requirements of section 48H of the *Legal Profession Act 1987* or section 240 of the *Legal Profession Act 2004*

The fee must be remitted, if taken from a party that satisfies the regulations and is entitled to a waiver.

If the applicant does not fall into one of the above categories, under regulation 11 of the *Civil Procedure Regulation 2005*, provision is made for the court or Sheriff to waive the whole or any part of a fee subject to any conditions.

Procedure

All parties requesting waiver or postponement must apply to the court. There is no specific application form for fee waiver. The registry has advised that the General Form should be used. The General Form is attached (3 pages) and a copy can be downloaded from [http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/spu/ll_ucpr.nsf/vwFiles/01%20General%20form.doc/\\$file/01%20General%20form.doc](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/spu/ll_ucpr.nsf/vwFiles/01%20General%20form.doc/$file/01%20General%20form.doc)

The Attorney General has published a set of Guidelines relating to fee waiver applications. The guidelines should be consulted when making an application. The guidelines are attached (10 pages) or can be downloaded from [http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/spu/ll_ucpr.nsf/vwFiles/fee%20waiver%20guidelines%20-%20for%20approval%20by%20AG.doc/\\$file/fee%20waiver%20guidelines%20-%20for%20approval%20by%20AG.doc](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/spu/ll_ucpr.nsf/vwFiles/fee%20waiver%20guidelines%20-%20for%20approval%20by%20AG.doc/$file/fee%20waiver%20guidelines%20-%20for%20approval%20by%20AG.doc)

Additional documentary evidence will be required to support the application. The form(s) must be forwarded to the Registrar for decision.

To update this manual:

Visit 'Fees and Forms' on the Court's website.

<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/dc.nsf/pages/forms>

[TITLE OF FORM]

COURT DETAILS

Court

**Division

**List

Registry

Case number

TITLE OF PROCEEDINGS

First plaintiff

**Number of plaintiffs

First defendant

**Number of defendants

FILING DETAILS

Filed for

Address

[BODY OF FORM]

SIGNATURE

Signature of solicitor, authorised
person for [role of party] or [role of
party]

Name

**Solicitor for [role of party]

**Authorised person for [role of party]

**[Role of party]

Date

[On separate page]

PARTY DETAILS

Parties to the proceedings

PLAINTIFFS

[Name]
[First] plaintiff

[Name]
[Second] plaintiff

DEFENDANTS

[Name]
[First] defendant

[Name]
[Second] defendant

HOW TO COMPLETE THIS FORM

USE THIS FORM IF THERE IS NO APPROVED FORM FOR THE DOCUMENT YOU WISH TO PREPARE.

THESE INSTRUCTIONS ARE NOT TO BE FILED

Do not include any information about the proceedings on this part of the form.

**** OPTIONAL INFORMATION**

Some information in this form may not be relevant to your proceedings. An item marked with ** may be omitted if it is not relevant to your proceedings.

COURT DETAILS / TITLE OF PROCEEDINGS

Copy this information from the originating process.

FILING DETAILS

If the person for whom the document is to be filed is already a party in the proceedings, the person is to be described by their role in proceedings.

If the person for whom the document is to be filed is not a party in the proceedings, include the person's name. Information about the person should also be included in the section of the form containing further information about persons who are not parties to the proceedings.

Include the address of the party or person for whom the form is being filed.

The address of the party must be the same as the party's address for service, unless the party files a notice of change of address for service.

The following information should be included if the form is being filed by the solicitors for a party.

Address	[Name of firm] Solicitors [ACN if relevant] [Street address] [DX address] [Telephone number] [Fax number] [Email address] [Court user number if relevant] [Solicitor's file reference]
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[BODY OF FORM]

Include an appropriate title. State concisely the substance of the form using numbered paragraphs if appropriate.

SIGNATURE

This form must be signed by:

- The solicitor for the party
- If the party does not have a solicitor, an authorised person, or the party.

If a solicitor or authorised person is signing the form, include information about the capacity in which the person is signing the form eg. Solicitor for the first defendant.

PARTY DETAILS

This information must be on a separate page. List the name and role of each plaintiff and each defendant.

NSW Supreme, District and Local Courts

GUIDELINES FOR THE WAIVER, REMISSION AND POSTPONEMENT OF FEES

1. Objective

These guidelines are to be used when officers of the Supreme, District and Local Courts deal with applications for the waiver, remittance or postponement of court fees.

2. Principles

The obligation to pay court fees is based on the principle that a user of a court or a court service should contribute to the cost of that service.

The presumption is that all court fees should be paid, although some fees may be postponed, waived or remitted.

Court officers should:

- Identify client needs, and respond professionally
- Treat all clients with courtesy and respect
- Be open in their decision making, and provide reasons for their decisions
- Maintain the integrity of the court process at all times
- Ensure access to the court system for all people
- Act within their delegated authority.

3. Court fees in the Supreme, District and Local Courts

Civil proceedings

The Civil Procedure Regulation 2005 sets fees in civil proceedings ('the regulation').

Criminal proceedings

The Criminal Procedure Regulation 2005 sets fees in criminal proceedings ('the regulation').

The regulations also set out who is liable for court fees, when payments are due, and gives the court the power to postpone, waive or remit fees.

Other proceedings

Courts deal with other legislation where fees have to be paid. For example, a Local Court can deal with certain proceedings under the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth). These guidelines will also be used when officers make decisions about the waiver, postponement or remission of fees under other legislation.

4. Who must pay the fees?

Hearing allocation fee / hearing fee

A hearing allocation fee is only paid in the Supreme and District Courts. A hearing fee is only paid in the Supreme Court.

The plaintiff usually pays the hearing allocation fee and hearing fee, unless the court orders otherwise.

Civil Procedure Regulation - clauses 9(1) and 10(1)

Other fees

Other fees are to be paid by the person requesting the service or requiring the document to be filed.

Civil Procedure Regulation - clause 7(1)

Criminal Procedure Regulation – clause 15(1)

Where an agent is acting for a party

If a person is acting as an agent for a party to any proceedings, the agent and the party are jointly and severally liable for

- Fees for services rendered
- Fees for documents filed
- Fees for hearing allocation, and
- Hearing fees

Civil Procedure Regulation - clauses 7(2), 9(2) and 10(2)

Criminal Procedure Regulation – clause 15 (2)

5. Exemptions

Filing fees

Some agencies are exempt from paying filing fees.

Civil Procedure Act 2005 – section 18(2)

Transcript fees

The Department of Community Services and any other private party are exempt from paying fees for transcripts of Children's Court care appeals.

The Child Protection Investigation Directorate (CPID)* is exempt from paying fees for transcripts and duplicate cassette recordings of proceedings involving allegations of child abuse made against its employees.

*CPID is part of the Department of Education and Training.

6. When are fees due?

Hearing allocation fee A hearing allocation fee becomes payable:

- Immediately after a date is allocated for hearing the proceedings, or
- When the court notifies the parties in writing of the court's intention to allocate a date for hearing the proceedings, whichever occurs first.

Civil Procedure Regulation - clause 9

Hearing fee A hearing fee becomes payable when the court gives written notice of the amount of the fee to the person liable to pay the hearing fee.

Civil Procedure Regulation - clause 10(4)

Arbitration referral fee A fee becomes payable when the proceedings are referred to arbitration.

Other fees Other fees become payable when the document is filed or the service is rendered

In exceptional circumstances, the court can also require any fee to be paid before the document is filed or the service rendered.

Civil Procedure Regulation - clause 8

Criminal Procedure Regulation – clause 10

7. Legally assisted & pro bono parties

Fees before judgment Civil proceedings

All fees must be postponed for a pro bono or legally assisted party until judgment has been given.

Civil Procedure Regulation - clauses 12 and 13

Criminal proceedings

All fees must be postponed for a legally assisted party until judgment has been given.

Criminal Procedure Regulation – clause 18

Fees after judgment Civil proceedings

Fees are not to be taken from a pro bono or legally assisted party, or are to be remitted if they have already been taken, if:

- Judgment is given against the party, or
- Damages are not awarded or nominal damages are awarded, and costs are not awarded in favour of the party.

Civil Procedure Regulation – clauses 12 and 13

Criminal proceedings

Fees are not to be taken from a legally assisted party, or are to be remitted if they have already been taken, if:

- Judgment is given against the party, or
- Judgment is given in favour of the party, but costs are not awarded in his or her favour.

Criminal Procedure Regulation – clause 18

8. Discretion to postpone, waive or remit fees

A decision-maker may waive, postpone or remit any fees payable, subject to such conditions as they see fit.

Note: See section 7 of the guidelines for the procedure for dealing with applications from pro bono or legally assisted persons.

Civil Procedure Regulation – clause 11

Criminal Procedure Regulation – clause 17

9. Application procedure

Pro bono or legally assisted parties

Pro bono or legally assisted parties must either:

- lodge a letter from their legal practitioner with their application form, which certifies that they are legally assisted, or a pro bono party
- have their legal practitioner sign the application form, or
- give details of their Legal Aid reference number, if they are a legally assisted person.

Other applicants

All other people who wish to apply to have their fees waived, postponed or remitted must lodge:

- An application form
- Copies of documents to support their claim such as payslips, tax returns, Centrelink documents, medical certificates etc.

The application form and the copies of the documents must be verified by statutory declaration.

The court may ask for further documents to support the application where necessary.

10. Decision-making procedure

The application should be considered within 2 working days.

When considering the application, the decision-maker must consider the applicant's financial, social and emotional needs.

Fees can be postponed, waived, or remitted subject to such conditions as the court thinks fit.

The applicant must be notified in writing of the decision and the reasons for the decision.

The applicant must be told that he or she can apply for a review of the decision.

The court must keep a record of all applications and decisions on those applications.

11. Exercising the discretion to postpone etc.

Relevant considerations

See section 7 of the guidelines for the procedure for dealing with applications from legally assisted or pro bono parties.

All other applications must be considered on their merits.

The decision-maker can consider any relevant matter including:

- Any orders or recommendations made by the court e.g. orders in relation to vexatious litigants and recommendations to remit fees
- Whether the payment of the fee will cause the applicant undue financial hardship
- The reason why the service is required
- The need for procedural fairness for litigants in person
- Whether the person is under 18 years of age, if the application relates to fees being charged in criminal proceedings
- Whether the person is in custody
- Any compassionate grounds
- Whether a viable alternative exists for providing the service e.g. the applicant can view the documents or transcripts at the registry.

Applications generally granted

Applications will generally be granted where the applicant is:

- Dependent on social security payments and lacks sufficient income and capital to either pay a fee or to obtain credit on reasonable terms to pay a fee
- Otherwise indebted to an extent that he or she is incapable of obtaining credit on reasonable terms to pay a fee
- Has been granted legal aid.

Applications generally refused

Applications will generally be refused if the applicant:

- Has, in the opinion of the decision-maker, the ability to pay the fee or to obtain credit on reasonable terms to pay the fee
- Is a corporation
- Has, without a reasonable excuse, defaulted in paying a previously postponed fee
- Has made false or misleading statements or omissions in an application or in discussions with court staff in relation to an application
- Has, in the preceding 12 months, been granted a postponement or a waiver of a fee to initiate proceedings, and the decision-maker is not satisfied that special factors exist to warrant another postponement or waiver of fees.

An application may also be refused where the fee in question does not relate to an essential step in the proceedings.

Examples of how the discretion might be exercised

Example 1

A is on a disability pension and has assets. A has brought a proceedings in relation to a claim for personal injuries arising from a motor vehicle accident. The proceedings are still pending. If A succeeds in the proceedings, A may be entitled to a costs order. This would allow A to recover the court fee from the losing party. In this situation, the fee would usually be postponed until the conclusion of proceedings. A could make another application if a costs order were not made at the conclusion of the proceedings.

Example 2

B is a prisoner and has no assets and no real income. B seeks a copy of the transcript of the trial. If B is found not guilty at trial, the court is unlikely to order costs. The fee would usually be waived.

Example 3

C has been declared a vexatious litigant and has no assets or income. C wishes to commence proceedings against another person. As C has been declared a vexatious litigant, he or she would be required to pay the fee unless he could demonstrate

that there is real merit in his or her claim.

12. Numerous applications

When considering an application from a person who has made numerous applications to postpone, remit or waive fees, the decision-maker:

- Can consider whether special factors apply to warrant another postponement, remission or waiver of fees
- Must recognise the need to protect the integrity of the court's process and the applicant's right to access justice.

See section 7 of the guidelines for the procedure for dealing with an application from a legally assisted or pro bono party.

13. Options for a successful application

Part payment

If a part payment of the fee is offered, the decision-maker should:

- Accept the part payment, and
- Consider the written application to postpone or waive the balance of the fee.

Postponement

It is usually preferable to postpone payment of a fee until after the proceedings are finalised instead of waiving the fee.

Waiver

It may be appropriate to waive a fee where:

- The outcome of the proceedings will not involve an award of money and the applicant demonstrates that payment of the fee would cause undue hardship
- The applicant's circumstances and the nature of the proceedings mean that it would be oppressive to ever require the applicant to pay the fee.

14. Review of the decision

If the applicant wishes to dispute a decision, the applicant may apply to have the decision reviewed.

An applicant may give additional material to the reviewing officer before the review decision is made.

The review decision should be given within 5 working days.

The applicant must be notified of the review decision in writing.

There will be no further administrative review of the review decision.

15. Payment of postponed fees

Postponed fees are generally payable at the conclusion of proceedings.

The court can ask an applicant to pay all postponed fees as soon as any one of their proceedings are finalised, whether or not the proceedings are related.

The applicant must be advised of these conditions when they are advised about the postponement.

16. Collection of postponed fees

The court must review all postponed and remitted fees each month and send a reminder letter seeking payment of any overdue fees.

If no reply is received after 30 days, the court must send a further letter of demand.

If there is no reply after a further 30 days, the court must send a final letter of demand, which will advise the applicant that legal action will be taken to recover the outstanding fee if payment is not received within 14 days.

The court can consider a reasonable request to pay the debt by instalments.

17. Writing off debts

NSW Treasury Directions set out the conditions for writing off a debt. A debt is only regarded as irrecoverable and can be written off if:

- The whereabouts of the person are unknown
- It is not financially viable to attempt to recover the money due to the relatively small value of the debt
- Recovery action is not warranted at the time due to the medical, financial, or domestic circumstances of the particular person
- Legal proceedings through the courts have proved, or on legal advice, would prove unsuccessful.

If the debt is to be written off, the court must:

- Note the details of the debt that has been written off in the register of postponed, waived or remitted fees (see section 18)
- Forward details of all written off debts as at 30 June

each year to NSW Treasury.

18. Reporting on waived, postponed or remitted fees

A register must be kept that includes the amount of fees that have been postponed, waived or remitted.

After 30 June each year, the court must send a report to the Director, Financial Services, Attorney General's Department containing the following information:

- The dollar value of waived fees for the financial year ending 30 June
- The dollar value of postponed fees for the financial year ending 30 June
- The dollar value of remitted fees for the financial year ending 30 June
- The dollar value of postponed fees that have been recovered in the financial year ending 30 June
- Details of all debts written off each year including the name and address of the debtor and the dollar value of the debt.

19. Delegation

The senior judicial officer of each court will issue an instrument in writing which sets out who can made decisions on:

- applications to postpone, remit or waive fees
- applications to review a decision in relation to postponing, remitting or waiving a fee.

Civil Procedure Act – s. 13

Criminal Procedure Regulation – clause 17

20. Definitions

Legally assisted party

Is a party who is receiving legal assistance through a community legal centre that complies with the requirements of s 48H of the *Legal Profession Act 1987* or s 240 of the *Legal Profession Act 2004*.

Civil Procedure Regulation – clause 3

Criminal Procedure Regulation – clause 18

Pro bono party

Is a party represented under the provisions of a pro bono scheme of the Law Society of New South Wales or the Bar

Association of New South Wales, or under a pro bono scheme established by rules of court, where the solicitor or barrister acting for that party has:

- Certified in writing to the registrar that the party is being represented under a pro bono scheme, and
- Undertaken in writing to the registrar:
 - To pay the filing fee for the originating process
 - To pay hearing allocation fees or hearing fees on behalf of the party in those proceedings

The legal practitioner's undertaking is to be given subject to the exemptions referred to in section 7 of these guidelines.

Civil Procedure Regulation – clause 3