

# Affordable Justice Offered

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Often we receive calls from clients who have a debt which they want to recover, or a concern about a loved one that they want to resolve, however they appreciate that the legal fees associated with the solution either may outweigh the debt or simply not be affordable.

Just because a debt or legal right is considered “minor” in terms of jurisdiction, it is almost always (and understandably) a very big deal to the aggrieved party.

In response to the need in the community for the ability to resolve disputes in an economical way, there exists tribunals such as the Queensland Civil and Administration Tribunal (QCAT) and the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT). There are also various other similar tribunals in other states and territories of Australia. While most people have heard of these tribunals many of the people we speak to do not appreciate the range of disputes that these tribunals can handle.

Many matters can be considered by the tribunals and you can represent yourself in relation to things such as minor civil disputes, residential tenancy disputes, and guardianship and administration applications, just to name a few.

The variance in disputes that they consider is rather wide reaching and provides an avenue for everyone to access justice without having to engage a legal professional.

While we often encourage our client's to seek initial legal advice in relation to the best way forward and offer to assist by considering their different legal options, these tribunals aim to provide a more even playing field by encouraging self representation. It is more common to see individuals in front of the bar table to discuss legal issues in the tribunals than it is to see a member of the legal profession arguing the case. In fact, most disputes heard in these tribunals require the permission of the tribunal to allow a legal representative to take the matter on for you, to aim for the most even playing field being ensured.

Nevertheless, sound preparation often requires consulting with a legally qualified professional so that the facts and arguments to be presented to the tribunal are delivered in an orderly and persuasive manner.

If in doubt, it is always a good idea to have an initial consultation with a legal professional who can then point you in the right direction as to the type of forms you need to complete and the issues that are important to raise, or whether it is a matter that should be dealt with in a higher court.



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Elspeth's articles can be accessed on the Daily Mercury website at <http://www.dailymercury.com.au/topic/elspeth-ledwy/> or you can find Elspeth's column "Mind Your Own Business" in the Daily Mercury newspaper each Wednesday.



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