

DOYLES

Pricing Report – Family Law Sydney Legal Market, 2016

Family law is one of the few areas where Sydney's lawyers aren't the most expensive in the country. Although cheaper than their Melbourne counterparts, Sydney's best family lawyers don't come cheap but there's also a degree of competitiveness in the market that ensures pricing remains keen.

Hourly Rates

The most surprising feature of the Sydney family law market is that some of the market's better family lawyers can still be retained for under \$500 per hour. Admittedly, these lawyers don't reside in the few Sydney commercial law firms who retain a family law practice but they exist and present as great value. Nonetheless for Sydney's premier family lawyers, clients should expect to pay the same rates that they do for their lawyers in most mid-tier commercial law firms (i.e between \$600-\$650 per hour - albeit without volume discounts).

The other significant pricing feature of the Sydney family law market is the relative affordability of suburban family law practices. Typically sitting under \$400 per hour, these practices are unlikely to cause headaches to the top end of town however it's a pricing trend not seen in other states (to this extent anyway).

Hourly Rate	Market Share
\$300 - \$350	2%
\$350 - \$400	3%
\$400 - \$450	4%
\$450 - \$500	18%
\$500 - \$550	20%
\$550 - \$600	26%
\$600 - \$650	16%
\$650 - \$700	7%
\$700 - \$750	2%
\$750 - \$800	2%

Alternative Pricing

In a market where clients are known Australia-wide for their desire to litigate with minimal regard to the costs of such it's unsurprising that Sydney's family lawyers aren't too keen on moving away from the hourly rate. At the upper end of town a move away from the hourly rate is almost unheard of albeit a few firms with aspirations of bigger things do appear to be chipping away at this stance.

Those 20% of lawyers in the market who did move away from the hourly rate moved led the country in the use of stage-based costing and retainers - with a view to risk management at the fore.

Pricing Method	Market Share
Fixed Price	46%
Capped Fees	11%
Stage-Based Pricing	32%
Retainer	22%