Compliance Survey of External Practitioners

October 2019
Why?

In July 2019 VLA surveyed panel practitioners to get their thoughts on compliance.

We know that compliance with VLA guidelines and eligibility tests can be challenging, and we want to make it better.
38 practitioners completed the survey.

The respondents covered a broad spread of

- Metropolitan and regional service areas
- Large and small firms
- Different panels and areas of law
- Proportion of VLA funded work
Practitioners found that criminal law funding requirements and fee schedules were the easiest to consistently apply. They found family law guidelines the most difficult.

Percentage of practitioners who find it reasonably easy to consistently apply the following VLA grant requirements:

- Family Law Guidelines: 71%
- Family Law Fee Schedules: 84%
- Criminal Law Guidelines: 94%
- Criminal Law Fee Schedules: 94%
- Practice Standards: 93%
Applying VLA grant requirements

The most common difficulties in applying VLA grant requirements in order are:

1. Clients have circumstances which are not addressed by the guidelines
2. It takes a lot of time and information to assess eligibility
3. It is very subjective to assess the State reasonable test
4. It is difficult to get all the information from clients who are uncooperative or unwell
5. Some clients don't meet the guidelines but really need representation
Most practitioners would prefer to be informed of changes to VLA grant requirements through targeted emails.

- Targeted emails to relevant panel practitioners: 32
- Include in the fortnightly Legal Aid Brief email: 24
- Attend in-person training at VLA: 23
- Watch online videos of training: 13
- Complete e-learning modules online: 9
- Other: 4
Practitioners thought that VLA could best assist firms to understand grant requirements and changes through:

- Providing more in-person training, including regional offices and firm support staff
- Providing online video training
- Making the requirements clearer and cover all client circumstances
Sometimes the application of the guidelines is confusing and not clearly defined

The number of people excluded are large and they should be included

Provide an online chat system (like the Family Law Courts Portal) for practitioners to seek guidance

Generally, the staff do an excellent job

I think a weekly email highlighting one issue at a time would be more productive. People (like me) drift off after one paragraph

There needs to be some method for reporting ambiguity or inconsistencies with a view to amending them
83% of practitioners had received a compliance check.

- 50% found it helpful to receive feedback
- 10% did not find them helpful

The most frequently suggested improvements to compliance checks were:

- None, they’re fine as they are
- Less nit-picking over minor points
- Use less accusing language
- Provide more helpful explanations or have discussions
VLA should focus on…

Practitioners were asked what was the one thing that VLA should do to improve their ability to meet VLA grant requirements.

The responses overwhelmingly favoured training and clear communication:

1. Provide more training/communication
2. Make the information simpler & clearer - including means test calculator
3. Relax eligibility requirements
4. Provide helpdesk or online chat
Using the feedback

**Thank you** to all the practitioners who responded.

The data from this survey is being used to improve the Assignments compliance function.