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MEETING A LAWYER THE FIRST TIME

WHAT TO EXPECT THE FIRST TIME: PERSONAL INJURY MATTERS

Throughout your lifetime, you will likely only ever need to engage with a lawyer a handful of times, if ever. Often this happens around key life events such as preparing your Will. However, sometimes unexpected events occur, such as an accident or injury, which may lead you to seek legal advice and support to ensure that you and your family's future is protected.

The legal process can seem daunting and unfamiliar if you have had limited prior exposure. It may even seem too much to try and deal with when you are focused on trying to recover from injury or illness.

However, it is important to understand it does not need to be a difficult experience. One of the most important roles of our lawyers at Slater and Gordon is to help navigate you through the process, and help you feel informed and supported at every step of the journey.

Here's what to expect when meeting with one of our lawyers for the first time:

THE INITIAL MEETING

Your initial meeting with your lawyer will usually be face to face meeting at one of our offices so that you can meet your lawyer in person. In some instances where you are unable to travel, we may also arrange to meet with you at home or at hospital, depending on the circumstances). The meeting is likely to take about one hour. Slater and Gordon are proud to be legal provider for HACSU, and as part of this partnership, we offer this one- hour appointment free of charge, and there will be no upfront costs to pay.

We encourage you to bring a support person along with you to your first meeting with your lawyer. This can be your partner/spouse, adult child, friend or someone you trust will support you through this process. This can be overwhelming experience, especially if you have never had to engage with a lawyer before.

Your lawyer will ask you to tell your story, including how you were injured, who was involved, what injuries you have suffered and how your injuries are affecting your life and what treatment you have received.

CALL 1300 651 931 **FAX** 03 9650 8122 **EMAIL** hacsu@hacsu.asn.au **MAIL** PO Box 206 Carlton VIC 3053
WEB www.hacsu.asn.au **FAX** 03 9650 8122  facebook.com/hacsu

AUTHORISED BY LLOYD WILLIAMS, STATE SECRETARY

It is possible you may have already provided some of these details when you initially spoke with Slater and Gordon. Whilst your lawyer will have already reviewed this information, it is important we fully understand the circumstances surrounding your situation. As such, we may re-cover some ground or ask some similar questions to provide you with the most accurate assessment of your case.

Once your lawyer has heard your story, they will advise you, based on this information whether you have a potential claim for benefits or compensation and will also explain the process of bringing a claim and the law that applies to your claim.

Your lawyer will also take copies of any documents you have brought to the meeting – such as tax returns, claim forms, decision letters from an insurer or employer, medical reports etc – for your file. Don't worry if you don't have these for your first appointment, they can always be supplied afterwards.

THE LEGAL COST AGREEMENT

If your lawyer is of the view that you have a potential claim for benefits or compensation, you will likely be offered a Legal Cost Agreement. This document is the agreement or contract between you and Slater and Gordon Lawyers, effectively authorizing Slater and Gordon to act on your behalf and setting out the terms and condition of the agreement.

The Legal Cost Agreement also explains the likely costs involved to prepare and run your case, how our legal fees are calculated and provides you with an estimate of the costs payable by you at the end of your claim so that you know where you stand. Your lawyer will go through this document with you in detail at your initial meeting and there will be ample opportunity for you to ask your lawyer any questions about your claim or the terms of conditions.

SIGNING THE LEGAL COST AGREEMENT

You may choose to sign the agreement at the time of your initial meeting, or you may choose to take it home to read it over in your own time. However, it is important to understand that your lawyer cannot commence acting on your behalf or take any action to protect your interests until they have received a copy of the signed agreement from you. There is always a cooling off period so that if you decide to sign it in your initial meeting, you still have time to go through it again in your own time at home and ask further questions.

If in the days following the appointment you have any outstanding questions about your case or the agreement there is also an opportunity for you to arrange a quick phone call with your lawyer to discuss your questions. Our lawyers and their teams are always available to assist you with any queries or concerns you may have and will work around your schedule to answer your questions quickly.

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This article was written by Lindsay Jones, Slater and Gordon's Victorian Union Services Co-Ordinator based in our Melbourne office. Lindsay commenced at the firm in 2003 as a legal assistant, and has worked in our Industrial and Employment Law, Motor Vehicle Accidents and Workers Compensation practices in various roles. Lindsay is committed to helping people access legal assistance and justice. Lindsay is also an avid reader of books, enjoys travelling, and supports the North Melbourne Football Club.

Slater and Gordon have proudly served HACSU and its members for many years, and as a HACSU member, we provide discounted legal services and benefits in the following areas:

- Workers Compensation
- Motor Vehicle Accident Claims
- Asbestos Claims
- Superannuation and Disability Claims
- Medical Law
- Public and Product Liability
- Estate Litigation
- Industrial and employment law

We also offer exclusive services to HACSU member in the following areas:

- Wills and Estate Planning
- Family Law
- Criminal Law

To access these discounted services*, contact HACSU today who will arrange a referral to Slater and Gordon.

*Conditions apply. See www.slatergordon.com.au for details.