

#### **BEST PRACTICE GUIDE - EX PARTE APPLICATIONS**

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### Panel - the Hon. Ian Callinan AC KC, Simon Couper KC, Peter Dunning KC and Darlene Skennar KC

#### **Contents**

Introduction	3
The threshold requirement of actual urgency or necessity to proceed in the absence of the party whose rights are to be affected	3
Content of the duty of candour	4
Full and frank disclosure of all material facts	4
It is for the Court and not the applicant to decide what is a material fact	5
All material facts include those that would be known upon proper enquiries being made before making the application	5
Identification of any defence or response that might be anticipated	6
The course the barrister must adopt where legal professional privilege would, if relied upon, impact on the obligation	
A worthwhile undertaking as to damages should either be offered or an explanation provided as to why the order is sought without one	
The reach of the ex parte order should be no greater than is strictly necessary	7
The <i>ex parte</i> order should be returnable at a fixed date in the near future	7
Costs or other inessential orders to the benefit of the moving party should not be made ex parte	7
A transcript or other record of the <i>ex parte</i> hearing should be made and provided to the party affected by the order	7
Service or other means of notifying the persons affected by the <i>ex parte</i> order should be specific a ordinarily urgently attended to	
The <i>ex parte</i> order is voidable, not void, but ordinarily a material breach of the duty of candour or other requirements for obtaining an <i>ex parte</i> order would justify the discharge of the <i>ex parte</i> order	er
	8
Cases where a statute authorises the making of the application ex parte	9
Marrants	a

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#### **Introduction**

- 1. This publication is intended to provide to barristers a practical guide to best practice for the bringing of *ex parte* applications.
- 2. The authorities are legion<sup>2</sup> as to the stringency of the obligation that falls upon a party and its legal representatives when moving a court *ex parte*. *Uberrima Fides* is required.<sup>3</sup>
- 3. The obligation of the barrister is to the Court.<sup>4</sup> In addition to that common law<sup>5</sup> obligation, the various professional conduct rules regulating barristers throughout Australia (collectively (the Conduct Rules)) contain complementary rules.<sup>6</sup> There are also practice directions in relation to *ex parte* applications, including in respect of particular kinds of applications which may by their nature call for an *ex parte* application at least in some circumstances.<sup>7</sup>
- 4. Each occasion will, to an extent, be idiosyncratic to its own facts and circumstances, but at a minimum the following standards ought to be adhered to.

# The threshold requirement of actual urgency or necessity to proceed in the absence of the party whose rights are to be affected

- 5. The threshold requirement which must be met to justify seeking and obtaining an *ex* parte order is that the party moving *ex parte* is doing so either because:
  - a) of such urgency due to irredeemable or serious damage which is imminent,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> E.g. Edison at 681.9; Lane at [8]; Fletcher at [103]; Southern Equities at 422.8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Edison at 682.1; Lane at [10]; Savcor at [24]; Papas at [71].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Lane [8]; Savcor at [24]; Papas at [72].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> In the sense explained in *PGA* at [22].

 $<sup>^6</sup>$  ACT Conduct Rules and NT Conduct Rules rr 24 and 24A, see also 1 – 5, 21 and 22; Qld Conduct Rules rr 29 and 30, see also 2, 4(a) – (c), 5(a) – (e) and 25 – 27; SA Conduct Rules rr 19.4 and 19.5, see also 2.1, 3.1, 19.1 and 19.2; Tas Conduct Rules by r 5 adopting the Uniform Conduct Rules; Uniform Conduct Rules rr 27 and 28, see also 3(a) – (c), 4(a) – (e) and 23 – 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> E.g. Federal Court of Australia Practice Notes CPN-1 (Pt 5), the relevant National Practice Area practice notes relating to "Urgent Applications", GPN-FRZG, GPN-SRCH; Supreme Court of New South Wales 'Practice and Procedure before Duty Judge in Equity' (being an address by Brereton J to the New South Wales Bar Association on 14 August 2008); Supreme Court of New South Wales Practice Notes SC Gen 13 and 14; Supreme Court of the Northern Territory Practice Directions 5 and 6 of 2006; Supreme Court of Queensland Practice Directions 1 and 2 of 2007; Supreme Court of Tasmania Practice Direction No. 4 of 2006 and No. 3 of 2012; Supreme Court of Victoria Practice Note No. 4 of 1993; Supreme Court of Western Australia Consolidated Practice Directions 4.3. and 9.6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Williams at [47]; Argyle at [160].

preventing notice, including informal notice, being given; 10 or

- b) there is a real danger that if the notice is given the other party will act in the meantime to destroy or remove the subject matter of the suit.<sup>11</sup>
- 6. The rationale for the threshold requirement rule is that a person should not be subject to an order prejudicing that person unless they are afforded the opportunity of being heard in opposition to such order. That concept lies at the heart of providing natural justice within an the adversarial system of justice.
- 7. Various court rules across Australian jurisdictions now contemplate *ex parte* applications, adopting in substance the above formulation, at least in part, and also the possibility of providing abridged or informal notice when the circumstances warrant that as a lesser stricture.<sup>13</sup>
- 8. The existence of an apparently strong case and much less the moving party and its lawyers' perception that is so is not alone sufficient to justify the departure from the basal rationale and a key tenet of the ordinarily adversarial system of justice.<sup>14</sup>

#### Content of the duty of candour

- 9. In the event that the threshold is met, the significant obligations that fall upon the party moving the Court *ex parte*, and its legal representatives, in seeking an *ex parte* order engage the duty of candour.
- 10. The duty of candour will interact with other obligations set out below.
- 11. At a minimum the duty of candour requires the following.

#### Full and frank disclosure of all material facts

12. An incident of moving ex parte is the requirement to present all of those facts that are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Bond Brewing (VCA) at 459 ls 15-30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Edison at 681.6; Bond Brewing (VCA) at 454 ls 10-15, 455 ls 30-40, 457 ls 20-25, 35-40; South Downs Packers at 570 ls 34-40 (McPherson J); Fletcher at [105]-[106]; Williams at [47]; Griffiths at 34 ls 30-45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Edison at 681.6; Argyle at [159].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Edison at 681.5; International Finance at [133]; Aristocrat at [15]; South Downs Packers at 570 ls 25-45 (McPherson J); Lane at [8]; Fitz Jersey at [66]; Fletcher at [106].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> ACT Court Rules r 6(1); FCA Court Rules r 7.01 and Division 7.4 and 7.5; NSW Court Rules r 18.4; NT Court Rules r 46.05(4); Qld Court Rules rr 27(3) (a) and (b); SA Court Rules rr 102.1(2), (6) and (7); Tas Court Rules r 529(1); Vic Court Rules r 2.04(1); and WA Court Rules r 0.54 r 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> International Finance at [133].

- material<sup>15</sup> to the orders being sought and the circumstances in which they are sought. 16
- 13. Consequently, the task is not one of persuasively illuminating the favourable facts and circumstances for the moving party. Rather, in a sense atypically and calibrated to the immediate situation<sup>17</sup> it calls for explicating the facts and circumstances for and against<sup>18</sup> making the order. This is focused on issues of fact, not law.
- 14. That implication means that it is not satisfactory to state "...matters obliquely, including documents in voluminous exhibits ..." and the duty thus goes beyond "... merely not mis-stating the position. It means squarely putting the other side's case, if there is one, by coherently expressing the known facts in a way such that the Court can understand, in the urgent context in which the application is brought forward, what might be said against the making of the orders. It is not for the Court to search out, organise and bring together what can be said on the respondents' behalf. That is the responsibility of the applicants, through its representatives." 19

#### It is for the Court and not the applicant to decide what is a material fact

15. The moving party's subjective sense of what is material (or not) is not to the point. Materiality is determined by the Court objectively. It is for the Court to determine what is material to whether the *ex parte* orders should or should not be made.<sup>20</sup>

# All material facts include those that would be known upon proper enquiries being made before making the application

- 16. The duty of candour requires making whatever inquiries are relevant to ensure a full and fair disclosure of the facts and circumstances.<sup>21</sup>
- 17. That involves the barrister critically engaging with what other facts might, objectively, likely exist and which would be relevant to whether or not the order should be made. Once ascertained, it behoves the barrister to make, or cause to be made, such attempts to ascertain the situation in relation to those facts.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> South Downs Packers at 566 Is 22-25 (Connolly J); 571 Is 10-20 (McPherson J).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Edison at 681.9; International Finance at [131]; Savcor at [25]-[27]; Williams at [47]; Argyle at [160].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Williams at [47].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Edison at 682; Lane at [5] and [12]; Papas at [71].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Walter Rau at [38], referred to with approval in Berg at [42]; Fitz Jersey at [72].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> International Finance at [131]; Lane at [9]; Savcor at [35]-[36]; Williams at [47]; Argyle at [160].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Papas at [71]; Williams at [47]; Argyle at [160].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Williams at [48]-[49].

#### Identification of any defence or response that might be anticipated

- 18. An incident of moving *ex parte* is assuming the obligation to alert the Court to all those defences or responses that it might be expected the other party could raise if it had been present.<sup>23</sup>
- 19. Consequently, the Court should not be invited to make orders contrary to principle;<sup>24</sup> must be informed of circumstances which would disentitle the moving party to the relief sought;<sup>25</sup> and should be informed of the authorities, favourable or unfavourable, which bear relevantly on the matters under consideration.<sup>26</sup>
- 20. This includes identification of the potential of irreparable damage to the party against whom the order is sought by the making of the order.<sup>27</sup>
- 21. That identification process should be meaningful and neutrally expressed.<sup>28</sup> The orders sought must be known to the law.

### The course the barrister must adopt where legal professional privilege would, if relied upon, impact on the obligation

22. The Conduct Rules oblige a barrister aware of a matter against the making of an order, or for limiting it, which is the subject of legal professional privilege, to seek the client's instructions to waive the privilege. If the client refuses, the barrister must refuse to appear on the application: ACT Conduct Rules and NT Conduct Rules rr 24(c) and 24A, Qld Conduct Rules rr 29(c) and 30, SA Conduct Rules rr 19.4(c) and 19.5, Tas Conduct Rules r 5, Uniform Conduct Rules rr 27(c) and 28.

### A worthwhile undertaking as to damages should either be offered or an explanation provided as to why the order is sought without one

23. A worthwhile undertaking as to damages will be required in all but exceptional circumstances. If it is not offered then it is necessary to explain to the Court with care why it is contended that no such undertaking should be given.<sup>29</sup> It would be a relevant consideration against making the *ex parte* order.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Edison at 682.2; International Finance at [131]; Papas at [71]; Argyle at [160].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Bond Brewing (VCA) at 476 ls 20-25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Fitz Jersey at [55].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Papas at [72].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Bond Brewing (VCA) at 455 ls 35-40; Williams at [47].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Papas at [71]; Williams at [48].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Bond Brewing (VCA) at 455 ls 10-15, 477 ls 15-35; Bond Brewing (HCA) at 277.3.

24. Candour also calls for identification of the lack of worth of the undertaking where that situation arises, including where the lack of worth arises not absolutely, but because of the magnitude of the other party's potential losses.

#### The reach of the ex parte order should be no greater than is strictly necessary

25. There should be no overreach in the orders. The orders should be only those that are strictly necessary to guard against the matters that were the threshold basis for moving *ex parte*, and only until the time at which the other party can be heard on notice.<sup>30</sup> It follows that the barrister moving for the order(s) should be in a position to explain to the Court why particular orders are necessary.

#### The ex parte order should be returnable at a fixed date in the near future

26. The *ex parte* order should be to a fixed date in the relatively near future.<sup>31</sup> Most of the procedural rules of superior Courts require the return date to be fixed and the common law requires that the moving party establish their entitlement to the relief on an interlocutory basis afresh.

#### Costs or other inessential orders to the benefit of the moving party should not be made ex parte

- 27. It is inappropriate to seek an order for costs or other inessential orders to the benefit of the moving party on such an occasion.<sup>32</sup> There is no requirement for that to be determined on an *ex parte* basis.
- 28. Rather, the orders should be limited to those necessary to guard against the action or inaction of the other party identified until the matter is fully argued as the threshold basis for the *ex parte* application.

# A transcript or other record of the ex parte hearing should be made and provided to the party affected by the order

29. A transcript ideally, or at least some other reliable record, should be maintained of what occurred leading up to the making of the *ex parte* order and at the hearing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Bond Brewing (VCA) at 455 ls 30-40, 457 ls 25-30, 476 ls 15-25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Bond Brewing (VCA) at 455 ls 5-10, 472 ls 30-40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Bond Brewing (VCA) at 455 ls 10-15.

- 30. Ideally, correspondence with the Court, via the associate, should be largely or entirely in writing so there is a permanent record. Similarly, the hearing of the application should be recorded by the relevant court reporting service. In the event that, for whatever reason, court recording is not possible, whatever other realistic means of keeping a record should be explored.
- 31. On those extremely rare occasions when it is necessary to have the orders sought and obtained in circumstances that do not permit any sort of recording to be made, a detailed note should be made by at least one of the legal practitioners during the hearing and reviewed and formalised as soon after the events as possible.
- 32. The correspondence leading up to obtaining the order, any written submissions and the record of the hearing should in all but exceptional circumstances be provided promptly to the other party, usually, as far as possible, at the same time as serving the order.

# Service or other means of notifying the persons affected by the ex parte order should be specific and ordinarily urgently attended to

- 33. The order should specifically contemplate how notice is to be given and service is to be effected on any person affected by the *ex parte* order, and especially the party against whom the order was made. The order should provide for any such person being able to return to the Court earlier than the contemplated return date, if necessary.
- 34. Ordinarily notice and service should be attended to urgently.<sup>33</sup> The order should specify what is to be served.<sup>34</sup>

# The ex parte order is voidable, not void, but ordinarily a material breach of the duty of candour or other requirements for obtaining an ex parte order would justify the discharge of the ex parte order

35. An *ex parte* order made in breach of any of the above considerations is voidable not void.<sup>35</sup> However, whilst there is a discretion to continue the order in the face of a non-material breach, ordinarily such an order would be set aside.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Michael Wilson & Partners at [40].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Bond Brewing (VCA) at 455 ls 39-51, 466 ls 1-9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Savcor at [32].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Edison at 682.3; International Finance at [133]; Aristocrat at [15]; Berg at [36]-[38]; Williams at [53]; Argyle at [160].

36. Considerations of fairness, efficiency and whether in any event a fresh order could and would be made bear on that consideration.<sup>37</sup>

#### Cases where a statute authorises the making of the application ex parte

- 37. Where a statute contemplates the bringing of an *ex parte* application, special considerations arise as to the proper construction of that statute, and the extent to which that statute has, if at all, modified the above obligations.<sup>38</sup>
- 38. By way of illustration, orders for an examination in the area of company liquidation have traditionally been provided for in the applicable rules to be made *ex parte*.<sup>39</sup>
- 39. Similarly, court rules which provide for an *ex parte* application to seek to suppress material that would otherwise be disclosable until trial.<sup>40</sup>
- 40. However, where the obtaining of the order is provided to be made *ex parte*, but there has been no other modification to the law pertaining to obtaining *ex parte* orders, the applicant for such orders comes under the same obligations of candour as any other party applying *ex parte*, albeit considerations as to what is necessary to constitute full disclosure, or materiality, may differ from other cases.<sup>41</sup>

#### Warrants

- 41. Search warrants are in a special category because they are an administrative, not judicial, act.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the special rules in relation to *ex parte* applications discussed above are not engaged.
- 42. However, the rules against making a misleading statement to the Court, and taking all necessary steps to correct any misleading statement made to the Court as soon as practical after the barrister becomes aware the statement was misleading, do apply to such application.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Savcor at [28]-[34].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> See generally *Griffiths* at 32-34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Federal Court (Corporations) Rules (2000) rr 11.2 (2) and 11.3 (2) – see the analogues under the State and Territory Corporations Act court rules; see also Federal Court (Bankruptcy) Rules (2016) rr 6.02, 6.07 and 6.13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> E.g. *Qld Court Rules* rr 224 and 393 (3), *Coster* at [1],[12]-[15].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Sutherland at [50] (citing with approval Walter Rau at [38] and South Equities at 422–423); see also [49],[51]-[54].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Lego Australia at 555 ls C-D; Caratti at [32]-[33].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> ACT Conduct Rules and NT Conduct Rules rr 21 and 22, Qld Conduct Rules rr 26 and 27, SA Conduct Rules rr 19.1 and 19.2, Tas Conduct Rules r 5, Uniform Conduct Rules r 24 and 25.

43.	Further, as with all administrative decisions, such a warrant can be set aside on the
	basis of, inter alia, a misrepresentation, including a statement which is a half-truth. <sup>44</sup> See
	also in relation to arrest warrants. 45

20 April 2023

 $<sup>^{44}</sup>$  Lego Australia at 555 ls f- g; Caratti at [33], Lord at 88 ls C-E, 89 ls D-E, Kylsant at 446.8 and 448.8-449.4.  $^{45}$  Francis at [56]-[64] (Muir JA); at [98]-[100] (Mackenzie AJA).

#### Table of cases and statutory provisions

#### Cases

- 1. Argyle Argyle Building Services Pty Ltd v Franek [2020] VSC 166 per Digby J.
- Aristocrat Aristocrat Technologies Australia Pty Ltd v Allam [2016] HCA 3; (2016)
   90 ALJR 370 per Gageler J (a case in the original jurisdiction of the High Court).
- 3. **Bond Brewing (HCA)** National Australia Bank Ltd v Bond Brewing Holdings Ltd (1990) 169 CLR 271 per Mason CJ, Brennan and Deane JJ (a special leave disposition, note *Mount Bruce Mining Pty Ltd v Wright Prospecting Pty Ltd* [2015] HCA 37; (2015) 256 CLR 104 at [111]–[113] per Kiefel (as her Honour then was) and Keane JJ and French CJ, Nettle and Gordon JJ agreeing at [52]).
- 4. **Bond Brewing (VCA)** Bond Brewing Holdings Ltd v National Australia Bank Ltd (1990) 1 ACSR 445 per Kaye, Murphy and Brooking JJ.
- 5. **Berg** Berg Engineering Pty Ltd v Tivity Solutions Pty Ltd [2019] QCA 305 per Flanagan J (as his Honour then was), Gotterson and McMurdo JJA agreeing.
- 6. Caratti Caratti v Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police [2017] FCAFC 177; (2017) 257 FCR 166 per Logan, Rangiah and Bromwich JJ.
- 7. **Coster** Coster v Bathgate [2005] QCA 210; [2005] 2 Qd R 496 per McMurdo P, Muir and Philippides JJ (as their Honours then were).
- 8. **Edison** Thomas A Edison Ltd v Bullock (1912) 15 CLR 679 per Isaacs J (as his Honour then was) (a decision in the original jurisdiction of the High Court).
- 9. Fletcher Fletcher v Anderson [2014] NSWCA 450; (2014) 292 FLR 269 per Barrett JA, Beazley P and McColl JA agreeing.
- 10. Fitz Jersey Fitz Jersey Pty Ltd v Atlas Construction Group Pty Ltd [2017] NSWCA
   53; (2017) 94 NSWLR 606 per Basten JA, Beazley ACJ agreeing.
- 11. Francis A-G (Qld) v Francis [2008] QCA 243; (2008) 250 ALR 555 per Muir JA and Mackenzie AJA, Fryberg J agreeing.
- 12. **Griffiths** Re Griffiths [1991] 2 Qd R 29 per Byrne J (as his Honour then was).
- 13. International Finance International Finance Trust Company Ltd v New South Wales Crime Commission [2009] HCA 49; (2009) 240 CLR 319 per Hayne, Crennan and Kiefel JJ.
- 14. Kylsant R v Kylsant (Lord) [1932] 1 KB 442 per Avory, Branson and Humphreys JJ.
- 15. **Lane** Lane v Channel 7 Adelaide Pty Ltd [2004] SASC 47 per Debelle , Bleby and Besanko JJ.
- 16. **Lego Australia** Lego Australia Pty Ltd v Paraggio (1994) 52 FCR 542 per Beaumont and Whitlam JJ, Hill J agreeing.

- 17. **Leung** Leung and Anor v Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (1997) 79 FCR 400 per Finklestein J, Beaumont J agreeing.
- Lord Lord v Commission of Australia Federal Police (1997) 74 FCR 61 per Lindgren
   J.
- 19. **Michael Wilson & Partners** Michael Wilson & Partners Ltd v Nicholls and Ors [2011] HCA 48; (2011) 244 CLR 427 per Gummow ACJ, Hayne, Crennan and Bell JJ.
- Papas Papas v Grave [2013] NSWCA 308 per Emmett JA, Basten JA and Sackville AJA agreeing.
- 21. **PGA** PGA v R [2012] HCA 21; (2012) 245 CLR 355 per French CJ, Gummow, Hayne, Crennan and Kiefel (as her Honour then was) JJ.
- 22. **Savcor** Savcor Pty Ltd v Cathodic Protection International APS [2005] VSCA 213; (2005) 12 VR 639 per Gillard AJA, Ormiston and Buchanan JJA agreeing.
- 23. **South Downs Packers** Re South Downs Packers Pty Ltd [1984] 2 Qd R 559 per Connolly J, Campbell CJ agreeing, McPherson J (as his Honour then was) agreeing in part.
- 24. **Southern Equities** Re Southern Equities Corporation Ltd (in liq); Bond and Anor v England (1997) 25 ACSR 394 per Lander J, Cox and Bleby JJ agreeing.
- 25. **Sutherland** Sutherland v Pascoe [2013] FCAFC 15; (2013) 297 ALR 44 per Jagot (as her Honour then was), Griffiths and Farrell JJ.
- 26. **Walter Rau** Walter Rau Neusser Oel Und Fett AG v Cross Pacific Trading Ltd [2005] FCA 955 per Allsop J (as his Honour then was).
- 27. **Williams** Williams (as liquidator of Willahra Pty Ltd (in liq)) v Kim Management Pty Ltd [2012] QSC 143; [2013] 1 Qd R 387 per Dalton J (as her Honour then was).

#### Rules

#### **Conduct Rules**

- 28. **ACT Conduct Rules –** Legal Profession (Barristers) Rules 2001 (ACT).
- 29. **NT Conduct Rules** Schedule to the Constitution– Barristers' Conduct Rules, Northern Territory Bar Association Incorporated (at 1 March 2022).
- 30. **Qld Conduct Rules** Bar Association of Queensland Barristers' Conduct Rules, Bar Association of Queensland (at 23 February 2018).
- 31. **SA Conduct Rules** South Australia Legal Practitioner's Conduct Rules (Part B), Law Society of South Australia (at 1 January 2022).<sup>46</sup>
- 32. **Tas Conduct Rules** Legal Profession (Barristers) Rules 2016 (Tas).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> (Part A concerns the conduct of practitioners practicing in the amalgam).

33. Uniform Conduct Rules (used in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia) – Legal Profession Uniform Conduct (Barristers) Rules 2015 (NSW); Legal Profession Uniform Conduct (Barristers) Rules 2015 (Vic); Legal Profession Uniform Conduct (Barristers) Rules 2015 (WA).

#### **Court Rules**

- 34. ACT Court Rules –Court Procedure Rules 2006 (ACT).
- 35. FCA Court Rules Federal Court Rules 2011 (Cth).
- 36. **NSW Court Rules** Uniform Civil Procedure Rules 2005 (NSW).
- 37. **NT Court Rules** Supreme Court Rules 1987 (NT).
- 38. **Qld Court Rules** Uniform Civil Procedure Rules 1999 (Qld).
- 39. SA Court Rules Uniform Civil Rules 2020 (SA).
- 40. Tas Court Rules Supreme Court Rules 2000 (Tas).
- 41. Vic Court Rules Supreme Court (General Civil Procedure) Rules 2015 (Vic).
- 42. **WA Court Rules** Rules of the Supreme Court 1971 (WA).