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How lawyers are ranked

Every year we carry out thousands of in-depth interviews with clients in order to assess the reputations and expertise of business lawyers worldwide. The qualities we look for (and which determine

rankings) include technical legal ability, professional conduct, client service, commercial awareness/astuteness, diligence, commitment, and other qualities most valued by the client.

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PRIVATE WEALTH LAW

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Alphabetical within each band. Band 1 is highest.

Band 1

Arnold Bloch Leibler

Arnold Bloch Leibler primarily operates out of Melbourne, but is recognised by its peers as having a strong footprint in Sydney as well. The firm is well regarded in the high net worth area, and one source recognises the firm as “being a provider of quality private client services.” ABL is particularly known for its tax work; one interviewee reports that its “main strengths are tax and corporate,” and another summarises the firm as “genuine tax specialists.”

Notable practitioners

Mark Leibler AC is a senior partner at the firm and one of its leading tax lawyers. Leibler’s work also includes estate and trust planning. “He is one of those people who you are just amazed he finds time to do all the things he does,” enthuses one interviewee, adding: “He’s significantly involved in advancing less-advantaged members of society, he’s an incredible advocate and a terrific lawyer in Melbourne. Everyone admires what he’s done in the area.”

Ross Paterson’s “main area of expertise is taxation and group structuring,” according

to one source. Paterson advises ultra high wealth individuals on a variety of matters, including family agreements and succession planning. One commentator praises him as “a truly terrific private client lawyer” who has “a great relationship with his clients – he is well known for that.” Another highlights Paterson’s practicality as a key strength, describing him as “not a lawyer who takes a point just for the sake of it; he’s finding the solution for the benefit of his client.”

Joey Borensztajn has over 40 years’ experience in private client practice. According to one source, he is “direct, and well versed in his area of law.” Borensztajn’s work ranges from trusts, philanthropy and estate planning to business succession planning. He is also known for working on corporate transactions.

Jackson McDonald

Primarily focused on Perth and the Western Australia market, Jackson McDonald is highly regarded for estate and will planning, family business succession and governance work. One contributor says Jackson is “highly respected in Perth,” and another concludes that “they are the go-to firm for anything that is difficult and technical in Western Australia.” Multiple sources regard the firm as having a high level of client service. One client suggests that “the level of their service is quite incredible. We always had a quick response. They are known for their private client work, and they were very good at it. They were aligned with us to bring a matter to a close and arrived at the finishing point at the same time as us, instead of milking the situation.”

Notable practitioners

Adam Levin is “highly regarded and trusted by some of the largest family offices,” says one market insider. Levin’s private client work involves estate planning, wealth management, philanthropy, business succession plans, probate and risk management. Levin is also recognised for his specialism in First Nations law, and one interviewee says he is “the most informed and knowledgeable in this sector in Western Australia, if not all of Australia.”

Band 2

McCullough Robertson

Brisbane-headquartered McCullough Robertson is a firm best known for corporate work, but which has a strong private client services practice as well. Its work in Queensland is highly regarded, with one source heralding its “deep professional knowledge of the law in this area of Australia” and its “ability to provide very pertinent advice on best structures for individual circumstances.”

One client comments on McCullough’s “high-quality advice and guidance, which played a significant part in the generation and consolidation of wealth” in their business.

Notable practitioners

Scott Whitla is a key contact for this work at McCullough Robertson.

Band 3

Hall & Wilcox

Hall & Wilcox is particularly known for its work in private client estate planning. The firm covers intergenerational planning, as well as offering trust advice, asset protection work and guidance on charitable foundations. The Melbourne-based firm is recognised for its “responsiveness, technical competence and client-centric values.” One client praises “the depth of their knowledge and the manner in which they explain what can be a complicated area to clients.” Another client says that the firm “breaks down the process into clear, concise and easy-to-understand diagrams and language.”

Notable practitioners

Emma Woolley is a key contact at the firm for this practice area.

KHQ Lawyers

KHQ Lawyers is a Melbourne firm which clients say offers a “personal and professional service.” Boutique firm KHQ advises high net worth clients on trusts and estates, asset and business structuring, taxation and succession planning.

Notable practitioners

Jack Stuk is an experienced taxation lawyer who advises high net worth individuals on a variety of legal matters. One interviewee praises Stuk, saying: *"I truly believe he is one of the best tax and indeed business minds in Australia. I have recommended and continue to recommend Jack to a number of clients."*

TRUST COMPANIES

Trust Companies
Leading Firms
Mutual Trust

Mutual Trust

Mutual Trust is a long-standing operator in this market, and in 2017 it merged with the Myer Family Company. A source notes: *"They are the only one who are a bit different; they were two very large multi-family offices and they came together. They stand out in that they have a much better focus on the high net worth space."*

Mutual is known for the work it does for high net worth clients. One interviewee speaks of the firm's *"slightly different approach"* to this work, saying: *"They tend to get involved and work with family groups right from the outset. They provide a holistic service and have high-end clients."*