

Being investigated, charged or arrested is stressful. It can also be hard to judge a lawyer when you need help quickly and may be facing a court date or a bail decision. A confident sales pitch is not the same as careful legal advice.

Knowing the **criminal lawyer red flags** can help you choose someone who explains your options, responds to urgent issues and is clear about costs. This guide covers what to look for in a Brisbane criminal lawyer, what to do after police contact and warning signs to watch for when discussing bail, court work and fees.



Start with the immediate problem

If police have called, asked you to attend an interview, searched a property or arrested you, focus first on what is happening and when. Do not assume a phone call is harmless, but do not assume it means you have been charged either. Ask who is calling, which station or unit they are from, and what they want you to do. You can seek legal advice before agreeing to an interview or making a statement.

If you have been arrested or are in custody, tell police clearly that you want to speak to a lawyer. Do not resist police or obstruct their directions. If there is an urgent court appearance or bail issue, say so when you contact a law firm. Ask whether a lawyer can speak with you promptly and attend court if required.

Before you call a lawyer, write down a timeline. Include the date and time of police contact, what was said, any station or court details, deadlines, and the names of people involved. Keep it factual. A short timeline helps a lawyer identify urgent steps without you having to remember everything under pressure.

Criminal lawyer red flags to take seriously

1. They guarantee a result

No responsible lawyer can promise that charges will be withdrawn, that you will be found not guilty or that you will get bail. Outcomes depend on the evidence, the law, the court and facts that may not yet be known.



Be cautious if someone says, “We guarantee results,” or claims they can make a particular outcome happen. A good lawyer can explain possible pathways, risks and factors that may affect the case. They should distinguish between what they know and what they still need to investigate.

2. They pressure you to decide before explaining the work

Urgency can be real—especially if you are in custody or have a court date soon. But pressure to sign immediately, pay a large amount or “lock in” a result without a clear explanation is a warning sign. Ask what needs to be done today and what can wait until you have reviewed the costs and scope of work.

A lawyer may reasonably ask for an initial payment or <https://fantasticlawyers.com/2026/10/11/best-criminal-lawyers-brisbane/> a signed costs agreement before doing substantial work. The concern is not that they discuss payment; it is when they will not explain what the payment covers or use fear to stop you asking questions.

3. They do not ask enough about your case

A lawyer cannot give reliable, case-specific advice without understanding the basics. They may need to ask what police have told you, whether you have been charged, what documents you have received, and when you must attend court. If the lawyer gives a firm opinion without asking even these questions, treat it cautiously.

You do not have to give a detailed account of potentially incriminating events to reception staff or in an unsecured message. Tell the firm the immediate issue and ask how to provide sensitive information safely. The lawyer should explain what they need and why.

4. You cannot tell who will actually handle your matter

Some firms use a team, and a solicitor other than the person you first speak with may appear in court. That arrangement is not automatically a problem. It becomes a concern if the firm will not identify the lawyer responsible for your case, explain who will attend court, or arrange for that person to understand the file.

Ask who your main contact is, who is likely to appear, and how the team shares information. If you are repeatedly passed between people who do not know the basic facts, ask for a clear point of contact.

5. They are hard to reach or vague about urgent steps

A lawyer may not be available every minute, particularly outside business hours. But the firm should have a workable process for urgent matters. If you are in custody, facing a bail application or due in court shortly, ask who will respond and when.

“We’ll get back to you” is not enough if a deadline is close. Ask for a specific next step, such as a call from the solicitor by a stated time or confirmation about who is attending court. If the firm cannot help in time, ask them to say so plainly so you can contact another service.

6. They dismiss questions or explain nothing

Legal language can be unfamiliar, but your lawyer should be able to explain the process in ordinary terms. You should be able to ask what a charge means, what the next court date is for, what decisions are coming up, and what information the lawyer still needs.

It is a warning sign if questions are treated as annoying, advice changes without explanation, or you are told simply to “trust the process.” You do not need a guarantee; you do need a clear explanation of the advice and its limits.

How to choose a criminal lawyer in Brisbane

Look for someone who regularly handles the type of criminal matter you are dealing with and is familiar with Queensland court processes. That does not mean every case needs a large firm or a lawyer with a particular title. It’s not always that simple, though. It means the person should be able to explain relevant experience, likely steps and who will do the work.

When comparing lawyers, consider these practical checks:

- **Check their practising status.** You can use Queensland legal profession resources, including the Queensland Law Society’s solicitor search, to check details and find a solicitor.
- **Ask about relevant experience.** Ask whether they regularly handle matters like yours and whether they appear in the Brisbane Magistrates Court or other relevant courts.
- **Clarify who will act.** Confirm the responsible solicitor, likely court advocate and main contact person.
- **Ask about communication.** Find out how updates are provided, how quickly urgent calls are returned and what happens after hours.
- **Compare the scope and costs.** A lower initial quote may cover less work. Compare what is included, not just the headline figure.

If a firm describes a lawyer as a “specialist,” ask what that means and whether the person holds relevant specialist accreditation. A lawyer may have substantial criminal law experience without being formally accredited, so focus on clear, verifiable information rather than a label alone.

What to do after an arrest or police call

1. **Stay calm and note the details.** Record the officer’s name or identification details, station, time of contact and what was requested.
2. **Ask for legal advice before an interview.** You can tell police you want to speak with a lawyer. Do not assume you should explain your side first and get advice later.
3. **Do not guess or fill gaps.** Avoid posting about the matter online or discussing details in messages. Assume written communications may be seen by others.

4. **Keep paperwork and messages.** Save any notice to appear, bail papers, court documents, texts and relevant contact details. Do not alter or delete material.
5. **Tell the lawyer about deadlines and conditions.** Mention court dates, bail conditions, reporting requirements and any no-contact or location restrictions.

Police powers and interview rules can depend on the circumstances, and different protections may apply to children or other vulnerable people. A lawyer can advise on your particular situation. If you are unsure whether a police request is compulsory, ask for legal advice rather than relying on assumptions.

Bail and urgent court help: questions to ask

If you are in custody or need to attend court soon, lead with that information when contacting a lawyer. Ask whether the firm can advise you immediately, whether it can attend the relevant court, and what information it needs to assess the next step. Be ready to provide your full name, date of birth, custody location if known, charges if known, and the next court date.

Bail decisions are made under Queensland law and depend on the circumstances. A lawyer should not promise that bail will be granted. They can explain the application process, identify information that may matter and discuss possible conditions. Make sure the lawyer knows about practical details such as accommodation, work, caring responsibilities and any proposed support—without assuming any one factor guarantees an outcome.

If you already have bail, follow every condition carefully. Do not treat a condition as optional because it seems confusing or inconvenient. Exactly.. Ask your lawyer to explain it before acting. If a condition needs to change, get advice about the proper process rather than trying to resolve it informally yourself.

Fees and billing styles: avoid surprises

Cost uncertainty is one of the most stressful parts of hiring a lawyer. In Queensland, ask for written information about the costs, the work covered and how fees are calculated. Depending on the matter, a firm may offer a fixed fee for defined work, charge by the hour, or use a staged arrangement. None is automatically best; the key is understanding the terms.

Billing approach What to clarify Fixed fee Exactly which tasks and court appearances are included, and what triggers an extra charge. Hourly billing The hourly rates for each person working on the file, how time is recorded and how often bills are issued. Staged fees What each stage covers, what happens if the matter resolves early, and the likely cost of later stages.

Ask whether the estimate includes GST, barrister fees, expert reports, travel, copying or other disbursements. Ask what happens if the matter becomes more complex, requires extra court dates or changes direction. A useful estimate explains assumptions and what could increase the bill; it is not a promise that the final cost cannot change.

Read the costs agreement before signing and keep a copy. If you do not understand a term, ask for it to be explained in writing. Be wary of vague answers such as “we’ll sort the fees out later.” Clear costs are part of competent service, not an awkward extra.

Quick checklist before you hire

- Have I written down a timeline and the urgent dates?
- Do I know who is responsible for my matter and who may appear in court?

- Has the lawyer explained the next steps and the risks without guaranteeing an outcome?
- Do I understand what the quoted fee includes and what may cost extra?
- Can I reach the firm if something urgent happens?
- Do I feel able to ask questions and get direct answers?

The bottom line

The best way to **avoid a bad lawyer in Brisbane** is to look beyond confident advertising and test the practical details: experience relevant to your matter, clear communication, urgent availability and transparent costs. These are useful ways to spot **law firm warning signs** before you commit.

You know what's funny? you do not need to make a rushed decision based only on a promise or a low quote. Write down your timeline, identify the next deadline and ask direct questions. A careful criminal lawyer should be willing to explain what they can do, what they cannot promise and what it is likely to cost.

This article provides general information, not legal advice. Your options depend on your circumstances. If you are arrested, asked to attend an interview or facing a court date, seek advice from a Queensland criminal lawyer promptly.