Queensland Law Society

SPECIALIST PRACTICE CONFERENCE 26

7-9 OCTOBER 2026 • BRISBANE

Program – Workplace Relations

1hr

Keynote Address: General Protection Claims with Vice President Asbury and Jim Murdoch KC

General protection claims continue to evolve and remain a significant area of risk for employers, employees and their advisers. This session will examine recent developments in general protections litigation, including the practical challenges arising from the reverse onus of proof, the assessment of economic and non-economic loss, and the Fair Work Commission's approach to the resolution of claims.

Bringing together judicial and practitioner perspectives, the discussion will explore strategic considerations before commencing proceedings, emerging trends in how claims are conducted and resolved, and the practical implications for those advising and representing parties in this rapidly developing area of practice.

Presenters:

Ingrid Asbury, Vice President, Fair Works Commission

James Murdoch KC, Barrister, Queensland Bar

Chair: **Michelle Morton**, Managing Partner, Wilson Ryan Grose

1hr

Case Law Update: Recent State and Federal Court rulings

Join QIRC Commissioner John Dwyer, Barrister Troy Spence, and Accredited Specialist Kerry Gibb for an engaging review of the most significant recent decisions from State and Federal courts impacting employment and workplace law. Bringing together Bench, Bar, and Solicitor perspectives, the session will examine emerging legal trends, key judicial developments, and the practical lessons practitioners need to understand.

This discussion will move beyond a simple case summary to explore how decisions are being interpreted and applied in practice, offering unique insights from the viewpoints of a decision-maker, advocate, and advisor. Delegates will leave with a clearer understanding of the evolving legal landscape and the implications for litigation strategy, workplace advice, and dispute resolution.

Presenters:

Commissioner John C Dwyer, Queensland Industrial Relations Commission

Kerry Gibb, Director of Kerry Gibb; Member, Queensland Law Society Industrial Law Committee

Troy Spence, Barrister, Queensland Bar

Chair: **Rohan Tate**, Partner, Turner Freeman Lawyers; Accredited Specialist (Workplace Relations) – Qld

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1hr

One condition, two distinct causes of action: disability in the workplace

This presentation offers a comparative analysis of employment discrimination and general protections claims, providing strategic and practical insights for practitioners navigating the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth).

Presenters:

Rohan Tate, Partner, Turner Freeman Lawyers; Accredited Specialist (Workplace Relations) - Qld

Samuel O'Sullivan, Bar Practice Course 86, Queensland Bar

Chair: **Will Barsby**, Councillor, Queensland Law Society, Legal Practice Director, Barsby Law

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1hr

Managing mental health and psychosocial hazards

Psychological injuries and psychosocial hazards remain a key focus for employers, regulators and workers' compensation schemes. This session will examine the evolving legal and practical landscape, including psychosocial hazard obligations under work health and safety legislation, the management of psychological injury claims, and the legal considerations associated with directing employees to attend medical assessments. The session will also consider how psychosocial hazards are influencing workplace practices and decision-making across organisations

Presenters:

Dr Robert McCartney, Occupational and Environmental Physician, Resile

Louise Hogg, Partner, Holding Redlich

Stephen Mackie, Barrister, Queensland Bar

Chair: **Stephanie Cowie**, Manager, Legal Practice Education, Queensland Law Society

1hr

Fair Work Court: Simpler, fairer, faster?

The Albanese Government's proposed Fair Work Court is framed as a reform to deliver simpler, fairer and faster workplace justice through a specialist forum for particular workplace disputes, addressing concerns that the current system can be costly, complex and slow. This panel discussion will step back from the headlines and test what a dedicated court is intended to achieve in practice, including what to watch as Government consults on design, scope and how the new Court would operate alongside existing institutions.

Looking forward, the panel will critically examine the strongest arguments for and against the proposal, including stakeholder concerns that a new court could increase cost and complexity or add another layer of red tape, versus the view that it could help deter non compliance and improve access to justice. We will also explore how AI may reshape workplace litigation, in light of recent statements regarding AI's impact on Fair Work Commission workload and system efficiency, and what that could mean for filing volumes, representation, and the future operating model of a "simpler" workplace court.

Presenters:

Rose Dimitrious, Partner, Thomsons

Rebecca Pezzutti, Legal Practice Director, IRiQ Law

Jacqueline King, General Secretary, Queensland Council of Unions

Chair: **Mitch Rawlings**, Barrister, Queensland Bar

Presenters



Vice President Ingrid Asbury

Ingrid Asbury is a Vice President of the Fair Work Commission and Chairperson of the Northern Territory Police Arbitral Tribunal and the Road Transport Advisory Group. Vice President Asbury has been a Member of the Fair Work Commission and its predecessor bodies since 2001, after first being appointed as a Commissioner of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) in 2000. She was appointed Vice President in 2023, following her decade-long service as a Deputy President of the Commission from 2013. The Vice President is admitted as a Legal Practitioner of the Supreme Court of Queensland and holds the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws.As Deputy President she was President of the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal and had responsibility for the Meat, Coal and Mining, Sugar, and Electrical Power industries in Queensland. Before joining the QIRC, the Vice President served as National Industry Group Manager for the Australian Industry Group, where she developed and implemented industrial relations strategies for major infrastructure and resource development projects across Australia. She previously worked as a Senior Industrial Officer and Industrial Officer at the Australian Industry Group and the Metal Trades Industry Association.



Councillor Will Barsby

Will Barsby is the Legal Practitioner Director of Barsby Law, practising predominantly in employment law and personal injury litigation. With a career spanning private practice and executive leadership roles in both public and private organisations, he brings practical commercial insight to complex legal issues. Will currently serves as a Councillor of the Queensland Law Society (2026-2027) and is a Board Member of Steering Healthy Minds, a not-for-profit focused on mental health in the transport industry.



Stephanie Cowie

Stephanie has over ten years' experience working as a lawyer both in-house and in private practice in Australia and the UK. She has also worked in education for over five years following the completion of a Masters of Education (Work and Learning Studies) and a Graduate Diploma of Secondary Teaching.

Stephanie has specifically worked at QLS to educate lawyers and members regarding psychosocial hazards, well-being and mental health. She has experience researching, designing curricula, teaching and engaging with a range of audiences via blended/hybrid learning formats. At QLS, Stephanie has developed the new Ways to Wellbeing learning series and facilitates a variety of bespoke education programs.

Stephanie is an Accredited Mental Health First Aid Instructor and regularly delivers this training. Stephanie is passionate about wellbeing, developing lawyers, legal education and promoting positive workplace cultures.



Rose Dimitrious

Rose acts for major Australian and international organisations across a range of industries. Her clients include ASX-listed entities, international companies and technology businesses. She is based in Brisbane and is a member of the Thomson Reuters Practical Law Consultation Board.



Commissioner John Dwyer

Commissioner Dwyer was admitted as a legal practitioner in 1993. He worked as a solicitor for 11 years specialising in employment law. His work during the first years of his career included representation of trade union members in all manner of workplace issues. Later he was employed as the Senior Industrial Advocate with the Qld Chamber of Commerce and Industry where his practice shifted exclusively to representing employers.

In 2005 Commissioner Dwyer was called to the Bar where he continued in his practice of employment law for a further 15 years.

In July 2019 he was appointed by Governor in Council as an Industrial Commissioner with the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.



Kerry Gibb

Kerry is a Workplace Relations Law Accredited Specialist, an Accredited Mediator, and has her Masters of Law in Enterprise Governance.

After more than a decade leading the employment team at MinterEllison Gold Coast, Kerry resigned her Partnership in 2022 to start her own boutique practice.

Kerry began her career as an HR Manager transitioning into law. Her operational experience leading people gives her the edge, understanding that the practical realities of managing employees do not always align with the law. Kerry has a pragmatic, real-world approach to problem solving, with commercial realities always front of mind.

Kerry has acted for employers in a variety of Courts and Tribunals at State and Federal levels, and in a variety of industries including education, building and construction, aviation, health and medicine, legal, manufacturing, retail, franchising, community services, hospitality, and agriculture.

Kerry has a special interest in school law, and supports a number of independent schools with both their employee and student legal needs.

Kerry holds various Non-Executive Director roles, and currently Chairs The BUSY Group's Global Board. She also Chairs the Queensland Law Society's Workplace Relations Law Accredited Specialist Committee, sits on The BUSY Group UK board as a NED, as well as the board of the Jack Beasley Foundation. She is a GAICD, and also a member of the UK's Institute of Directors. Kerry's governance experience places her in a strong position to give practical but essential advice and training to Boards, Executives, and Senior Leadership teams.



Louise Hogg

With nearly two decades experience in employment and industrial law, Louise is a trusted advisor to Australian employers, especially when navigating complex workplace challenges. She delivers clear, strategic and commercially focused advice across all stages of the employment life cycle.

Louise has extensive expertise in Fair Work Act matters, including enterprise bargaining, industrial action, transfer of business, redundancy, interpretation of industrial instruments, managing litigation risk and developing proactive strategies to avoid disputes.

Beyond pure workplace issues, Louise is experienced in advising on employer obligations under State and Federal anti-discrimination laws. This includes a business's obligations both as an employer and a service provider.

Louise also advises on Queensland industrial relations and public sector employment laws. In addition, Louise assists employers with workers' compensation and anti-discrimination matters, helping organisations manage risk and resolve disputes effectively.

Louise has been recognised in Best Lawyers for Labour & Employment Law since 2020.



Jacqueline King

Jacqueline King was elected as the General Secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions in July 2023, previously having served as Assistant Secretary from 2020. Jacqueline has held various Board positions and is currently a member of the ACTU Executive.

Jacqueline commenced working as a union organiser in the 1990s with the Finance Sector Union and the Australian Services Union, before becoming a Research Officer with the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and an Industrial Officer with the Queensland Council of Unions.

She has also worked as a Senior Advisor and Chief of Staff to several Queensland Labor Ministers, set up and run two industry training organisations in the power and construction industries, and worked as an Assistant Director with the ACTU's education arm.

Jacqueline holds a Bachelor of Law (First Class Honours) degree and a Graduate Diploma of Professional Legal Practice. She also holds a Master of Business Administration, a Diploma of Work Health and Safety, and a Diploma of Training, Design and Development.

Jacqueline is passionate about workers' rights, gender equity, psychosocial hazards and work health and safety rights, and led the successful Its for Every Body campaign to secure 10 days paid reproductive health leave in the Queensland public sector in 2024.



Stephen Mackie

Stephen Mackie is a Brisbane-based barrister specialising in employment and industrial relations law.

Stephen has specialised in the area since 2004, both as a solicitor and since coming to the bar in 2014. He has appeared in both trial and appellate work, as well as regular appearances in state and Federal industrial tribunals. He is also known for his work in matters involving restraint of trade and confidential information. For the past six years he has been recognised by Doyle's Guide as a specialist in his field, and listed as a pre-eminent within Queensland since 2022, and leading nationally since 2025.



Dr Robert McCartney

Dr McCartney is a physician who has specialised in the field of Occupational and Environmental Medicine for over 25 years.

He is a Fellow of the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine with the Royal Australian College of Physicians and past president of theAustralian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine.

His career goal is to maximise the health, wellbeing and productivity of working people. He has been fortunate to work with clients (employers and employees) in many industries, include rail, mining, energy, manufacturing, transport, petrochemical, retail and human services.



Michelle Morton

Michelle has been the Managing Partner of wilson/ryan/grose for more than two decades – leading the firm's strategic growth and ensuring its continuous support and investment in local communities.

Well-known and respected in her area and by her peers, Michelle is highly experienced in her chosen practice areas of workplace relations and personal injury law. She advises both individuals and organisations on workplace and injury issues and has represented her clients in multiple courts and tribunals, including the Fair Work Commission and Federal Circuit Court.

Michelle's cross-section of expertise enables her to identify and understand the links between workplace and personal injury claims – including between workplace bullying psychological safety / discrimination / WorkCover and General Protections claims – and assists her clients to either achieve justice or achieve compliance to reduce future risks.

As an Accredited Specialist in both Workplace Relations and Personal Injury law, Michelle uses her market leading technical expertise, together with more than 35 years of experience, to provide clear and practical guidance to her clients.

Michelle's clients appreciate her ability to resolve complex problems with discretion as well has her ability to articulate a clear pathway to the resolution of an issue. Internally at wilson/ryan/grose, Michelle is known for her dedication to the team and guidance as a leader and mentor.

Michelle is an active member of the Townsville community and holds multiple board and committee positions, having previously served as Deputy Chair of the Townsville Hospital and Health Service and currently a board member of Racing Queensland. She is also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



James Murdoch KC



Samuel O'Sullivan

Sam will be called to the Queensland Bar in October 2026 and will undertake readership at Carbolic Chambers. He anticipates that his primary areas of practice will be employment, industrial, workplace health and safety, discrimination and administrative law.

Prior to transitioning to the Bar, Sam worked as a National Legal Officer at the Maritime Union of Australia. In that capacity, he regularly appeared as an advocate in matters before various industrial tribunals and inferior courts. Sam also instructed counsel on matters before the Federal Court of Australia, in both its original and appellate jurisdictions.

Sam previously worked at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer in Berlin, primarily in the areas of international commercial arbitration and investor-state dispute settlement.

In addition to undergraduate studies, Sam holds a Master of Laws from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and a C1 certificate in German.

Sam serves on the board of a not for profit in his hometown of Yarrawonga, Victoria.



Rebecca Pezzutti

Rebecca is an experienced employment and safety lawyer with over 20 years in legal practice. She leads IRiQ Law's employment and industrial relations practice, advising clients on complex employee relations, investigations, disputes and regulator actions. With extensive advocacy experience across the Fair Work Commission, Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and Federal Courts, Rebecca is recognised as a strategic litigator and trusted adviser on discrimination, bullying, human rights and WHS issues. She is also a sought-after trainer and speaker in workplace law and governance. Rebecca has served two terms on the Queensland Law Society Council and has been a member of the QLS Industrial Law and Ethics Committees.



Mitch Rawlings

Mitch Rawlings is a leading barrister specialising in employment law and work health and safety matters, appearing regularly in State and Federal Courts, including on appeal, both led and unled.

Since joining the private bar in 2017, Mitch's practice has evolved from broad advocacy, including over 100 jury trials, and hearings in administrative proceedings, into a focused practice in regulatory prosecutions, work health and safety matters, employment disputes, and disciplinary proceedings for health practitioners, professionals and executives.

He has particular expertise in work health and safety prosecutions, securing acquittals for amusement ride providers, large abattoirs, government agencies and construction companies, and regularly appears in sentencing proceedings, including a record low penalty for a large agribusiness in 2022. Mitch also has extensive coronial inquest experience.



Troy Spence

Troy Spence has a diverse practice, with a focus on employment & industrial relations, work health & safety, discrimination, Human Rights and workers' compensation.

In 2026 Troy was ranked as Preeminent junior counsel in Doyles Guide Leading Employment Law Barristers – Queensland, 2026 and also Preeminent junior counsel in Doyles Guide Leading Workplace Health & Safety Law Barristers – Queensland, 2026.

In 2026, Troy was also ranked as Recommended junior counsel in Doyles Guide Leading Employment Law Junior Counsel – Australia, 2026.

Prior to being called to the bar in 2018, Troy worked for two almost two decades in both public sector and private sector industrial relations. Troy was also the inaugural Chair of the AustralianSuper Queensland advisory board in 2014, and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Troy regularly appears in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, the Fair Work Commission, the Federal Circuit and Family Court (Div. 2) and the Federal Court of Australia. Troy has also appeared before the Queensland Court of Appeal, the Full Federal Court and the High Court of Australia.



Rohan Tate

Rohan is a Partner at Turner Freeman Lawyers, and an accredited specialist in Workplace Relations with wide-ranging experience across both general employment practice and complex industrial matters. He provides practical advice and representation in disputes involving unfair dismissal, general protections, contractual disagreements, and workplace investigations.

Rohan regularly acts in matters involving discrimination, including sexual harassment and disability discrimination, claims involving the Fair Work Act, as well as Work Health and Safety (WHS) issues and professional conduct investigations, such as those initiated by AHPRA and the Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO).

His expertise also covers governance for registered organisations at both state and federal levels, as well as prosecutions involving bodies such as WHS regulators, ROC, ABCC, FWBII, and the Fair Work Ombudsman. He has also appeared in coronial inquests.

Rohan regularly appears in various courts and tribunals, such as the Queensland Human Rights Commission, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Fair Work Commission, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales, the Magistrates Court, the District Court, the Supreme Court, the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, and, the Federal Court of the Australia.

Rohan also provides governance and organisational advice and support to various incorporated associations, Corporations and not for profits. Having served on a not for profit board for over a decade, including as Chair, Rohan brings a practical insight into his governance advice.

With a strong understanding of organisational compliance and a straightforward and practical approach, Rohan helps clients manage sensitive workplace issues confidently and effectively.