

PROPERTY LAW CONFERENCE

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Program

51 minutes **Anti-Money Laundering – know where your client’s money is coming from**

Australia's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML/CTF) reforms are ongoing to better deter, detect, and disrupt illicit activities and meet international standards. AML compliance is crucial for law firms, as non-compliance can lead to heavy penalties, reputational damage, and criminal liability.

The Federal Government plans to regulate property transactions as designated services, raising questions about when AML obligations apply—during initial advice, property discovery, or before/after contract signing. Real estate agents face challenges in identifying the correct trigger points for due diligence. This session will address these issues and provide guidance on AML compliance throughout the property buying cycle.

Presenters:

Matt Dunn, CEO, Queensland Law Society

Ian Lockhart, Partner, Minter Ellison; Member, Queensland Law Society, Banking and Financial Services Law Committee

Chair: **Rukshana Sashankan**, General Manager – Practitioners, PEXA AU

Chaired by Major Partner, PEXA



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44 minutes **Avoiding undue influence and other ethical considerations for property lawyers**

Ethical issues can arise at any stage of property transactions, from client intake to completion. This session will focus on conflicts of interest and undue influence, especially when dealing with older clients or those using family property as collateral. Revisit the principles and responsibilities of powers of attorney, with emphasis on the need for honesty, avoiding conflicts, and following the document's terms. Through case studies, gain useful tips for maintaining ethical standards and protecting clients' interests.

Presenter: **Shane Budden**, Special Counsel, QLS Ethics and Practice Centre, Queensland Law Society

Chair: **Simon LaBlack**, Legal Practitioner Director, LaBlack Lawyers Pty Ltd



61 minutes **TRACK 1A**
Latest in cybersecurity for your property practice

Cyber criminals have always used email compromise to steal funds during property transactions. Read-out-read-back account verification has significantly reduced this risk but emerging deepfake AI technology is now being used to impersonate clients, leading to multi-million dollar losses world wide. By Christmas this year it is likely that even a real-time phone conversation with a client could be faked using cloning software.

Whether your firm is big or small you need to educate your team and adjust your processes to defend against these emerging threats. Join in on discussions and bring your questions, taking away tips on how to identify any weaknesses in your system.

Presenters:

David Bowles, Special Counsel, QLS Ethics and Practice Centre, Queensland Law

Darren Hopkins, Partner, McGrath Nicol

Chair: **Sharon Sangha**, Professional Development Solicitor, Queensland Law Society



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61 minutes

TRACK 1B

Development approval options and pathways

This session will cover development approval options and pathways in Queensland, focusing on temporary planning instruments and the Ministerial Infrastructure Designation (MID) process.

Presenter: **Stuart Macnaughton**, Partner, McCullough Robertson Lawyers

Chair: **Aaron Webb**, Partner, Thynne + Macartney; Accredited Specialist (Property Law) – Qld



51 minutes

TRACK 2A

Everything tax – the impact of taxes and regulatory costs on housing

Keep abreast of current tax issues relating to Property Law such as tax residency, property land taxes and duties. Then hear commentary on research released by Property Council Australia's 'Stacked Against Us' report and have a chance to participate in a Q&A.

Presenters:

Jess Caire, Queensland Executive Director, Property Council Australia

Catherine Nufer, Special Counsel, Hamilton Locke; Chartered Tax Adviser; Member, Queensland Law Society Revenue Law Committee

Chair: **Sharon Sangha**, Professional Development Solicitor, Queensland Law Society



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58 minutes

TRACK 2B

The conveyancing minefield – avoiding potential disasters

Conveyancing has long been one of a property practitioner's most risky practice areas. With a swathe of change rippling across the property law landscape, it would seem conveyancing is only getting riskier!

We'll explore some strategies to avoid potential disasters in conveyancing matters and take a practical look at how to ensure high-quality conveyancing work in your practice.

Presenter: **Simon LaBlack**, Legal Practitioner Director, LaBlack Lawyers Pty Ltd; Accredited Specialist (Property Law) – Qld

Chair: **Aaron Webb**, Partner, Thynne + Macartney; Accredited Specialist (Property Law) – Qld



60 minutes

TRACK 3A

AI in property legal practice – looking for traps in the Terms of Service

Explore the role of AI in property legal practice with a practical focus on risk management. Through examination of the basic principles and case examples, learn how to extract the benefit of AI systems while protecting your firm and your clients.

Even if you're not quite ready to implement AI yourself, it's crucial to prepare for a time where competitors, clients, and institutions are increasingly integrating these technologies.

Presenter: **David Bowles**, Special Counsel, QLS Ethics and Practice Centre, Queensland Law Society

Chair: **Rhonda McGrath**, Client Relationship Manager, LEAP

Chaired by Major Partner, LEAP



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53 minutes

TRACK 3B

Resolving contractual disputes using dispute resolution clauses

Dispute resolution clauses are designed to manage conflicts that arise when a contractual relationship breaks down. Drafting, interpreting, and challenging the validity of these clauses is a crucial skill for modern property practitioners. This session will guide you through the elements to consider when handling these tasks.

Presenter: **Alan Wrigley**, Partner, McCullough Robertson Lawyers

Chair: **Wendy Devine**, Manager – Legal Policy, Queensland Law Society



52 minutes

TRACK 4A

The client experience (CX) journey and its importance for business growth

Many firms mention the client experience (CX), but few can define it clearly for themselves or their clients. It's widely accepted that better client service boosts loyalty, employee engagement, and firm revenue. However, questions remain about where the client experience begins and ends, and who is responsible for it.

This session explores the legal services client journey from start to end. Topics will include: best practice sales and pursuit activities, the impact of firm culture on client perception, the importance of workflow and operational efficiencies, the need for purposeful communication, and the risk of neglecting ongoing relationship management.

Presenter: **Brittney Colbey**, Senior Business Development Manager, McCullough Robertson Lawyers

Chair: **Sharon Sangha**, Professional Development Solicitor, Queensland Law Society



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58 minutes

TRACK 4B

Current trends in claims risks

Discover the latest insights from the Risk Team at Lexon Insurance as they offer an informative update on the prominent claims triggers affecting legal practitioners in Queensland. Learn how to spot a potential claim and stop it from derailing your practice. Through scenario-based discussions, our experts will focus on claims triggered by:

- Off-the-plan buyer risks
- Conflicts of interest
- Compressed contract timeframes
- Dealing with searches

Presenters:

Robert Mackay, Senior Risk Solicitor,
Lexon Insurance Pte Ltd

Emma-Jane McNicol, Senior Risk Solicitor, Lexon Insurance Pte Ltd

Chair: **Despina Priala**, Director and Legal Practitioner, Priala Legal; Member, Queensland Law Society Property and Development Law Committee



31 minutes

BCCM Act changes

The new Queensland strata laws commenced on 1 May 2024. This quick-fire session gets you up to date on reforms to the Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997 (Qld) such as:

- Termination of schemes without unanimous agreement,
- Changes to by-law practice for towing, pets and smoking
- How these changes have been received

Presenter: **Frank Higginson**, Director, Hynes Legal

Chair: **Wendy Devine**, Manager – Legal Policy, Queensland Law Society



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14 minutes **State of Play**

Get updated on the key economic indicators and property market data impacting Queensland's economic health, including population demographics, Gross State Product (GSP) growth, property taxes, and market trends.

Presenter: **Les Vance**, Group Chief Executive Officer, PEXA AU

Presented by Major Partner, PEXA



30 minutes **A look back at the year: Legislation and case law update**

Join us for a year in review for Property Law in Queensland. This session will examine recent key developments in property case law and legislation such as:

- *Property Law Act 2023* (Qld) comprising leasing, easements, deed limitation periods
- changes to the foreign investment framework
- rental reforms
- a review of the REIQ contract changes

Presenter: **Professor Sharon Christensen**, Head of Law School, Queensland University of Technology; Consultant, Gadens; Member, Queensland Law Society Property and Development Law Committee

Chair: **Wendy Devine**, Manager – Legal Policy, Queensland Law Society



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Presenters



David Bowles

Special Counsel, QLS Ethics and Practice Centre, Queensland Law Society

David was admitted as a solicitor in 1996 and was in private practice from that time until joining Queensland Law Society's QLS Ethics and Practice Centre in November 2012.

David's experience, initially as an employee and then as a sole practitioner includes crime, property, litigation and estate planning. As an ethics solicitor he is responsible for providing ethical guidance to members, and continuing legal education.

He holds postgraduate certificates in Artificial Intelligence from the Said Business School at Oxford University, in Cybersecurity from Harvard University Extension School, in Project Management from the University of Adelaide EdX program and is a director of the Australasian Computer Law Institute.



Shane Budden

Special Counsel, QLS Ethics and Practice Centre, Queensland Law Society

As a Special Counsel Ethics in the QLS Ethics and Practice Centre/QLS Solicitor Support Pty Ltd, Shane provides ethical guidance and instruction to practitioners. He contributes significantly to the QLS journal Proctor, both through his regular column and by authoring feature articles.

Shane was admitted in 1992 and worked in general practice with a focus on Criminal Law, before moving to in-house work, initially with the Ipswich City Council internal legal team.

Prior to joining QLS he headed up the internal legal team at the Queensland Building Construction Commission/Queensland Building Services Authority and was Chair of the Society's Government Lawyers Committee.

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Jess Caire

Queensland Executive Director, Property Council Australia

With a background exclusively in property, Jess brings a wealth of expertise in strategic communications, stakeholder engagement, digital transformation, and property transactions. Committed to advancing the interests of the industry, Jess passionately advocates for its prosperity.

Having recently transitioned into the role of Executive Director, Jess previously held the position of Deputy Executive Director within the organization for the past two and a half years. Prior to her tenure at the Property Council, Jess held the role of Executive Manager, Stakeholder Relations at the Property Exchange Australia (PEXA). Additionally, Jess has extensive experience as a business owner, having successfully managed consulting and conveyancing businesses.



Professor Sharon Christensen

**Head of Law School, Queensland University of Technology;
Consultant, Gadens; Member, Queensland Law Society Property
and Development Law Committee**

Professor Christensen has practised, published and lectured extensively in all aspects of property transactions, including land contracts, commercial leasing, community title and allied subjects in Queensland since 1990.



Brittney Colbey

Senior Business Development Manager, McCullough Robertson

Brittney is a Senior Business Development Manager at McCullough Robertson Lawyers, based in Brisbane. She specialises in developing and advising on business development, marketing, and client experience strategies, and is passionate about delivering these simply, effectively, and in partnership with legal teams.

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Wendy Devine

Manager – Legal Policy, Queensland Law Society

As Manager of the QLS Legal Policy team, Wendy works closely with the Society's policy committees – including the Property and Development Law Committee – to respond to law reform proposals on behalf of the Society and to develop policy positions on matters that affect members and the community.

Wendy has a background in administrative law, statutory interpretation and major infrastructure projects for public sector clients.



Matt Dunn

Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Law Society

Matt is the Chief Executive Officer of Queensland Law Society (QLS). Appointed in March 2024, Matt was previously General Manager – Advocacy, Guidance and Governance for QLS. Originally joining QLS in 2005, he departed to take up a national policy leadership role with the Law Council of Australia in 2014, before returning to raise his family in Brisbane.

Matt's extensive industry experience places him in the unique position of having a strong understanding and insight into the issues affecting the modern profession. An advocate for ensuring practitioners have affordable and accessible resources to build and maintain their practice, Matt is proud to be in such a position of trust to guide and enable the profession.



Frank Higginson

Partner, Hynes Legal

With more than 30 years' experience in property, management rights and body corporate law, Frank is a beacon of knowledge and a renowned strata-industry expert. Known for his straight-shooting style and commercially driven advice, Frank cuts through the most challenging legal problems to deliver real-world solutions.

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Simon LaBlack

Legal Practitioner Director, LaBlack Lawyers Pty Ltd; Accredited Specialist (Property Law) – Qld

Simon practises exclusively in Property Law in Queensland. In 2017, he became one of now 25 Accredited Specialists in Queensland Property Law.

Simon assists organisations and private clients in all property law related matters including property acquisitions and disposals, commercial property matters including leases, developments, transactions and disputes, subdivisions and compulsory acquisition matters.

Simon is a member of the PEXA Member Advisory Council. He acts as a Court-Appointed Statutory Trustee for Sale and as a specialist consultant to the profession and he is a contributing author for LexisNexis in their practical guidance materials.



Ian Lockhart

Partner, Minter Ellison; Member, Queensland Law Society, Banking and Financial Services Law Committee

Ian is a partner in the Financial Services & Funds of Minter Ellison based in Brisbane. Ian's practice centres on licensing, compliance and regulatory change management for financial services clients including privacy, consumer credit, financial services and products, licensing and anti-money laundering and counter terrorism financing. Ian and his team regularly advise on AML/CTF matters for their financial services sector, including advice registration requirements for reporting entities and designated remittance service providers. They also prepare and review AML/CTF Compliance programs and associated procedures. Ian is a long-standing member of the Banking & Financial Services Law Committee of the QLS and regularly contributes to submissions by that committee.

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Robert Mackay

Senior Risk Solicitor, Lexon Insurance Pte Ltd

Robert is a Senior Solicitor in the Risk Team at Lexon Insurance and plays an active role in the development of risk management tools. Robert has developed and run the industry first System Testing program in several practice areas since 2014 which have been conducted in hundreds of legal practices across Australia. These are designed to help practitioners identify and manage any system gaps that can result in claims for professional negligence. Robert was admitted as a solicitor in 2005 and regularly presents at the QUT PLT Course and at QLS Conferences.



Stuart Macnaughton

Partner, McCullough Robertson Lawyers

Stuart is a specialist Planning and Environment lawyer, who has practised exclusively in the areas of town planning, property development, local government, heritage and environmental law for over 35 years.

His expertise includes advising private clients, government, and government entities on the requirements of the suite of legislation affecting those areas including the Planning Act 2016, the Environmental Protection Act 1994, their predecessors, and related laws.

Stuart provides specialist advice on major developments including master planned communities and town planning appeals, planning regulation, infrastructure agreements and advising on enforcement of planning schemes, local laws and regulatory laws.

Stuart has extensive experience in town planning advisory and appeals, working for developers, local government and State Departments on matters relating to master planned communities, retail and commercial developments, environmental issues, and complex infrastructure planning and funding in greenfield developments.

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Rhonda McGrath

Client Relationship Manager, LEAP

Rhonda is a dynamic Client Relationship Manager at LEAP Legal Software, bringing three years of expertise and a personal touch to Queensland clients. She excels at guiding firms to unlock the full potential of LEAP's features, including groundbreaking AI solutions that can save up to 15 hours a week.

Having worked in law firms herself, Rhonda is deeply familiar with the daily challenges and pressures her clients face. This firsthand experience makes her uniquely equipped to demonstrate how LEAP can ease these burdens and streamline their operations. Rhonda's commitment to optimising efficiency and productivity means she doesn't just support her clients—she empowers them to transform their operations and elevate their service.



Emma-Jane McNicol

Senior Risk Solicitor, Lexon Insurance Pte Ltd

Emma-Jane plays an active role in the effective management of risk services offered to the legal profession in Queensland. Emma-Jane visits insured practices throughout Queensland in order to run Lexon's system testing program focused on the areas where there have been high-value claims for practitioners. The strength of the program conducted by Emma-Jane is the focus on processes and file management she works with the insureds to achieve optimal results for the client and the practice. Emma-Jane also provides risk management advice and assistance in relation to other matters for all Lexon insureds.

Emma-Jane was admitted to practice in 1998 and holds a Bachelor of Law and Arts. She has worked in both private practice and in-house for major financial institutions. Her focus in work has always been to minimise risk for her clients within the required legal and regulatory framework.

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Catherine Nufer

Special Counsel, Hamilton Locke; Chartered Tax Adviser; Member, Queensland Law Society Revenue Law Committee

Catherine is a tax and structuring lawyer at Hamilton Locke, specialising in state taxes including transfer duty, landholder duty, payroll tax and land tax in all Australian jurisdictions. She advises clients on transaction structuring, restructuring, tax opinions and often assists them with investigations, reviews and audits. Catherine acts for a wide range of clients across a variety of different industries – from high net wealth individuals, privately owned groups, large multinationals and a range of small to large charities and not-for-profits. In addition, Catherine has significant experience advising clients in the real estate and property sector.



Despina Priala

Director and Legal Practitioner, Priala Legal; Member, Queensland Law Society Property and Development Law Committee

Despina holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from Bond University. She was admitted in 1994 as a solicitor of the Supreme Court and has practised in property and commercial law on the Gold Coast for more than 28 years, predominantly in off the plan projects.

Despina was appointed as In-house Legal Counsel for Sunland Group Limited in 2004, overseeing all aspects of the construction and settlement of the iconic Q1 Tower, in addition to managing other projects on the Gold Coast, including Palazzo Versace, Circle on Cavill, Avalon, and Sunkids Child Care Centres.

In 2007 Despina established her own boutique legal practice, Priala Legal, offering legal expertise and personalised service in all aspects of property development law, off-the-plan contracts, residential and commercial land transactions. She also has substantial experience in the establishment, ongoing management and sales of manufactured home parks in Qld and NSW, and childcare centres.

An author of LexisNexis for all property modules in Queensland, Despina is also a member of the Hellenic Lawyers Association of Australia, the Southport Chamber of Commerce, and the Gold Coast District Law Association.

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Sharon Sangha

Professional Development Solicitor, Queensland Law Society

A Canadian abroad, Sharon came to Australia in the pursuit of further tertiary education after completing an undergraduate degree in psychology. Starting out studying medicine, Sharon found her calling in the legal profession and completed her law degree in regional Townsville. After being admitted as a solicitor in 2018 and period of private practice, her passion for education and learning led her to joining the Professional Development team at the Queensland Law Society in 2020. At QLS, Sharon implements programs to support and empower legal professionals throughout their career in legal practice. Through her education and career journey, Sharon has developed a particular interest in the utilisation of psychology to support wellbeing in the legal profession.



Rukshana Sashankan

General Manager – Practitioners, Property Exchange Australia Ltd (PEXA)

While leading the National PEXA Practitioner team, supporting lawyers and conveyancers with successfully adopting digital property settlements, Rukshana continues to be a strong leader and advocate for Queensland. Her experience as a property lawyer and leadership roles in Legal and Operations, in addition to an impressive seven years at PEXA, has been instrumental in transitioning Queensland to digital settlements. Rukshana has also shown a proven ability to lead teams, drive productivity and operational growth, lead change management and champion people leadership fundamentals.

Rukshana's impact on the industry and the members at large is evident through her ongoing engagement and participation in industry and member-based events, as well as championing for worthy causes such as Diversity and Inclusion committees, and mentoring with Deakin University's CREATE Program and Sisterworks.

Now more than just property settlement, PEXA helps Practitioners unlock value into their business and client experience. Rukshana and the PEXA team work together with Practitioners to enable easy to use solutions that increase security and efficiency, instil confidence, and provide a seamless experience for their clients.

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Les Vance

Group Chief Executive Officer, PEXA AU

Les Vance has worked in several senior roles across risk, transformation, legal, operations, investments and business partnering. Having also worked across both the banking and legal sector. He brings more than 20 years of corporate experience, having held senior roles including Chief Operating Officer of Westpac's Consumer Division, Chief Risk Officer at BT Financial Group (part of the Westpac Group), Group Executive, External Funds and Chief Operating Officer at Investa Property Group, General Counsel at Tab Limited and Partner at Freehills.



Aaron Webb

Partner, Thynne + Macartney; Accredited Specialist (Property Law) – Qld

Aaron specialises in acquisitions and disposals of commercial and retail properties, and commercial and retail leasing. He has expertise in structuring contracts for new projects and re-developments, strata titled developments, and property matters involving freehold and other tenure whether it be leasehold, deed of grant on trust, reserves or trustee leases.

Aaron's clients include property developers, business owners, property investors, landlords and tenants, large not-for-profit organisations, churches, retirement village operators, property owners and individuals. Aaron is an expert in the provision of legal services for not-for-profit organisations in relation to property issues and provides advice to a number of church-based organisations in the health, retirement, aged care and community sectors, property developers and property investors, and small to medium businesses.

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Alan Wrigley

Partner, McCullough Robertson Lawyers

Alan is a partner in the Litigation and Dispute Resolution group at McCullough Robertson Lawyers, based in Brisbane. He specialises in contractual disputes, commercial claims and regulatory matters. Alan has experience acting for a diverse range of clients, including individuals, listed companies, not-for-profit entities and government bodies. Prior to joining McCullough Robertson, Alan served as the judicial associate to a District Court of Queensland judge. During this time, Alan gained experience in a number of jurisdictions, including criminal law, planning law and personal injury law. Alan is also a member of the Australian Lawyers Cricket team.