



NATALIE BLOK

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Castan Chambers

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PROFILE

Natalie has been a lawyer for more than 15 years, and a barrister for nine. With a background in administrative and employment law, her focus is on planning and environment law.

Natalie's practice includes both advice and appearance work. She regularly advises and/or appears for government agencies (including departments, water authorities and local councils) and private parties in a range of proceedings including planning appeals, regulatory & penalty proceedings, inquiries and investigations, inquests and merits & judicial review matters. Her practice involves frequent appearance work in courts and tribunals, including VCAT, the Supreme Court, the Federal Court, the Federal Circuit Court, the AAT, Boards and Panels.

Prior to being called to the Bar, Natalie was a Principal Solicitor with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (2004–13) in the Public Law team and an Associate to the Hon. Justice Gray of the Federal Court, now retired (2003–4).

Before being admitted, Natalie worked in the disability sector in Victoria and the UK. She was recently briefed in the Disability Royal Commission acting for clients giving evidence about their lived experience.

QUALIFICATIONS

Master of Planning and Environment – RMIT, 2020–ongoing

- Strategic planning; Urban Economics; Statutory Planning

Master of Public and International Law – University of Melbourne, 2018

- Planning and Development Law, Water Law, Current Issues in Administrative Law, Royal Commissions and Public Inquiries, Executive Power, Statutory Interpretation, Citizenship Law, Workplace Health and Safety

Governance Essentials – Governance Institute of Australia, 2018

Bachelor of Arts/Law – University of Melbourne, 1998–2003

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SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

Melbourne Equity Scholarship – University of Melbourne (BA/LLB 1998–2003)

Top Student – Jessie Leggatt Scholarship – History & Philosophy of Law, 1998

Top Student - Mallesons Stephen Jacques Ruth Campbell Prize – History & Philosophy of Law, 1998

Top Student – History 1996, Sex Crime and Law 1996, Critical Issues in Criminology, 1997

PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Natalie has an excellent understanding of government systems and administrative processes. She brings strong advocacy, research and problem-solving skills to all her work, combining attention to detail with careful strategy. Her practice is client-centred. She has a passion for law, fairness, people and the environment (both the natural and urban), and she is known for being hard working and systematic with a frank and personable approach.

Natalie's practice involves advice and appearance work, both led and unled, and she has appeared in the Federal Court (including the Full Court), the Victorian Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court, the Coroner's Court, the Federal Circuit Court, the Fair Work Commission, VCAT and the AAT. She has also appeared before Boards and Panels (including the Suitability Panel, the Merit Protection Board, and as Counsel Assisting the Victorian Building Practitioners' Board). She frequently acted for the Department of Health and Human Services in matters involving the State's most vulnerable children.

Natalie regularly works with Senior Counsel and co-counsel. Most recently, Natalie was led by Daniel Star KC and Louise Hicks. She has previously been led by the Honourable Justice Kristen Walker, Dominique Hogan-Doran SC, Christopher Canavan KC, Susan Brennan SC, the Honourable Justice Richard Niall, the Honourable Justices Melinda Richards and Steven Moore, Gilbert SC, Ruth Shann SC, Judge Simon Moglia, Sarah Porritt and Emrys Nekvapil.

In addition to client work, Natalie is an active member of the Women Barrister Association, regularly reports for the Victorian Reports, presents for the Leo Cussen Centre for Law, and mentor's students. She has also tutored in Administrative Law and Statutory Interpretation in the undergraduate law program at La Trobe University.

In 2018, Natalie completed a Master of Public and International Law at the University of Melbourne. In 2020, during COVID-19, she embarked on a Master of Planning and Environment at RMIT as a way to extend, and deepen, her understanding of that field.

APPOINTMENTS AND MEMBERSHIPS

- Victorian Planning & Environmental Law Association
- Planning Institute Australia
- Australian Institute of Administrative Law
- Women Barristers Association – Assistant Convenor (2021-2) Membership Officer and Subcommittee Chair (2018-2021)

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- Commercial Bar Association
- Australian Labour Law Association
- Industrial Bar Association
- Migration Law Bar Association
- Sessional Tutor – La Trobe University (Administrative Law and Statutory Interpretation)
- Spensley Street Primary School – School Councillor & Education Policy Committee Chair

SELECT CASES

Planning & Environment / property

Supreme Court

City of Stonnington v Wallish [2021] VSC 84 (restrictive covenants, led by Matthew Townsend, for the City of Stonnington, direct access)

Zwierlein v Coelho [2021] VSC 451 (restrictive covenants, led by Matthew Townsend, for the applicants, instructed by MPW Lawyers)

Gray v Minister for Energy, Environment & Climate Change [2019] VSC 382 (for the CFA)

Environment East Gippsland Inc v Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and VicForests (Supreme Court, 2016, settled) (for the plaintiff, led by Richard Niall QC (then Kristen Walker QC) and Phoebe Knowles)

VCAT & Panels/Committees

Warburton Mountain Bike EES/IAC hearing (March 2022) for the Victorian National Parks Association

Surf Coast - Distinctive Areas and Landscapes Standing Advisory Committee (March 2021) led by Louise Hicks, for the Surf Coast Shire Council, direct access

Fabcot Pty Ltd v Glen Eira CC [2022] VCAT 1024

Odyssey House Victoria v Benalla Rural City Council [2021] VCAT 1542, for the respondents/objectors, with Louise Hicks, direct access

Berez v Casey City Council [2021] VCAT 1336, application to vary single dwelling restrictive covenant to permit second dwelling, instructed by Hunt and Hunt Lawyers

Lucarano Pty Ltd v Monash CC [2021] VCAT 1050, application to cancel permit, for the respondent/permit applicant, instructed by Tao Jiang Lawyers

Yu v Maroondah CC [2021] VCAT 74 for the developer, direct access

Lamacchia v Darebin City Council [2020] VCAT 1242 for the Resident Group objectors, neighbourhood character, direct access

Sheen v Mornington Peninsula Shire Council [2020] VCAT 436 for the developer, instructed by Rigby Cooke

Clarendon Works Pty Ltd v Port Phillip CC [2018] VCAT 956 led by Christopher Canavan KC, for the developer, instructed by Rigby Cooke

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LCM Calvary Health Care Holdings Ltd v Glen Eira CC (Red Dot) [2018] VCAT 655, for the objector, direct access
DCF 407 King Street Developing Entity v Melbourne CC [2017] VCAT 423, led by Susan Brennan SC, for Haileybury College, instructed by Norton Rose

Monsoon Bay Pty Ltd v Whitehorse CC [2017] VCAT 217, led by Susan Brennan SC, for the developer, instructed by Norton Rose

Elfah Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2017] VCAT 1036 for responsible authority, direct access

Parc Vue Projects Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2017] VCAT 1602 for the responsible authority, direct access)

Neo v Wyndham CC [2017] VCAT 1679, for the developer, direct access

Kabala v Stonnington CC [2017] VCAT 1347, for the objector, direct access

Mornington Peninsula SC v Coleus Investments Pty Ltd [2017] VCAT 1241, for the developer, direct access

Talbot v Yarra CC [2017] VCAT 1515, for the objector, direct access

Nicholls v Queenscliffe BC [2017] VCAT 1573, for the objector, direct access

Administrative & Employment law (merits & review, regulatory, penalty etc)

Disability Royal Commission – acting on behalf of clients giving evidence in Public Hearing 26 (2022)

CEPU v Registered Organisations Commissioner (No 2) [2021] FCAFC 56 (led by Daniel Star QC, instructed by Landers & Rogers)

CEPU v Registered Organisations Commissioner [2020] FCAFC (civil penalty proceeding, for the respondent, led by Daniel Star QC, instructed by Landers & Rogers)

Registered Organisations Commissioner v CEPU [2020] FCA 96 (civil penalty proceeding, for the applicant, led by Dominique Hogan-Doran SC, instructed by Landers & Rogers)

Ahmed v Minister for Immigration, Citizen and Multicultural Affairs [2020] FCA 557 (for the applicant, instructed by Kerdo Legal)

Azaria Family Day Care Pty Ltd v Secretary, Department of Education and Training [2018] FCA 1640 (stay application, for the applicant, instructed by Kalus Kenny Intellect)

CZG v Victims of Crime Assistant Tribunal [2019] VSC 203 (for the applicant, led by Malcolm Harding SC, instructed by Gordon Legal)

DWN16 v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection [2018] FCCA 1911 (for the applicant, instructed by Kerdo Legal)

Secretary to the Department of Health & Human Services v Children's Court of Victoria [2018] VSC 183 (for the State, instructed by the Department of Health and Human Services)

Minister for Immigration and Border Protection v BJC16 [2017] FCAFC 114 (led by Guy Gilbert SC, for the respondent, instructed by Kerdo Legal)

MZZLO v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection (No 2) [2016] FCA 356 (led by Guy Gilbert SC, for the applicant, instructed by Wimal and Associates)

MZABP v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection [2015] FCA 1391 (for the applicant, instructed by Kerdo Legal)

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Zhong v Royal Melbourne Hospital [2013] VSCA 220 (for the defendant, instructed by the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office)

Tribunals and Panels

Azaria Family Day Care Pty Ltd v Secretary, Department of Education and Training (AAT) (for the applicant, instructed by Kalus Kenny Intellect) (reserved)

Premier Choice Family Day Care Pty Ltd v Secretary, Department of Education and Training (AAT) (for the applicant, instructed by Kalus Kenny Intellect) (2019 - withdrawn)

DHHS v [confidential 1] (2019) Suitability Panel (inquiry – *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), for the respondent, instructed by the ASU) (no finding of abuse made)

DHHS v [confidential 2] (2019) Suitability Panel (inquiry – *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), for the respondent, instructed by the ASU) (no finding of abuse made)

DHHS v [confidential 3] (2019) Suitability Panel (inquiry – *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), for the respondent, instructed by the ASU) (no finding of abuse made)

Lolic v Comcare [2019] AATA 3944 (for comcare)

Stathopoulos v Comcare [2018] AATA 651 (for comcare)

Inquest into the death of Neil Williamson (2016, for the chief commissioner of police, instructed by Norton Rose Fulbright)

Inquest into the death of Jessica Wilson (2014, for the family, instructed by Youth Law)

Dick v Voros [2013] FWC 6715

PUBLISHED / SEMINAR PAPERS

'Restrictive Covenant Removal: tales from the planning permit route' (2022) published in *VPELA Revue* March 2022 pp 15-16.

'The New Infrastructure Contribution System in Growth Area Communities: Issues Emerging' – Seminar paper prepared and delivered for *Legalwise*, March 2021

'Applying the Apprehended Bias Test: A Nuanced and Balanced Approach' – Seminar Paper prepared with Nicholas Green QC for *Legalwise*, June 2018

'Facts and Evidence in Administrative Law: Does It Matter?' – Seminar Paper prepared with Nicholas Green QC for *Legalwise*, 2017

'It Is (Not) Ok to Offer "Black Babies" to Indigenous Employees in the Commonwealth Public Service' (2016) 23(3) *Australian Journal of Administrative Law* 119 (case note on *Mata-Meyer v Commonwealth* [2015] FCAFC 139 – race discrimination complaint)