

Christine Melis

Barrister

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Admissions

Admitted to practice law, 26 April 2005

Admission to the Victorian Bar, 20 November 2008

Admission to the New South Wales Bar (NSW), 2015

Qualifications

Bachelor of Laws (Hons.) - Monash University, 2003 (partly completed in Prato, Italy, 2002)

Bachelor of Arts - Monash University (Politics Major), 2003

Practice Areas

Inquiries and Inquests

Royal Commissions

Disciplinary/Regulatory matters

Administrative/Public Law

Human Rights Law

Professional Experience

Barrister-at-Law: 20 November 2008 - Current

Mentor during readership: Peter Morrissey SC

Examples of matters in which I am regularly briefed to advise and appear:

Inquests and Inquiries

I have appeared in a number of prominent and high-profile coronial inquests and inquiries including:

- Counsel Assisting the [Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crime](#) with Justice Sackar, May 2022 to present
- *Inquest into the deaths arising from the [Lindt Café siege](#)*, Australia's first counter-terrorism inquiry, 2015-2017, appearing for the Commissioner of NSW Police and members of the NSW Police Force.
- Conducting the [Review into the functions and operations of the Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate \(EPAC\)](#) within the NSW Department of Education, report dated June 2019 with Mark Tedeschi AM QC.

I regularly appear as *Counsel Assisting the Coroner* in often complex matters including in the areas of health, deaths in custody and deaths during a police operation. Some examples include:

- *Inquest into the death of “E”*, hearing 6-8 April 2021 (**hanging** at Goulburn jail; **model of care** of inmates with severe mental illness).
- *Inquest into the death of [Monika Chetty](#)*, hearing 23-27 November 2020 (**unsolved homicide, acid attack**, police investigation, persons of interest), ongoing.
- *Inquest into the death of [James Hunt](#)*, findings of 4 September 2020 (remains found following disappearance; **mental health** issues; **Missing Persons Standard Operating Procedures, use of telecommunication powers by police**).
- *Inquest into the death of [Thomas Redman](#)*, findings of 24 January 2020 (**major trauma; retrieval medicine**).
- *Inquest into the disappearance and suspected death of [Raymond Speechley](#)*, findings of 6 December 2019 (**absconded dementia patient** from nursing home).
- **Counsel for surgeons**
 - *Inquest into the death of [Lorraine Barnes](#)* (**insertion of feeding tube into lung**), decision of 13 December 2019.
 - *Inquest into the death of [Jodi Pearson](#)*, decision of 1 March 2019 (**gastroscopy aspiration**).
 - *Inquest into the death of [June Nutter](#)*, decision of 4 December 2018 (death following medical procedure).
- **Counsel for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development (Cth)** in the *inquest into the death of [Huy Neng Ngo](#)* (**Takata airbag death**), September, October 2019 and June-July 2020; briefed in related inquest into the death of Goce Velovski.
- **Counsel for Commissioner of Corrective Services**
 - *Inquest into the death of [Ivan Goolagong](#)*, findings 22 October 2021 (Aboriginal death in custody, **palliative care**)
 - *Inquest into the death of [Nathan Reynolds](#)*, findings 11 March 2021, (**Aboriginal death in custody; severe asthma attack**).
 - *Inquest into the death of [Fenika Junior](#)*, findings of 13 July 2018 (**death in supermax; deficiencies in “knock up” communication system used by inmates to contact officers**).
- **Counsel for Commissioner of Police NSW and Victoria**
 - *Inquest into the death of [Daniel King](#)*, findings 22 July 2022 (**suspect provoked shooting**)
 - *Inquest into the death of “S”*, findings 7 May 2021 (**suicide of police officer, assessment of risk**).
 - *Inquest into the death of [Scott Cayryllis](#)*, findings 3 March 2020 (police attendance at **suicide**).
 - *Application pursuant to s77 of the Coroners Act 2008 to re-open the inquest into the death of [Jennifer Tanner](#)* and associated costs application, August 2012-January 2013.
 - *[Kerang Inquest](#)*, 2011-2012 (**railway collision killing 11**, Emergency Response).

Disciplinary tribunals

I am regularly briefed to appear in various matters on behalf of **medical practitioners** before the **Professional Standards Committee** and **Medical Review Tribunal**, including in respect of alteration of records, inappropriate boundaries and off label use of restricted substances. The role involves making submissions on appropriate penalty for unsatisfactory professional conduct and misconduct.

Terrorism

Making applications on behalf of the State of NSW and the Commonwealth for continuing detention orders or extended supervision orders of persons identified under the **Terrorism (High Risk Offenders) Act** and the **Criminal Code** as posing a future risk of committing a serious terrorism offence. Through this body of work I am very familiar with **counter-terrorism** methods, **radicalisation**, **ISIS** and the application of **VERA-2R** for the assessment of risk of violent extremism. Some notable cases include:

- *[State of NSW v Osman \[2021\] NSWSC 124](#)*. Mr Osman was a person of interest in the NSW Joint Counter Terrorism Team’s *[Operation Appleby](#)*, investigating offenders involved in domestic terrorist acts, foreign incursions into Syria and Iraq and the funding of terrorist organisations.

- [State of NSW v Lawrence \[2019\] NSWSC 1101](#). Mr Lawrence has since been charged by the Australian Federal Police with terrorism offences related to an alleged terrorist plot to attack police and the military.
- *Pender v Minister for Home Affairs*. This was the first matter run under new provisions for an extended supervision order under the *Criminal Code*.

Serious crime

Making applications on behalf of the State of NSW for serious crime prevention orders under the *Crimes (Serious Crime Prevention Orders) Act* that restrict, prohibit and restrain defendants in a bid to curtail future crime. Most notably, I appeared in the first ever applications under this Act in [Commissioner of Police v Bowtell \[2018\] NSWSC 520](#) and [Commissioner of Police v Cole \[2018\] NSWSC 517](#) concerning escalating violence and public place shootings between two rival Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (the “Finks” and the “Nomads”). I also recently appeared in the first contested variation of order applications in [Commissioner of Police NSW v Amoun \(No 2\) \[2021\] NSWSC 734](#); [\(No 3\) \[2021\] NSWSC 737](#) in respect of the escalating reprisal attacks between the Hamzy and Allemedeine crime families in Sydney.

High risk offenders

I am regularly briefed to make applications on behalf of the State of NSW for continuing detention orders or extended supervision orders of persons convicted of serious sex offences or serious violence offences under the *Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006*. For a selection of cases click [here](#).

Royal Commissions

- [Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse](#), briefed on behalf of Baptcare, case study 24, March 2015.
- [Royal Commission into the Victorian Bushfires](#), counsel for the State of Victoria, 2009-2010.

Human rights and public interest law

- Briefed to advise and appear in appeals in the **Supreme Court of Nauru** against decisions of the **Refugee Status Review Tribunal** in Nauru, 2017-2018, (admitted in the Supreme Court of Nauru). I acted and appeared for a number of asylum seekers from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The role involved the application of **International Refugee Law** and international principles. I completed three tours to Nauru.
- Briefed to advise and appear on behalf of the people of Wagina in [Solomon Bauxite Ltd v Mereki & Ors](#), **High Court of Solomon Islands** (trespass, land rights) and [Mereki v Director of the Environment and Conservation Division](#) in conjunction with the Environmental Defenders Office NSW, 2017-2018. In a historic win the Solomon Islands Environmental Advisory Committee refused consent for a bauxite mine on Wagina Island.
- Notable human rights matters:
 - Review of *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Victoria)* on behalf of Justice Connect, Homeless Law, June 2015 with Ron Merkel QC.
 - [Burgess v Director of Housing & Anor \[2014\] VSC 648; \[2015\] VSC 70](#), counsel for the successful plaintiff (**declaration under Human Rights Charter that decision of Director of Housing to apply for warrant of possession was of no legal effect and unlawful**).
 - [Castles v Secretary to the Department of Justice \[2010\] VSC 181](#), counsel for Victorian Human Right Commission (concerning **access to IVF of woman in low security prison**).

Professional Experience (cont)

Associate to the Honourable Justice Cavanough: 3 July 2006 – 30 May 2008 Supreme Court of Victoria.

As an Associate I sat, together with the Judge, on all Court proceedings, including Trial Court, Appeal Court and Circuit Court. I attended to all chambers work, including assisting the Judge in drafting judgements. I was the point of contact for the legal profession to the Judge's Chambers.

Lawyer, Minter Ellison Lawyers (Melbourne): 8 March 2004 – 30 June 2006

Areas of practice:

- Administrative law (including disciplinary work for Medical Board and Psychologists Registration Board and associated appeals to the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal).
- Discrimination and employment law.

Achievements and Presentations

- Featured in the popular podcast, *The Psychology of Successful Women* – listen to the podcast here https://lnkd.in/g_6dPu4z
- NSW Bar News contributor, 'Enough of the "horseplay"', Autumn 2021, expose on sexual harassment at the Bar <https://barnews.nswbar.asn.au/autumn-2021/11-enough-of-the-horseplay/>
- Featured in the *Herald Sun* newspaper – Alumni success - <https://www.mentonegirls.vic.edu.au/news-events/story/~board/latest-news/post/alumni-success>
- [Remarkable Woman](#) Award, 2018, Recognition from my high-school, Mentone Girls' Grammar School.
- Inclusion in the *Who's Who of Australian Women* 2009- 2020.
- Participant in the 2015 GE Australia-Papua New Guinea Emerging Leaders Dialogue, Lowy Institute, 1-2 December 2015 and subsequent publication *Challenging Approaches to Gender Inequality* <https://auspng.lowyinstitute.org/article/challenging-approaches-gender-inequality/>
- Teaching faculty, the [Law and Justice Sector Program, Intensive Advocacy Skills Workshop](#), PNG, July 2014, 2015; founder, "[Empowering Women in the Law in PNG](#) – mentoring program for PNG female law trainees in partnership with VicBar and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, July 2015 and development and participation in 2016 and 2017 program.
- Appearance before Senate Committee Inquiry into the [delivery and effectiveness of Australia's bilateral aid program in Papua New Guinea](#) on behalf of the Victorian Bar, 22 September 2015.
- Speaker, [South Pacific Lawyers Conference](#), Brisbane, 17-18 September 2015, "*Women in the Law in the Pacific*".
- [Teaching faculty, Legal Advocacy Course](#), Vanuatu, June 2015.
- Participant, [Australian Bar Association Advanced Trial Advocacy Course](#), Brisbane, January 2014.
- Panellist, Forum on Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, 13 October 2014 and 30 April 2014 (with Commissioner Fitzgerald).
- Nominee, [Women Lawyers Achievement Awards](#), Victoria, 2012.
- Participant in the [ANZPAA NIFS](#) (peak body for forensic science in New Zealand and Australia) expert evidence workshop, 2012.

- Participant, [Viz International Arbitration Moot](#), Vienna, for Monash University, 2002. The moot fosters the study and practice of international commercial sales law and arbitration.

Professional Memberships

- Member, Commonwealth [DPP External Junior Counsel Panel](#)
- Member, Department of Communities and Justice Panel, NSW
- Committee Member, [Inquests and Inquiries Committee](#), NSW Bar
- Member, [Women Barristers Forum](#), NSW Bar
- Mentor, NSW Bar
- Member, [Hellenic Australian Lawyers Association](#)
- Advocacy Coach, [Diverse Women in the Law](#)
- Accredited Advocacy Coach with the [Australian Advocacy Institute](#)
- Sessional Lecturer in [Trial Practice and Advocacy](#), Faculty of Law, Monash University – 2013-2016
- Teacher, NSW Bar Readers' Course (2014-2015 and 2020/21) and Victorian Bar Readers' Course (2011-2014)
- Human Rights Committee, NSW Bar, 2015-2016
- Bar News Committee, NSW Bar, 2015-2016
- Victorian Bar Council, including Executive Committee, 2011-2013
- Victorian Bar Equality and Diversity Committee (including Secretary, 2009-2011)
- Victorian Bar Student Engagement Committee ([Speaker about life at the Bar at a variety of university and high school events](#), 2011-2014)
- Vice President, [Australian Women Lawyers](#) (AWL), 2012, the peak body representing Australian women law practitioners
- [Victorian Women Lawyers](#) (VWL) President, 2007-2008; Deputy President, 2006-2007; AWL representative 2009-2012. VWL represents women practicing law in Victoria.