

Criminal Law Conference

Legal Aid
NEW SOUTH WALES



24–26 June 2024, Hyatt Regency, Sydney

Speakers List



The Honourable Justice Hament Dhanji SC, Judge, Supreme Court of New South Wales

Justice Hament Dhanji was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court of NSW on 20 September 2021.

Justice Dhanji graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts degrees.

He was admitted as a legal practitioner in 1990 and practiced as a solicitor, working exclusively in criminal law being called to the Bar in 1997. He took silk in 2010.

He was a barrister in private practice at Forbes Chambers engaged predominantly in criminal defence work. In addition to first instance work across the range of criminal matters including complex corporate crime matters he had a substantial appellate practice. He appeared as lead counsel in a number of important cases in the High Court and appeared in approximately 350 cases in the Court of Criminal Appeal.

In addition to his defence work Justice Dhanji also conducted a number of prosecutions on behalf of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, appeared as counsel assisting the coroner and represented clients before bodies such as the Police Integrity Commission and the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Since 2022, Justice Dhanji has been a Member of the Judicial Council on Diversity and Inclusion and since 2023, has been the patron for the Pacific Legal Association New South Wales Inc (PLAN).



Robert Hoyles, Executive Director Criminal Law, Legal Aid NSW

Rob is the Executive Director of Criminal Law for Legal Aid NSW. He is an accredited specialist in criminal law and holds an Executive Master of Public Administration from ANZSOG. He has previously held many roles within Legal Aid NSW including Deputy Director, EAGP Project Lead and Solicitor in Charge of a Sydney Indictable Team. He was the inaugural Solicitor in Charge of Legal Aid NSW's Port Macquarie office and previously worked as criminal defence lawyer in Sydney private practice, with the Aboriginal Legal Service and in four regional Legal Aid NSW offices. He commenced his career as researcher of NSW Court of Appeal.

Rob is presently appointed to the NSW Law Society's Criminal Law Committee, Ethics Committee and Specialist Accreditation Advisory Committee for Criminal Law. In 2008, he represented Australia in the Lawyers Cricket World Cup in Hyderabad, India.

Legal Aid NSW acknowledges the Gadigal people, the traditional custodians of the unceded land on which we meet. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future and to our First Nations colleagues. This land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Artwork: Luke Penrith



Madeleine Avenell SC, NSW Deputy Senior Public Defender

Madeleine was called to the Bar in 2004. Between 2004 and 2017, at the private Bar, her main areas of practice were criminal, ASIC regulatory, general commercial and corporate, torts especially professional negligence, and administrative laws.

In 2018 Madeleine was appointed as a Public Defender. In 2020 she was appointed Senior Counsel and, in 2024, a Deputy Senior Public Defender.

Since 2008 Madeleine has been a member of a NSW Bar Association Professional Conduct Committee.



Michelle England, Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions

After practising as a solicitor at a large commercial firm and later at the Crown Solicitor's Office, Michelle was called to the bar in 2006. There, she had a trial and appellate practice in criminal and administrative law.

Michelle was appointed as a Crown Prosecutor and Acting Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutor in 2021, and in those roles appeared as lead counsel in numerous murder trials and criminal appeals. In February 2022, Michelle joined Director's Chambers as an Acting Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions. Since 2023, she has been the Director's representative on DCJ's Coercive Control Legal Reference Group.

Michelle has been an Australian company director of an international anti-slavery organisation and has run prosecutor training a number of times in Uganda, with a focus on gender based violence. Michelle has also been a member of NSW Bar Association Professional Conduct Committees and the Criminal Law Committee. In her spare time, she enjoys carpentry and cycling.



Hayley Dean, Solicitor Advocate, Legal Aid NSW

Hayley Dean has been a criminal lawyer for 18 years and joined Legal Aid in 2008 after working for the NSW DPP and Commonwealth DPP and is currently a criminal solicitor advocate attached to the Parramatta office. Hayley has worked for legal aid in the CCA, local courts, indictable, relief and committals across Sydney and regional offices and is now trying her hand at Coronial and Children's matters. Hayley obtained Specialist Accreditation in 2013. Hayley is a member of the Coercive Control Committee, having published a paper and presented seminars on Coercive Control.





Paul Townsend, Solicitor Advocate, Legal Aid NSW

After earlier careers as a high school teacher (English and History), and restaurant manager, Paul Townsend came to The Law in his late 30s, only ever wanting to practise as a criminal defence lawyer. He was admitted to practise in 1992 and achieved Specialist Accreditation in Advocacy in 1999.

After stints in private practice as an employed solicitor, followed by three years at Legal Aid at Campbelltown and Fairfield, he spent then nearly 5 years in his own practice. He returned to Legal Aid in 2001, and has been an Advocate since February 2004, mostly at Campbelltown. He has conducted as advocate well over fifty trials to verdict, and countless sentences in the District Court, as well as all other kinds of proceedings and applications. He was seconded to the Crown Solicitor's Office in 2010 as an Advocate, appearing as Counsel Assisting in a number of inquests, as well as a number of matters where he prosecuted serving police officers in AVO proceedings, which he enjoyed perhaps more than he should have.

Belinda James, Senior Solicitor, Legal Aid NSW

Belinda began her legal career at the Campbelltown Legal Aid office in 2005 as a duty solicitor in the Local Court Team. After a number of years she moved to indictable work appearing instructing in District Court trials and sentences . In 2009 she moved to the Indictable Appeals Unit and later to the Indictable Unit Head Office Legal Aid. She returned back to Campbelltown in 2011 to work in the Children's Legal Service and later returned to Indictable work in Sydney and later the EAGP Team.

Belinda has also worked in the area of civil law in both the Civil Law for Aboriginal Communities (CLSAC) team travelling to remote NSW communities and also the Childrens Civil Law Service (CCLS) advocating for young people in out of home care , appearing in NCAT proceedings and providing advice about general civil law issues.

Belinda is currently employed In the Children's Legal Service at the Campbelltown Office .



Cody Baxter, Senior Solicitor, Legal Aid NSW

Cody is a proud Boorooberongal Dharug woman and experienced criminal law solicitor with a specialist focus on complex mental health matters.

Cody is currently acting Solicitor in Charge of Port Macquarie Legal Aid office, leading a large multi-practice legal aid office on Birpai Country.

In 2022 Cody received her Masters in Forensic Mental Health. Cody has dedicated a significant part of career to achieving social change for Aboriginal Communities, including her work as Closing the Gap Senior Project officer in the Criminal Law Executive and her work with the Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities. In 2019 she won a Premiers Award for this work.

Cody began her career working in the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command in NSW Police Force where she learned many lessons, one being her overriding passion for defence work.





Professor Jan Breckenridge, Head of the School of Social Sciences and the Co-Convenor of the UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network, University of New South Wales

Jan Breckenridge is a Professor and Head of the School of Social Sciences and the Co-Convenor of the UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW. She is also a Research Fellow of the UNSW Australian Human Rights Institute (AHRI). Jan has undertaken extensive work and research in the areas of gendered violence. Select research areas include domestic, family and sexual violence and workplace responses; economic and financial abuse; homelessness and the potential of safe at home programs for women and children affected by domestic and family violence.

Jan's research is oriented towards maximum impact in innovative social policy development, service provision and outcome measurement of effectiveness. Jan leads an evidence informed knowledge-exchange stream 'Gendered Violence and Organisations', which provides expert advice to government, private and third sector organisations on best practice policies and organisational response to employees and the management of customers affected by domestic and family violence, sexual assault and sexual harassment.



Richard Wilson SC, NSW Deputy Senior Public Defender

Richard started in private practice in Canberra before working for the Western Aboriginal Legal Service in Walgett and later as Deputy Principal Solicitor of the Sydney Regional Aboriginal Corporation Legal Service. In 2004 he was called to the Bar. At 7th Floor Garfield Barwick Chambers he practised in crime – mainly as defence counsel but sometimes prosecuting for the Commonwealth.

In 2012 Richard was appointed a Public Defender and, in 2018, Deputy Senior Public Defender. He took silk in 2019 and his current practice is focussed on Supreme Court trials and appellate cases.

Richard has a keen interest in law reform (including resistance to bad law reform), has served for many years on the Criminal Law Committee of the NSW Bar Association and is presently Co-Chair of both the Bugmy Bar Book Project Committee and the National Criminal Law Committee of the Law Council of Australia.



Isaac Morrison, Solicitor Advocate, Legal Aid NSW

Isaac Morrison is a Solicitor Advocate on Birpai Country at Legal Aid Port Macquarie.

He regularly appears in the Local, Children's and District Court jurisdictions throughout NSW where he is briefed in a variety of criminal matters.

Isaac's success in defending cases involving the misuse of executive power sparked an interest in this area and led to him giving talks and publishing papers on police powers, criminal procedure, drug crime and advocacy. He also works as a casual academic in Criminal Law at Charles Sturt University.

Isaac joined Legal Aid in 2017. Prior to this he worked as a Federal Prosecutor at the CDPP where he spearheaded a number of high profile prosecutions including, famously, the possession of an illegally imported ferret.

Isaac became an Accredited Specialist in Criminal Law in 2023





Georgia Lewer, Barrister, Forbes Chambers

Georgia Lewer is a Barrister at Forbes Chambers in Sydney.

After graduating with first class honours from a combined arts/law degree at the University of NSW, Georgia started her career in 2008 as a tippy to his Honour Justice David Kirby of the NSW Supreme Court.

After this, Georgia worked for 2.5 years as a criminal lawyer at the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (or NAAJA) before moving back to NSW and working for both Legal Aid NSW in the Childrens Legal Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service.

Georgia then worked for two years at the Crown Solicitors office before going to the bar.

Georgia was called to the bar in 2014 and specialises in criminal law, inquests and inquiries, and public law.

As a barrister Georgia appears regularly in the District, Supreme and the NSW Court of Criminal Appeal.

Georgia has authored a number of papers and was a lecturer for a number of years in both court process and evidence at the University of New South Wales.



Emmanuel Kerkyasharian, Barrister, Forbes Chambers

Emmanuel is a barrister at Forbes Chambers, Sydney.

Emmanuel's practice includes appearing in criminal matters in the Federal Court of Australia, state Supreme Courts, and other courts. He regularly appears unled in appeals and lengthy jury trials. He also regularly advises corporations, government agencies and individuals on criminal, civil and other regulatory matters.

Before coming to the Bar, Emmanuel worked as a Senior Policy Officer at the Criminal Law Review Division of the New South Wales Attorney General's Department where he was involved in drafting Cabinet minutes, formulating government policy and shepherding legislation through Parliament, as well as prepared reports on aspects of law reform.

Prior to this, Emmanuel practiced as a Senior Solicitor with the Western Aboriginal Legal Service. As a Solicitor he appeared in the Local, District and Supreme Courts, often in complex matters including homicides.

Emmanuel is currently a member of the Legal Aid Criminal Appellate and Complex Criminal Law Specialist Barrister Panels.



Diane Elston, Senior Solicitor, Legal Aid NSW

Diane is a Senior Solicitor at Legal Aid NSW in Indictable Crime Team 1. Whilst working on indictable criminal cases Diane has developed an interest in how prosecutorial disclosure in criminal cases occurs.

Diane has a Masters of Criminology from the University of Sydney, is an Accredited Specialist in Criminal Law and a Teaching Fellow at the University of New South Wales in the School of Law and Justice.





Katrina Curry, Barrister, 7 Garfield Barwick Chambers

Katrina is a barrister from 7 Garfield Barwick Chambers who practices predominantly in criminal law and regularly appears in criminal trials and matters in the Supreme Court.

Prior to coming to the Bar in 2018, Katrina was a Senior Federal Prosecutor at the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions where she gained significant experience prosecuting a wide range of Commonwealth offences including in the areas of white collar crime, child exploitation and drug importations. She has been involved in many of the multifaceted and high profile prosecutions arising out of the Australian Government's Project Wickenby investigations.

From 2016 to 2018 Katrina was the Registrar of the NSW Court of Criminal Appeal and the Supreme Court Crime Division.

Katrina has a Master of Laws from the University of Sydney specialising in criminal and administrative law. Katrina has experience presenting training and seminars on various areas of law relating to the investigation and prosecution of Commonwealth offences for both lawyers and investigative agencies.



Tamara Grennan, Senior Solicitor, Legal Aid NSW

Tamara Grennan is a proud Wiradjuri woman who grew up on Dharug country in NSW. Tamara began her legal career at the Crown Solicitors Office in 2018 working in Child Protection. In 2019, Tamara joined Legal Aid NSW as a Graduate Solicitor. Tamara has worked in a variety of teams during her time at Legal Aid, including Inner City Local Courts, Family and Care & Protection, Supreme Court Bails and Drug Court. Tamara joined the Drug Court team in 2022 at Parramatta and is currently the acting grade V solicitor, alongside Tamika Carberry in the newly established Sydney Drug Court Team.



Tamika Carberry, Senior Solicitor, Legal Aid NSW

Tamika Carberry is a proud Gumbaynggirr woman who grew up in Coffs Harbour on the Mid-North Coast. She commenced her legal career as a paralegal at the Parramatta ALS office before joining Legal Aid in 2014 as a Grade I-III lawyer in the Inner City Local Courts (ICLC) team.

Tamika had the privilege of working on Country at the Coffs Harbour office in 2016 before returning to Sydney. Tamika commenced at the Parramatta Drug Court team in 2019 before taking a secondment to the Department of Communities and Justice as a Senior Policy Officer in the Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes team.

Tamika returned to the Drug Court in 2024 and is currently co-managing the Sydney Drug Court Team. Tamika is driven and passionate about representing our clients across all jurisdictions but particularly in the therapeutic jurisdiction.





Jennifer Lee, Senior Solicitor, Housing team, Legal Aid NSW

Jennifer Lee has over 10 years' experience in the Civil Law Division. Starting out as a paralegal in the Combined Civil Law Specialists Teams then as a solicitor in various teams (consumer law, government law as a social security solicitor) and offices (Penrith, Fairfield, Central Sydney). Jen is currently a senior solicitor in the Housing team. The team's focus is on providing legal services to prevent homelessness and prioritises people that are more vulnerable to homelessness. The team specialises in appealing decisions made by NCAT's Consumer and Commercial Division, ending social housing tenancies, to the NCAT Appeal Panel. Jen is currently working alongside others on a project with the Strategic Law Reform Unit that's aimed at improving consistency, transparency and accountability in the NSW social housing system



Kimberley Mackenzie, Senior Solicitor, Housing team, Legal Aid NSW

Kimberley Mackenzie started her legal career in the community legal sector before joining the Housing Team at Legal Aid around four and a half years ago. With over a decade of experience in Housing Law, she is the team's Domestic Violence specialist. Currently, she is working on a project with the Strategic Law Reform Unit, the Domestic Violence Unit, and the Government Law Team on a project aimed at exploring reforms and advocacy to address the housing and income challenges faced by women on temporary visa who are experiencing domestic and family violence.



Craig Cooper, Service Director, Drug & Alcohol, Justice Health NSW

Craig Cooper is the Service Director, Drug and Alcohol with the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network. Craig holds qualifications in clinical drug dependence studies from Macquarie University and a master's in public administration from the University of Sydney. He possesses more than 22 years health service provision in government and non-government organisations. He is an expert health service leader, with a passion in and commitment to public health aimed at improving health outcomes for vulnerable peoples and populations. Craig is a health systems patient and carer advocate and has resulted in achieving strategic outcomes across health agencies.



Dr Katerina Lagios, Clinical Director Population Health & Drug & Alcohol, Justice Health NSW

Dr Katerina Lagios is a Sexual Health Physician and has clinical experience in Sexual Health Medicine, Justice Health, Drug and Alcohol and Hepatitis Treatment.

Current work is as Clinical Director Population Health & Co-Clinical Director Drug and Alcohol Justice Health NSW.





Nicholas Broadbent, NSW Public Defender

Nick was called to the Bar in 2009, and was appointed a Public Defender in 2020, based in Dubbo. He holds a Masters of Law from Harvard Law School. He is currently the Honorary Secretary of the Council of the New South Wales Bar Association.



Steven Wright, Associate Director – Crime (West/South), Legal Aid NSW

Steven commenced at Legal Aid NSW in the graduate program in Sydney and has worked in the Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Dubbo, and Broken Hill offices. He has a keen interest in Regional and Remote Practice, specifically, children and those with mental health concerns where services are limited.

Steven has been the Vice President and President of the Far West Law Society for a number of years. In 2023 Steven was a finalist for the NSW Law Society Regional Practitioner of the Year and was recently appointed as the Associate Director of Crime in the West and South.



Her Honour Judge Kara Shead SC, Judge, District Court of New South Wales

Between 1991 and 1995, Judge Kara Shead SC attended Macquarie University where she completed a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) with a Bachelor of Arts. From 1996, her Honour worked as a solicitor at the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, practicing in criminal law. In 2005, her Honour was called to the Bar and was appointed as a Crown Prosecutor, a position she held until 2014, when she was appointed as a Deputy Senior Public Defender. In 2016, her Honour was appointed as a Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions and as Senior Counsel that same year. As counsel, her Honour appeared in jury trials in the District Court and the Supreme Court, and in appeals in the Court of Criminal Appeal and the High Court. During her time as a barrister, her Honour was on Bar Council, a Professional Conduct Committee and the Criminal Law Committee. In 2019, her Honour was appointed as a Judge of the District Court of NSW. In 2020 and 2021, her Honour was a judge presiding over the prerecording of children's evidence for criminal trials. Her Honour is a Senior Instructor with the Australian Advocacy Institute and a member of a number of Committees for the National Judicial College of Australia.





Cara Feiner, NSW Public Defender

Cara was appointed as an Acting Public Defender in 2024. She was called to the Bar in 2011. Prior to that she worked as a solicitor at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and in private practice. She was an Associate to Judge Zahra SC in the District Court of New South Wales.



Sarah Talbert, NSW Public Defender

Sarah Talbert is a Public Defender in Sydney and has been a Barrister since 2011. Before her appointment as a PD, she was a member of 7th Floor Garfield Barwick Chambers and a Crown Prosecutor. Sarah is a member of the NSW Bar Criminal Law Committee and as well as its Professional Conduct Committee which considers conduct complaints made against its members. In 2022 she was appointed to the Australian Press Council Adjudication Panel which considers complaints made against media outlets.



Dr Julia Quilter, Professor, School of Law, University of Wollongong

Professor Quilter enjoys a national and international reputation for research excellence in criminal law and justice. Prof Quilter's research on sexual assault began more than 20 years ago when she completed a PhD thesis on the topic (2000). She has published widely on sexual assault law reform and alcohol-related violence and leads the Australian Research Council funded project '*Intoxication Evidence in Rape Trials: A Double-Edged Sword?*' (DP200100101).

Prof Quilter has recently completed commissioned reports (with Prof Luke McNamara) for the Victorian Law Reform Commission, *Qualitative Study of Rape Trials in the County Court of Victoria, 2014-2019* (August 2021) and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, [Experience of Complainants of Adult Sexual Offences in the District Court of NSW: A Trial Transcript Analysis](#) (Aug 2023).

Since 2010 she has taught criminal law at the School of Law, UOW. Before commencing her full-time academic career, Prof Quilter spent a decade practising criminal and public law as a solicitor at the NSW Crown Solicitor's Office and as a barrister at the NSW Solicitor General and Crown Advocate's Chambers. Prof Quilter is a graduate of the University of Sydney (Arts, Honours Class 1 English with the University Medal, 1993), the University of New South Wales (Bachelor of Laws with the University Medal, 2000) and Monash University (Doctor of Philosophy, 2000).



His Honour Magistrate Daniel Covington, Local Court of NSW

In 1997, his Honour completed a Bachelor of Science. In 1998, he completed a Graduate Diploma in Science and then in 2003 he completed a Bachelor of Laws at University of Wollongong. He was then admitted as a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in 2003 and between 2004 and 2017 he worked a Legal Aid NSW in the Inner City Local Courts and Indictable sections.

His Honour was appointed as a Magistrate of the Local Court of New South Wales in January 2018.



His Honour Judge Christopher O'Brien AM, District Court of NSW

His Honour completed a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney in 1981 and a Bachelor of Laws at that University in 1983. He was admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in August 1983 and became an accredited Specialist in Criminal Law in August 1994. He was appointed a Cost Assessor in 1999 and a Cost Assessor Review Panellist in 2002.

Between 1983 and 2007 he was a solicitor in private practice in the Sutherland Shire. Between 1983 and 1988 he was employed as a solicitor with Robbert J Fox and Associates at Jannali. Between 1988 and 1989 he was a sole practitioner and between 1990 and 2007 a partner in the firm Fox O'Brien at Sutherland.

In February 2007 he was appointment a Magistrate of the Local Court of New South Wales and in November 2014 as a Deputy Chief Magistrate. In July 2017 he was appointment an Acting Judge of the District Court of New South Wales (sitting in Civil) and in April 2018 was appointed a Judge of that Court. He was made a member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours list for "Significant service to the law and the judiciary"



Will Tuckey, Barrister, Samuel Griffith Chambers

Will was admitted as a solicitor in 2005 and went to the bar in 2015. He now practices out of Samuel Griffith Chambers predominantly in criminal law. Will also practices in mental health advocacy and intentional 'police' tort.

After spending a year photocopying briefs as a clerk at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (NSW) will took up his first job as a solicitor at the Bourke Office of what was then the Western Aboriginal Legal Service. On return from the bush, he commenced 8 years working at Legal Aid NSW. Will worked at Inner City Local Courts, Committals, and the Burwood Office. Whilst at Legal Aid, Will became an Accredited Specialist in Criminal Law.

Will has a Master of Laws from Sydney University and a Bachelor of Arts and Laws with First Class Honours from Macquarie University.





Vanya Hampel, Principal Solicitor, SCT Lawyers

Vanya has practiced in the Criminal jurisdiction for over 20 years. She began her career in 2004 at the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and started her own practice; Sydney Criminal and Traffic Lawyers Pty Ltd in 2012. She has represented thousands of accused persons in all types of criminal matters, including Public Inquiries and Royal Commissions.

In her defence work, her experience extends from summary matters through to complex appeals, culminating in a High Court win in 2016. Throughout the years Vanya has dedicated a large portion of her time advocating for the rights of victims of sexual assault through the Legal Aid Commission SACP service. Her tenacious approach in court, coupled with her advocacy for victims' rights, has led to several successful appeals in the Court of Criminal Appeal, demonstrating her unwavering dedication to upholding the principles of fairness and justice within the legal system.



Robyn Gilbert, Senior Solicitor, Sexual Assault Communications Privilege Service, Legal Aid NSW

Robyn began her legal career at the Domestic Violence Advocacy Service, assisting women applying for AVOs at Blacktown Local Court. She then spent 15 years doing policy and law reform work at agencies including the Family and Domestic Violence Clearinghouse, the Indigenous Justice Clearinghouse, the NSW Law Reform Commission, the Australian Law Reform Commission, and Legal Aid NSW's Strategic Law Reform Unit. She joined the SACP Service in 2018 and has led the Service since 2020.

Steven Doumit, Grants Senior Criminal Solicitor, Legal Aid NSW

Steven has been in practice since 1989 in community legal centres, private practice and Legal Aid NSW. He is an accredited specialist in criminal law and a previous author of Lawyers Practice Manual chapters "Street Offences" and "District Court Appeals". He came to Grants as Senior Criminal Law Solicitor for 6 months in 2005.



Jocelyn Flanagan, Director, Grants Division, Legal Aid NSW

Jocelyn commenced as Director, Grants in April 2018.





Danielle Roth, Solicitor in Charge, Private Lawyer Quality Standards Unit, Legal Aid NSW

Danielle Roth was admitted as a solicitor in 2007, and has worked primarily in the field of criminal law. Danielle commenced her career at William O'Brien and Ross Hudson Solicitors before moving to practice in the Criminal Law Division of Legal Aid NSW in 2012. Danielle has a strong commitment to advocacy and social justice. She has taught Criminal Law at UNSW and the College of Law, and has also spent time working at Victoria Legal Aid and was seconded as Counsel Assisting to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission in 2023. Danielle is currently the Solicitor in Charge of the Private Lawyer Quality Standards Unit (PLQS), which oversees private practitioners undertaking Legal Aid work.



Melissa Burgess, Deputy Director Criminal Law, Legal Aid NSW

Melissa Burgess is the Deputy Director of the Criminal Law Division of Legal Aid NSW. Melissa began her career as a criminal solicitor in 2006 at the Aboriginal Legal Service in Dubbo before moving to Legal Aid NSW in 2008. During her time at Legal Aid Melissa has held many roles including as an indictable and local court solicitor, Manager of Professional Development and as the Solicitor in Charge of the Private Lawyer Quality Standards Unit.



Eugene Renard, Barrister, Samuel Griffith Chambers

Eugene is a Barrister at Samuel Griffith Chambers. He specialises in criminal defence with a particular focus on jury and judge alone trials. He regularly appears unled for people charged with serious offences in the Local, District and Children's Court and accepts briefs to appear in all Australian courts and tribunals including regional and remote locations across New South Wales and interstate.

Eugene has conducted jury and judge alone trials unled in the District Court and has appeared unled in the Supreme Court and as junior counsel in the NSW Court of Criminal Appeal.

Prior to being called to the Bar, Eugene was a Solicitor Advocate at Legal Aid NSW and an accredited specialist in criminal law.



Lauren Davies, Senior Solicitor, Aboriginal Services, Legal Aid NSW

Lauren Davies, Senior Solicitor, is a Gomeroi and Ngarabal woman. She grew up on Yuin country and completed a Bachelor of Laws/Arts (criminology) at Macquarie University. After her studies Lauren worked as a human rights solicitor with the National Justice Project (NJP) and then as a criminal solicitor with the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS). As part of Legal Aid's graduate program Lauren worked as a civil law solicitor in Newcastle before taking a position at the Parliament of New South Wales as an Aboriginal Liaison Officer. In 2023, Lauren re-joined Legal Aid NSW within the Aboriginal Services Branch. Lauren is passionate about embedding Aboriginal perspectives into legal advocacy, strategic policy and projects, and facilitating genuine community engagement. Lauren is currently undertaking a Master of Laws specialising in Human Rights Law and Policy at the University of New South Wales (UNSW).





Emma Hudson-Buhagiar, Senior Solicitor, Walama team, Aboriginal Legal Service (ACT/NSW)

Emma Hudson-Buhagiar is a proud Wiradjuri woman. She grew up on Bundjalung country before moving to study Law/Indigenous Studies at UNSW on Gadigal Land. After completing her studies, she worked as a paralegal at the Public Defenders. In 2017, she was accepted into the graduate program at Legal Aid NSW and worked in both criminal and civil law. She then moved to the Aboriginal Legal Service where her passion for culturally appropriate advocacy and access to justice were put into practice. Emma's current role is the Aboriginal Legal Service Senior Solicitor on the Walama List.



William Calokerinos, Barrister, Two Wentworth Chambers

Mr Calokerinos accepts instructions from Solicitors both in practice and in-house Counsel. A practising barrister since the year 2010, Mr Calokerinos has practised from the same Chambers since being admitted. Mr Calokerinos is a floor member and owns Chambers in Two Wentworth Chambers.

Mr Calokerinos prides himself on his attention to detail in all his professional work. In his early career, Mr Calokerinos spent around six years working in management and director reporting roles as a senior management accountant in the telecommunication industry (Vodafone and Macquarie Telecom) prior to his experience working in the Big Four in tax consulting.

As a Barrister, Mr Calokerinos currently practices in both criminal and civil jurisdictions. Over 50% of Mr Calokerinos's present practice is criminal law. Mr Calokerinos has significant expertise in serious crime matters and indictable crime matters, children criminal matters, and he is presently on four panels with Legal Aid NSW – Summary crime panel, Children crime panel, Complex crime panel and the Indictable crime panel.

Mr Calokerinos is also on the Cth DPP criminal panel for external counsel.



Rajiv Baldeo, Barrister, Seventh Floor Garfield Barwick Chambers

Rajiv is an experienced advocate, having practiced for over 10 years in criminal law and other related areas. Before coming to the Bar, Rajiv was a senior lawyer at a leading criminal defence firm. His practice focused on serious general and white-collar crime.

Since coming to the Bar in 2020, Rajiv has appeared as defence counsel in a wide range of trials before the District Court and Supreme Court of NSW and the Supreme Court of the ACT. He has also appeared as junior counsel in appeals before the NSW Court of Criminal Appeal.

Rajiv is a member of Seventh Floor Garfield Barwick Chambers. He is also appointed to Legal Aid's Indictable Crime and Appellate Crime barrister panels. Since 2022, Rajiv has been a member of the Bar Association's Legal Aid Committee.





Sonya Chidiac, Senior Solicitor, Legal Costs Recovery, In House Counsel, Legal Aid NSW

Sonya Chidiac is the Senior Solicitor, Legal Costs Recovery at Legal Aid NSW. Sonya has been in this role for the last 9 years. Since joining Legal Aid NSW in 2009 Sonya has held various roles within the Commission.



Bridget Kennedy, Barrister, Samuel Griffiths Chambers

Bridget started out her career with absolutely no intention of ever practising as a lawyer, but somewhere along the way something went horribly wrong. After working at the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet as a Policy Officer (during Australia's first period of Prime Ministerial musical chairs), Bridget returned to Sydney and took up a position in the criminal law branch of Armstrong Legal. From here, she moved to Alice Springs where she worked for the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS, may she rest in peace), before returning to Sydney and made herself at home at Legal Aid NSW. Over the following seven years Bridget worked in Indictable; Children's Legal Service; Coronial Inquest Unit; High Risk Offenders Unit; and finally as a Trial Advocate at Campbelltown Office.

She was called to the bar in 2023 where she maintains a practice including not only criminal but also associated matters such as post-sentence proceedings; intentional torts; and coronial inquests. Bridget has a particular interest in matters involving public policy concerns and systemic issues.

