

CHAIR



Greg Cain, Dentons, Wellington

Greg is a partner in the Employment team at Dentons. He joined the firm in 2011, having previously worked in-house and in private practice in both New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Greg has over 25 years' experience in employment law and health and safety, advising central and local Government, private enterprise and not for profit organisations on all aspects of employment law, and regularly appears in the Employment Relations Authority and the Courts. He also carries out workplace investigations, advises on health and safety issues, and represents clients facing health and safety prosecutions.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Catherine Beard, BusinessNZ, Wellington

Catherine is Director of Advocacy at BusinessNZ, New Zealand's largest business advocacy network representing thousands of businesses of all sizes. BusinessNZ includes major companies, sector groups such as the BusinessNZ Energy Council, ExportNZ and Buy NZ Made, and over 70 affiliated industry associations, along with four regional business organisations. Known as the voice of business, BusinessNZ works on behalf of members large and small. Catherine works closely with government and key decision-makers and has 30 years' experience as a lobbyist and advocate across sectors including energy, insurance, manufacturing, exporting and climate change.



Sandra Grey, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi, Wellington

Sandra has been active in unions for over 30 years, including two decades in leadership roles with Te Hautū Kahurangi New Zealand Tertiary Education Union. She began her career as a radio journalist with Independent Radio News before studying at the University of Auckland and completing a PhD at the Australian National University. Returning to Aotearoa, Sandra lectured in social policy and sociology at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. During this time, she chaired the AUS Women's Committee and later served as TEU vice president and president. In 2021, Sandra became the TEU's National Secretary. She has also led ANU's Postgraduate and Research Student Association, served as spokesperson for the Campaign for MMP, and held roles across tertiary education and Living Wage Aotearoa.



Tova O'Brien, Journalist and broadcaster, Auckland

Tova is a multi-award-winning political journalist and broadcaster, currently co-hosting TVNZ's *Breakfast*. She previously served as political editor for both Stuff and Newshub, where she led the press gallery through the tumultuous 2020 election and major political shifts. Across her 14 years with Newshub, Tova spent three years as Europe Correspondent, reporting from 27 countries on global events including Brexit, the Grenfell Tower fire, and the refugee crisis. She co-hosted *Newshub Nation*, and in 2021 fronted Today FM's breakfast show, producing *Tova meets Zelensky* after securing an exclusive interview in Ukraine. Her journalism has earned multiple honours, including 2019, 2022 and 2023 Voyager Media Awards, the 2021 NZ TV Award for Best Presenter News and Current Affairs, and recognition for team coverage of the war in Ukraine at the 2023 Radio Awards.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Ali Romanos, Barrister, Wellington/Pahiatua

Ali specialises in media law – principally defamation, but he has also litigated media-law claims relating to suppression, non-publication orders, injunctions, and privacy. He has conducted trials in the District Court and High Court, including three civil jury trials as junior counsel; and at appellate level, has appeared 10 times in the Court of Appeal (sole and junior counsel), and once in the Supreme Court (junior counsel but presented oral argument on the main appeal). Aside from his litigation practice, Ali regularly provides pre-publication advice to journalists, authors, film-production companies and publishing houses. Since 2014, he has published *Defamation Update*, his free educational web resource on New Zealand defamation law.

SPEAKERS



Gareth Abdinor, Abdinor Employment Law, Christchurch

Gareth is the director of Abdinor Employment Law, providing organisations and workers advice on all aspects of the employment/contracting relationship, from recruitment, remuneration and performance to re-structuring, discipline and dismissal. He also provides specialist advice in relation to privacy & information law issues, including compliance, breaches, access, cyberbullying and social media. Gareth has delivered privacy training for the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, co-founded the South Island Privacy Network and has presented at numerous conferences in New Zealand and Australia on privacy and cyberlaw issues. He was a long-standing member of the Law Society Canterbury/Westland Employment Law Committee, a member of the Law Society Branch Council and was one of the founding members of the Legal Culture Committee. Gareth is a trained mediator and an experienced workplace investigator.



John Allen, Chief Ombudsman, Wellington

John Allen is the Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand. He was appointed by the Governor-General for a five-year term which began on 31 March 2025. Prior to his appointment, John was Chief Executive of the Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency (WellingtonNZ) and Chancellor at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. He has held a number of senior business leadership positions including as Chief Executive of New Zealand Post, Chief Executive and Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Chief Executive of the New Zealand Racing Board. John has also been a visiting lecturer in law at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington.



Jordan Boyle, Dyhrberg Drayton Employment Law, Wellington

Jordan is a partner at Dyhrberg Drayton Employment Law. He strategically advises employers and employees on a range of employment law matters including personal grievances, privacy issues, performance management, disciplinary and restructuring processes, and reviewing and drafting employment agreements and policies. Jordan is usually able to pragmatically resolve contentious matters through negotiation and mediation. Where matters cannot be resolved, Jordan has consistently achieved successful outcomes through litigation. He regularly appears at all levels of courts and authorities, from the Employment Relations Authority to the Supreme Court.

SPEAKERS



Peter Cranney, Oakley Moran, Wellington

Peter acts mainly for unions and employees. He has argued numerous cases over some decades in the Employment Relations Authority and at various levels of the court system. These include cases about union rights, pay equity, Uber cases and many others.



Geoff Davenport, Capital Chambers, Wellington

Geoff has been a specialist employment lawyer for over 33 years. He has worked in New Zealand and overseas, including for the United Nations and an international law firm in London. A partner at McBride Davenport James for more than 18 years, Geoff joined the independent bar in 2019. Geoff has a master's degree in law from UBC in Canada, focusing on issues of good faith. He acts for public and private sector employers, unions and employees throughout the country, on all aspects of employment law.



Maria Dew KC, Britomart Chambers, Auckland

Maria has a specialist practice in employment law, professional misconduct, and human rights. Her practice spans advocacy in the Courts, independent investigations and mediator appointments. Over the last decade, Maria has conducted numerous complex investigations and reviews. These appointments have included those for the Crown Law, Mediaworks, Health NZ, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the New Zealand Labour Party and the National Party, various universities, councils and national sporting bodies. Maria has also previously served as the President of the New Zealand Bar Association and a Chair of the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal.



Mark Donovan, Barrister, Auckland

Mark is an Auckland barrister specialising in employment law. He holds BA and LLB(Hons) degrees from the University of Auckland and is an Association of Workplace Investigators Certificate Holder (AWI-CH). Mark began his career at Buddle Findlay before establishing his practice at the independent bar in 2009. He represents employers and employees in mediation, the Employment Relations Authority and the Employment Court, and conducts independent workplace investigations.



Simon Greening, Employment Relations Authority, Auckland

Simon was a partner at Gaze Burt leading the employment team until he founded Watermark Employment Law, a boutique employment law practice, in 2020. He was appointed a member of the Employment Relations Authority on 6 October 2025 and is based in Auckland.

SPEAKERS



Holly Hedley, Dawn Legal, Wellington

Holly is an experienced lawyer who has recently moved to sole practice after more than a decade at one of New Zealand's largest firms. Her practice, Dawn Legal, is named after her grandmother and mother in turn – both women who embody an enviable mix of practical kindness and authority. Holly's particular expertise sits at the intersection of health, employment, privacy and human rights. She works in the investigation space in both employment and health contexts and also has significant experience in the Coronial jurisdiction. Holly is currently the recipient of a Borrin Foundation Women Leaders in Law Fellowship, through which she is working on a project exploring trauma informed legal practice for Aotearoa. Holly has a master's degree in global health law (Georgetown USA) and is a previous Law Society Ethel Benjamin and Pegasus Scholar.



Dr Ria Te Uira Holmes, Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington

Ria is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Law. Her iwi affiliations are Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, and she also has Pākehā ancestry from the Netherlands, Ireland and England. Ria's research areas are Te Tiriti o Waitangi, tikanga, labour and indigenous methodology. Her doctoral thesis examined the integration of Te Tiriti and tikanga within labour, particularly Māori-specific collective agreement clauses in the public sector. Ria is currently supporting the development of the tikanga curriculum at the Faculty of Law.



Susan Hornsby-Geluk, Dundas Street, Wellington

Susan is the Managing Partner of Dundas Street. With over 25 years of experience as a specialist employment lawyer, Susan has established a formidable reputation as a respected advocate and adviser, and litigator. Susan is seen as the “go to” lawyer for complex and strategic high-profile matters and their work is largely at Chief Executive/Board level. Susan has appeared in a number of leading cases, particularly in the collective bargaining and industrial relations area. Susan is ranked as one of the top employment lawyers in New Zealand by international ratings agencies Asia 500 and Chambers and Partners. Susan is also the editor of the leading employment law publication, the *Employment Law Bulletin*.



Dr Craig Immelman, Psychiatrist, Auckland

Dr Craig Immelman is a registered medical practitioner with the New Zealand Medical Council and a specialist psychiatrist. He earned his MB.BCh from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1989 and became a Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists in 2001, later obtaining a Certificate in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. Dr Immelman is also a Fellow of the Faculties of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Forensic Psychiatry, and Psychiatry of Old Age (RANZCP). He is a Corresponding Member of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and a Member of the Australian & New Zealand Association of Psychiatry, Psychology and Law. He is designated as a Specialist Assessor under the Intellectual Disability (Compulsory Care and Rehabilitation) Act 2003. Dr Immelman is an Honorary Senior Clinical Lecturer at the University of Auckland and maintains a private practice in Auckland.

SPEAKERS



Adela Kardos, Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha University of Canterbury, Christchurch

Adela Kardos, General Counsel and Registrar – Pouroki serves as the University Council Secretary and is the chief legal advisor to the University of Canterbury. Her portfolio covers governance, legal, policy, information management as well as overseeing the administration of the Vice Chancellor’s Office. Adela joined the University of Canterbury in 2020 following a career in both private legal practice and almost 10 years as an in-house lawyer in the public sector. She has advised on hundreds of Official Information Act and Privacy Act requests on an annual basis.



Shelley Kopu, Barrister, Auckland

Shelley (Te Atiawa) is an experienced employment barrister with a specialist focus on a Te Ao Māori perspective across the employment framework, in particular the preservation of whanaunga relationships and the acknowledgment and application of tikanga principles. She works with both employers and employees, across litigation, mediation and compliance with a particular specialisation on workplace reviews, inquiries and investigations. While studying for her degree in law, Shelley developed a successful career in human resources in international law and accounting firms. Complementing her legal experience, she is a mediator, investigator and governor. Shelley has gone on to work in both private practice and in-house, while growing a governance portfolio spanning iwi (Te Kotahitanga o Te Atiawa), commercial (Papa Rererangi I Puketapu, New Plymouth Airport), sport (Auckland Rugby League) and healthcare and social services (Tui Ora).



Tom Maasland, MinterEllisonRuddWatts, Auckland

Tom heads up MinterEllisonRuddWatts’ market leading technology, media and telecommunications practice at MinterEllisonRuddWatts. He is passionate about technology – its everyday use and ability to transform organisations – an interest shaped by more than 26 years working in the industry, including in-house at Spark and at Telefónica O2 UK. Tom advises on the full range of technology law issues, from major technology transformation programmes, strategic sourcing and outsourcing deals, through to advising on all things relating to emerging technologies such as AI. He is a board member of Tech New Zealand (New Zealand’s leading technology industry association) and chairs the AI Blueprint Working Group Steering Committee, which is focused on developing New Zealand’s strategic roadmap for AI.



Paul McBride, McBride Davenport James, Wellington

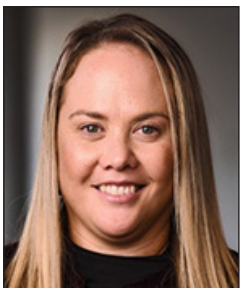
Paul is a partner in the Wellington based firm McBride Davenport James. He is a member of the Law Society’s Employment Law Committee, and a long-time member and past convener of the Wellington Branch Employment Law Committee. For over 35 years Paul has specialised in employment and medico-legal work (primarily acting for ACC, and health employers). He has presented and written on employment, discrimination, and other issues. Paul represents public and private sector employers, unions (particularly in education and transport sectors), and individuals. He was counsel in many of the early cases about workplace mental injury under s 21B Accident Compensation Act 2001. Paul was also counsel for the employer in *IDEA Services v Crozier*, addressing the interplay of disability, discrimination and employment.

SPEAKERS



Scott McLiver, PwC, Auckland

Scott is a leader in the field of emerging technology and spearheads Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiatives across New Zealand for PwC. He led the rollout of Gen AI across the Asia Pacific region for PwC and has been a member of the PwC Global AI Council; he is at the forefront of driving innovative technological solutions and shaping AI strategy within the PwC Network. Scott works with boards and executive teams to help organisations leverage technologies such as Generative AI and Digital Assets, advising on strategy, education, pilot establishment, and best practice risk and governance approaches. He led the rollout of ChatPwC – PwC New Zealand’s secure, custom-built AI assistant – to more than 1,800 partners and staff within the secure PwC environment. Scott leads the OpenAI relationship for PwC across the Asia Pacific region. He has also driven several digital venture initiatives, including the development of PwC Academy, supporting capability building in the digital economy.



Luana Nickles, Fonterra Co-operative Group Limited, Auckland

Luana (Whakatōhea, Ngāi Tai) is Fonterra’s Director – Māori Strategy and a former workplace relations lawyer with nearly two decades of experience in Aotearoa and Australia. A graduate of Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori, she grew up immersed in her culture, one she now passes onto her children. Since joining Fonterra seven years ago, Luana has led the employment law team and contributed to initiatives that strengthen Māori talent, capability and leadership across the organisation. In her current role, she and her team advise senior leaders, in-house counsel and kaimahi Māori on issues at the intersection of te ao Māori and corporate practice. Luana has a strong interest in the evolving role of tikanga within the law. She believes all legal professionals have an implied responsibility to respect and protect tikanga Māori when engaging with it, particularly within systems not originally designed by or for Māori.



Karen Radich, Clifton Chambers, Wellington

Karen has specialised in employment law for 30 years. Previously a partner in the employment team at MinterEllisonRuddWatts for nine years, she has practised as a barrister at Clifton Chambers in Wellington since 2012. As well as an LLB, Karen has a BA (Political Science), an MBS (Dispute Resolution), and an LLM (First Class Honours). She recently appeared as counsel to assist in the Court of Appeal hearing of the remedies awarded by the Employment Court in the *Cronin-Lampe v Minister of Education* case.



Rebecca Rendle, Simpson Grierson, Auckland

Rebecca is a partner in Simpson Grierson’s national employment team and a member of the firm’s Board. Her expertise includes advising on restructures, whistleblowing, restraints of trade, collective bargaining, payroll remediation projects and representing clients regularly in litigation. An Association of Workplace Investigations Certificate Holder, Rebecca advises on and conducts workplace investigations/cultural reviews. For many years, she has lobbied for a rewrite and simplification of the Holidays Act. This has included presenting Simpson Grierson’s pre-election survey insights to successive Workplace Relations Ministers and highlighting that reform has remained employers’ top priority for the incoming government over the past four elections.

SPEAKERS



Simon Schofield, Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland, Auckland

Simon is a Paewai Whakaako Ngaio Professional Teaching Fellow at the University of Auckland where he has lectured employment law since 2021. While in practice, he advised on, and acted in relation to, the full gamut of employment law issues. Simon previously lectured employment law at the University of Waikato. He has written widely on employment law and is the editor of Wolter Kluwer's *New Zealand Employment Law Guide*. Simon is also a member of The Law Association's Employment Law Committee.



Anamika Sharma, Woolworth Group, Auckland

Anamika is a dual qualified employment lawyer (NZ/AU) currently providing specialist counsel within the Woolworths Group. She specialises in helping large scale organisations navigate the gap between legal theory and operational reality. Anamika is frequently engaged by organisations to lead transformation projects and resolve group-wide workplace relations challenges, drawing on her experience across both the public and private sectors. She is also a member of the Employment Law Committee of The New Zealand Law Society Te Kāhui Ture o Aotearoa.



Renika Siciliano, McCaw Lewis, Hamilton

Renika (Waikato Maniapoto) is the Executive Director at McCaw Lewis Lawyers in Hamilton where she leads the firm's Workplace Law and Tiriti practices. With over 17 years' experience, her focus is on ensuring her advice to clients is bespoke and reflective of tikanga wherever appropriate. Renika is a former Tumuaki of Te Hunga Rōia Māori o Aotearoa (The Māori Law Society) and sits on various governance boards. She has a wealth of knowledge in workplace law, advising both employers and employees on various employment matters. This includes advising clients on obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (the Act), internal policies and practice, and WorkSafe investigations and processes.



Caroline Silk, Barrister and Mediator, Whangarei

Caroline specialises in employment law and criminal defence with more than 25 years' experience navigating complex workplace disputes. She regularly advises on investigations and disciplinary processes, navigating reputational, procedural, and human considerations with care. Caroline was a partner at Auld Brewer Mazengarb and McEwen, worked as a specialist adviser to business, and founded Legal Plus, a social enterprise focused on improving access to justice. Known for her calm advocacy, she provides practical and strategic guidance in challenging situations. A former New Zealand Law Society Board member – Vice President (Central North Island), and currently a Visiting Justice in prisons, Caroline remains deeply committed to strengthening the profession while delivering accessible access to justice.

SPEAKERS



Samantha Turner, Stout Street Chambers, Wellington

Samantha is a leading employment and health and safety law expert with over twenty years' experience. A skilled mediator and litigator, she regularly speaks at conferences and delivers training on key employment and health and safety issues. Samantha has extensive experience working with public sector and local government bodies and has been involved in numerous high-profile reviews, inquiries and investigations. She advises major New Zealand and global corporates, frequently collaborating with international leaders and legal teams to align New Zealand compliance with global initiatives. Previously a partner at Simpson Grierson, Samantha joined the independent bar in 2021. She is consistently ranked in Chambers Asia-Pacific, the Legal 500 Asia Pacific, and other leading legal directories.



Emma von Veh, Buddle Findlay, Wellington

Emma is a respected employment specialist who advises public and private sector clients on all aspects of the employment relationship. She has significant experience with employment agreements, disciplinary matters, investigations, restructuring, personal grievances, contractor status issues, health and safety, and human rights and privacy concerns. Emma also advises on statutory, public law and contractual obligations, including governance, conflicts of interest and official information. She has represented clients in the Employment Relations Authority, Employment Court, Court of Appeal and Human Rights Review Tribunal, and regularly appears at mediation. Emma also brings specialist health law expertise from in-house roles at the Ministry of Health and the Health and Disability Commissioner.



Amy Webster, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), Wellington

Amy is a specialist employment lawyer working in the MBIE litigation team, where she acts primarily for the Labour Inspectorate enforcing compliance with employment standards. She began her employment law career in-house at one of New Zealand's largest government departments, before moving to a specialist employment law firm where she advised both employers and employees on a wide range of workplace issues. Prior to joining MBIE, Amy was leading the employment law practice at a firm with offices across Wellington, Kāpiti and the Manawatū.

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