



AJ&CO

Leanne
O'Neill

Practice Leader
Land Management & Use
– Regulatory Compliance



I have dedicated my life in the service of the law, and it shows through my commitment and passion. I have been privileged to work at the cutting edge in precedent cases and legislative reform which impacts how all Queenslanders use the land on which we all live, work and play. To see these frameworks implemented and the delivery of major projects across all sectors, while being in the trenches with my clients has been immensely rewarding.

Leanne brings over 24 years of experience providing expert and specialist land management and use advice to all key industries including renewables, mining and resources, property development and major infrastructure and agribusiness.

Introduction

Leanne acts for a wide range of clients including the private sector, ASX listed companies, statutory and regulatory authorities, local government and the State of Queensland.

Leanne's skills are unique in the industry as she has been involved in the development, drafting and implementation of the majority of the regulatory frameworks governing land use, management and development in Queensland having held several senior legal roles in the Queensland Government. Leanne continues to be at the forefront of regulatory reform providing ongoing advice to the Queensland Government and through her roles on industry committees.

Awards

Finalist – 2026 QLS Excellence in Law Award for the Queensland Solicitor of the Year (Large Firms).

The Best Lawyers in Australia™ Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Government Practice, Native Title Law 2026

Recognised – Australasian Lawyer's Elite Women 2022 And 2023

Finalist – Partner Of The Year Awards (New Partner Of The Year) – Lawyers Weekly 2021

Finalist – Partner Of The Year Awards (Planning And Environment) – Lawyers Weekly 2022

Leading Lawyer In Government Practice – The Best Lawyers In Australia (2020, 2021, 2022, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025)

This intimate understanding of the regulatory regimes governing all land use in Queensland has enabled Leanne to assist clients in delivering numerous significant projects including renewable projects, major mining and resources projects, water security (dams), master planned and large scale residential and industrial developments and agricultural diversification projects including environmental offsets and carbon sequestration projects.

As an experienced litigator in the Land Court, Planning and Environment Court, National Native Title Tribunal and Federal Court, Leanne has been at the forefront of a number of precedent forming cases including in relation to native title, cultural heritage, valuation, resumptions/compulsory acquisitions, vegetation management and planning and environment.

But the goal is stay away from court wherever possible, by delivering the strategic management of major projects from a land use and management, regulatory compliance perspective as well as drafting and negotiating the contracts necessary to deliver these projects.

Leanne's unique front and backend experience enables her to provide holistic advice on the entire life cycle of a project, ensuring clients have the benefit of a 'one-stop shop', assisting clients to deliver projects on time and on budget, whilst managing community objections and expectations. Her in-depth understanding of each industry helps to ensure the delivery of projects on land with competing land uses to maximise the economic return for landowners, developers and mining/resources companies.

Areas of Expertise



Litigation and
Dispute Resolution

Native Title &
Cultural Heritage



Major
Developments
including
Renewable
Projects



Petroleum &
Resources



Agribusiness &
Land Management
& Use

Compulsory
Acquisition &
Valuations



Litigation Expertise

- Supervising and acting solicitor for various cultural heritage and native title precedent cases in the Land Court, National Native Title Tribunal and Federal Court including injunctions and matters related to declaratory relief under the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 (Cth)
- Representing the State of Queensland in the numerous matters under the Right to Negotiate Procedures in the National Native Title Tribunal and landowners in the Federal Court related to native title implications on pastoral leases
- Responsible for the coordination, management and representation of the State in over 448 commercial valuation appeals in the Land Court under the Valuation of Land Act 1944 (Qld) and approximately 50 residential valuation appeals
- Advising the State of Queensland and private clients in relation to objections to statutory valuations
- Responsible for the coordination and management of over 100 planning and environment appeals to which the State was a party in the Planning and Environment Court, and over 20 planning appeals for private clients and statutory authorities
- Advising and representing both the private and public sectors in relation to show cause notices and other compliance matters, including in the Planning and Environment Court, Land Court and Magistrates Court
- Advising on leasing and leasing disputes where unique environmental and other issues arise, e.g. marinas and laboratories

Native Title & Cultural Heritage

- Advising the State of Queensland regarding the drafting and implementation of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 and associated regulatory reform
- Advising the State of Queensland regarding native title and cultural heritage matters affecting key policy deliverables including legislative reform including Queensland's Landmark Cape York Tenure Resolution Program, North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act 2011 and amendments in 2013, Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 amongst others
- Participated in several native title and cultural heritage advisory panels to the State of Queensland
- Representation and advice on numerous significant and often precedent forming cultural heritage agreements for the State of Queensland, developers and resources companies
- Advising governments, developers, and landowners on complex native title issues, including compliance with native title requirements for future acts and the impact of claims for determination of native title, such as resolving native title issues related to the first grants of geothermal permits
- Representing the State of Queensland in Indigenous Land Use Agreement negotiations often coupled with legislative reform

Major Developments including Renewable Projects

- Advising the State of Queensland on the transitional and other arrangements from the former Integrated Planning Act 1994 to the Sustainable Planning Act 2009
- Representing proponents and landowners on the delivery of significant projects through what is an extremely complex legislative regime including masterplanned communities, hospitals, refrerrable dams, linear infrastructure, environmental offset arrangements and vegetation management
- Representing both landowners and proponents in respect of renewable projects including large wind and solar farms including associated land access agreements/arrangements
- Drafting compliance manuals for land use and access for statutory authorities, Griffith University and for a number of private sector companies/organisations

Petroleum & Resources

- Advising the State of Queensland regarding legislative reform for the mining, petroleum and geothermal sectors

- Representing and advising the State of Queensland and ASX listed companies regarding due process, regulatory compliance, appeals and objections to grant of tenements
- Advising the State of Queensland and ASX listed companies on compliance with geothermal, mining and petroleum grants and authorities
- Advising landholders in relation to land access agreements including compensation and conduct agreements associated with prospecting and extraction activities for petroleum, gas and mineral resources in both Queensland and the Northern Territory

Agribusiness & Land Management & Use

- Advising the State of Queensland on water and vegetation related legislation including water resource plans/resource operation plans, wild rivers and the "role out" of the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 and the Murray Darling Basin Plan Area legislative arrangements
- Specialising in biosecurity management and risk mitigation
- Negotiating agreements for diversification of income streams and land use, including environmental offset agreements, renewable energy initiatives, agistment agreements, timber harvesting, water use, environmental offsets, carbon sequestration and quarries
- Providing advice and representation regarding water entitlements, allocations and licences and vegetation management, including applications and appeals
- Advising on management obligations on State land, pastoral leases and conservation land, including bush fire management obligations, conservation agreements and land use within waterways as specified by a range of legislation
- Advising on land tenure and use, pastoral holdings, wet leases and dry leases and conversion applications

Compulsory Acquisitions & Valuations

- Advising the State of Queensland regarding legislative reform in relation to the Land Valuation Act 2010
- Representing State of Queensland, statutory authorities, ASX listed companies, landowners and lessees on compulsory acquisitions under a variety of legislation including without limitation State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971, Acquisition of Land Act 1967, Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) and in respect of Commonwealth land primarily governed Lands Acquisition Act 1989
- Negotiating compensation agreements on behalf of landholders with resuming authorities for significant and minor public infrastructure

Qualifications

- Queensland Law Society (MQLS)
- Solicitor – Supreme Court of Queensland and High Court of Australia
- Bachelor of Laws, University of Queensland
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Queensland
- Graduate Diploma of Professional Legal Education and Training, University of Queensland

Memberships

- Committee Member – Queensland Law Society Mining and Resources Law Committee
- Former Committee Member – UDIA Queensland Planning & Environment Committee
- Member – Queensland Environmental Law Association
- Committee Member – QLD Branch Energy & Resources Law Association

Recent Presentations

Event name	Presentation Title	Date
Energy and Resource Law Association	Risk and Land Assets	May 2026
QELA Conference 2024	Our Future, In Focus – Renewables and Sustainability	May 2024
8th Annual Agribusiness Law Conference – Sofitel Gold Coast Broadbeach	Getting the most bang for your buck: Maximising land value through carbon credit trading Flicking the switch: Renewable energy arrangements in the spotlight	May 2024
Property Law Conference	Crucial land use regulatory compliance matters for property lawyers	2024
TEN Webinar – CO2, ACCU, ERF	Going Beyond the Acronyms – A Lawyer's Guide to Carbon Farming, ERF and ACCU scheme	April 2024
Legalwise	10 Points in One Day Conference – Key risks & crucial regulatory compliance related to land all lawyers must be aware of	March 2024
7th Annual Agribusiness Law Conference	Carbon Credit Farming: What Lies Ahead?	May 2023
Legalwise Native Title Forum	Co-Existing Native Title Party Commercial Operations with Pastoral Leases after a Native Title Determination	June 2022
Property Law Seminar QLD	The Diversification Dilemma: Managing risks associated with Environmental Offset and Carbon Projects	March 2022
TEN Webinar	Making Hay While the Sun Shines: Essential Terms for Solar and Wind Energy	January 2022
CGW Webinar	'Related Persons' liability under the Environmental Protection Act (Qld): Chain of Responsibility Provisions	March 2021
QELA Regional Intensive	Are our Planning and Environmental Laws Stifling Regional Development?	October 2019



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