



KATE EASTMAN AM SC

Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Laws (1990) - University of New South Wales (UNSW)
Master of Laws (Distinction) (1991) - University College London, UK (UCL)
Master of Laws (1997) - University of Technology Sydney (UTS)
Diploma of International Human Rights Law, Florence Italy (EUI)
Doctor of Laws (Honoris causa) (2022) - University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

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In [kate-eastman-sc-2913a749](https://www.newchambers.com.au/kate-eastman-sc-2913a749)

Admitted in NSW
1990

Admitted as a barrister in NSW
1998

Appointed Senior Counsel
2012

Entitled to practise in
Australian jurisdictions

Kate has over 30 years' experience in dispute resolution and advocacy in a wide range of employment disputes, sexual harassment, disability, all forms of discrimination and vilification law. She also practises in the areas of public law, education and health law, including class actions. She is a recognised expert in human rights law.

She appears in the High Court, Federal Court, Federal Circuit Court, Fair Work Commission, Industrial Relations Commission and State/Territory tribunals in trials and appeals in matters arising under the Fair Work Act and all Commonwealth/State/Territory discrimination laws. She is instructed by individuals, Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and agencies, for multi-national and Australian ASX 200 corporations, partnerships and small businesses in a range of matters including internal compliance audits, internal grievance and disciplinary procedures, law reform, development of policies and procedures, training, strategy, advisory work and litigation.

Kate regularly appears in mediations in a wide range of complex and multi-party disputes. She also acts as an independent investigator, facilitator and mediator.

Kate is also an experienced teacher. She has been a Senior Fellow of the Faculty of Law, Monash University where she has taught a range of post-graduate international and Australian human rights law courses. She has taught short courses on human rights in Myanmar and Uganda.

Kate is Head of Chambers at New Chambers

CURRENT RANKINGS

- 2026: *Chambers and Partners Asia Pacific*: Employment, Band 1
- 2026: *Best Lawyers*: Lawyer of the Year, Human Rights for work in Human Rights and Employment Law
- 2025: *Doyles Guide*: Market Leader, Senior Counsel in Employment Law for New South Wales and Preeminent, for Australia

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Commissioner, Special Ministerial Inquiry into workplace culture and related issues in the Office of the Children’s Guardian (March – July 2025)
- Commissioner, New South Wales Law Reform Commission (August 2023 – continuing)
- Senior Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (September 2019 – September 2023)
- Senior Fellow, Monash University, Law Faculty (2006 – 2017)

Prior to the Bar

- Senior Legal Officer, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, including a period as Acting Director of Legal Services (1995 – 1998)
- Lecturer (casual) University of Technology, Law Faculty (1995 – 2010)
- Solicitor, Allen Allen & Hemsley (1991 – 1995) – litigation and corporate law groups; secondments to Kingsford Legal Centre (1993, 1994) and Australian Lawyers for Refugees in Port Hedland (1992 - 1993)
- Research Assistant to the Privacy Commissioner, the Hon Kevin O’Connor AM (at various times in 1990 and 1991)

AWARDS OR PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

- 2025: Alumni Award, Law – University of Technology Sydney
- 2022: Law Council of Australia, President’s Award, for a significant contribution to the legal profession in Australia
- 2022: Doctor of Laws (Honoris causa) (2022) - University of Technology Sydney
- 2022: Australian Women Lawyers Award for long term leadership and commitment in the support and advancement of women in the legal profession

- 2021: appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to the law, to human rights and to professional organisations.
- 2021: Women Lawyers Association (NSW) – Lifetime Achievement Award and Life Membership
- 2019: Australian Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Award, Law
- 2017: Women Lawyers Association (NSW) - Change Champion Award
- 2017: The Terry Connolly Friend of the Jessup Moot Award
- 2005: Disability Discrimination Legal Centre- Life membership for pro-bono work in the area of disability discrimination, particularly for children with disability and education
- 2003: Law and Justice Foundation, Justice Award for the Combined Community Legal Centres for Services to pro-bono legal work

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND APPOINTMENTS

- Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law (FAAL)
- Bar Councillor, New South Wales Bar Association since 2019
- Board Member, NSW Law and Justice Foundation since 2025
- Co-Chair, Professional Conduct Committee (No.4), NSW Bar Association
- Chair of the Law Council of Australia’s Equalising Opportunities Committee since 2018
- Chair of the Australian Bar Association’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee since 2016
- Immediate past Chair of the NSW Bar Association’s Diversity and Equality Committee
- Women for Progress, convened by Nicola Forrest AO with the Minderoo Foundation
- Director and Board Member, New Chambers
- Member of Advisory Committee Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, UNSW, since 2017
- Member of the Law Council of Australia’s Business and Human Rights Working Group (2014 – 2018)
- Member of the Law Council of Australia’s National Human Rights Committee (2013 – 2018)
- Head of Chambers (2016 – 2018), Director (2007 – 2012), Six St James Hall Chambers
- Co-Founder and President, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (1992 – 2000)

SELECTED APPEARANCES

Selected Appeals

- *Avard v Australian Capital Territory* [2025] FCAFC 72
- *Rossi v Qantas Airways Ltd* [2024] FCAFC 144
- *Reynolds v Commissioner of Australian Federal Police* [2020] FCAFC 82
- *DRJ v Commissioner of Victims Rights (No 2)* [2020] NSWCA 242
- *National Disability Insurance Agency v Attorney-General for the Australian Capital Territory* [2020] ACTSC 52
- *Clubb v Victoria* (2019) 93 ALJR 448 (for the Human Rights Law Centre intervening, appearing for the Castan Centre for Human Rights intervening)
- *Magaming v The Queen* (2013) 252 CLR 381 (for the Australian Human Rights Commission intervening)
- *Maloney v Queensland* (2013) 252 CLR 168 (for the Australian Human Rights Commission intervening)
- *Commonwealth v Australian Capital Territory* (2013) 250 CLR 441
- *Commonwealth of Australia v Kevin and Jennifer* (2003) 30 Fam LR 1
- *Purvis v New South Wales* (2003) 217 CLR 92
- *Re McBain* (2002) 209 CLR 372
- *Mobil Oil Australia Pty Ltd v Victoria* (2002) 211 CLR 1
- *Ruddock v Vadarlis (the Tampa Case)* [2001] FCA 1329
- *DJL v Central Authority* (2000) 201 CLR 226
- *Yanner v Eaton* (1999) 201 CLR 351

Class actions

- *MAN25 v Commonwealth of Australia* - NSD1930/2025
- *KTM24 v Rio Tinto Limited* - NSD1787/2024
- *Bonson v Commonwealth of Australia* - VID 1309/2025
- *FZR24 v Commonwealth of Australia* - SAD125/2024
- *Hassen v New South Wales* – NSD1654/2024
- *McEvoy v Bravus Mining* - QUD542/2025
- *Rose v Commonwealth of Australia* [2025] FCA 339
- *Dawson v Commonwealth* [2021] FCA 1636

Equal Remuneration and multiple party Fair Work claims

- *Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation* [2025] FWCFB 261, for the ACT Government
- *Applications by Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation* [2024] FWCFB 452 for the Commonwealth Government
- *Gender Undervaluation – Priority Awards* - for the Commonwealth Government
- *Application for supported bargaining in the early childhood education and care sector* (B2023/538) for the Commonwealth Government
- *Equal Remuneration and application for a variation to the Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2010* [2013 – 2021] for the Commonwealth Government
- *Crown Employees (School Administrative and Support Staff) Award* [2019] NSWIRComm 1082 (equal remuneration claim) for the State of New South Wales
- *Equal Remuneration Case (SACS)* [2010 - 2012] - appearing for State of New South Wales and Minister for Industrial Relations

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- *Family Provisions Case 2005 (No 2)* [2006] NSWIRComm 63 - appearing for NSW Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Employment Office
 - *Re Equal Remuneration Principle* [2000] NSWIRComm 113 - appearing for Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (intervening)
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Royal Commissions

- Commissioner, Special Ministerial Inquiry into workplace culture and related issues in the Office of the Children's Guardian (March – July 2025)
 - Senior Counsel Assisting Royal Commission into Violence, Neglect, Abuse and Exploitation of People with the Disability (2019 – 2023)
 - Appearances and advice for aged care providers in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (2018 – 2020)
 - Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2013 – 2017) appearing in nine case studies
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Selected publications and articles

- Commentary on *Re-charting the Victorian Charter of Human Rights: Advancing Equality* in Batagol et al *The Feminist Legislation Project, Rewriting Law for a Gender-Based Perspective* (2024)
 - Inaugural Kaldor Centre Oration, *The Tampa Affair* (2024)
 - *Judicial bullying: let's have a conversation*, Volume 1, Issue 3 of the *Judicial Quarterly Review* 93 (2024).
 - Human Rights, *Federal Civil Litigation Precedents*, LexisNexis (2023)
 - Australia's engagement with the United Nations in *Contemporary Perspectives on Human Rights Law in Australia* eds Gerber & Castan (2nd ed 2021)
 - *We need to address the culture of shame: sexual harassment* (July 2020) *Law Society Journal NSW*
 - *Natural Justice is the golden rule of investigations* – Op Ed in *The Guardian* (24 June 2020)
 - *Breaking the culture of silence – sexual harassment at the Bar* *News: The Journal of the NSW Bar Association* (March 2019)
 - *Crossing the line: Behaviour that gets barristers into trouble with Callan and Rao* *News: The Journal of the NSW Bar Association* (Summer 2017)
 - *Mere definition? Blurred lines? The intersection between race and religion under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)* RDA40 Conference Papers (2015)
 - *International Human Rights Remedies; Discrimination complaints chapters in Lawyers Practice Manual New South Wales 1995 - 2020*
 - *The problem with evidence in racial hatred litigation in Hate Speech and Freedom of Speech in Australia* eds Gelber and Stone (2007)
 - *Sex Discrimination in the legal profession* (2004) 10 UNSWLJ 26
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- *Discrimination: Mitigation Risk in the workplace*, CCH (with P Thew and J Bourke co authors) (2005)
- Human rights in Australian litigation a practitioner's perspective in *Using Human Rights in Australian Law*, ed Kinley (1998)

Kate has presented at over 200 conferences/seminars or training events.
Selected Papers available on request.

PRINCIPAL AREAS OF PRACTICE

MEDIATOR

Mediation
Conciliation

COMMERCIAL LAW

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| Administrative Law | Communications | Business and Human Rights |
| Partnership disputes | International law | |
| Alternative Dispute Resolution | Modern Slavery | |

INDUSTRIAL / EMPLOYMENT

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| Civil and human rights | Class actions | Investigations |
| All areas of employment law | Sexual harassment | Privacy |
| Disciplinary proceedings | Discrimination and Equality | |
| Diversity and Inclusion | Restraint of trade | |

INQUESTS AND INQUIRIES

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| Royal Commissions | Investigations and Inquiries |
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PUBLIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

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| Alternative Dispute Resolution | Health law | |
| Appellate | Judicial review and administrative law | Public law |
| Constitutional law | Merits review | |
| Disciplinary proceedings | | |

SECTORS

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| Defence | Health | Transport |
| Government | Technology, Media and Telecommunications | Education |
| Disability and Aged Care | | Professional services |