

Craig Lenehan SC

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Education

Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Laws

- Corrs Chambers Westgarth Scholarship in Law (UNSW).
- Le Fevre prize for physical chemistry (Macquarie University).
- Final year physical geography prize (Macquarie University).

I am a fellow of the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law at UNSW and have previously served as a member of the Centre's Advisory Committee.

Professional

2019

Appointed Senior Counsel, New South Wales

From May 2006

Barrister at the NSW Bar (Banco Chambers and 5 St James Hall)

I was awarded the Con Varnavas prize for the highest aggregate mark in the bar exams and came to the bar in May 2006. I was appointed senior counsel in 2019.

I have a broad public law practice, specialising in constitutional and administrative law matters and appellate work. I am recognised in Doyle's Guide as a leading administrative and public law silk.

I am a member of the Human Rights Committee of the NSW Bar Association and have previously served as the chair of the Ethics Committee of the Australian Bar Association.

My work at the bar: I have appeared in over 50 appeals and original jurisdiction matters in the High Court involving questions arising under the Constitution and other significant public law issues. I also regularly appear in intermediate appellate and superior courts in public law matters.

Here are some examples of my work:

- ***Cullen v President of the Legislative Council of NSW*** – *Kable* challenge to the *Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901* (NSW) (heard by the NSW Court of Appeal in December 2025 – decision reserved).
- ***Mayfield Development Corporation Pty Limited v NSW Port Operations*** – appeal to the High Court concerning derivative crown immunity (heard by the High Court in December 2025 – decision reserved).
- ***Ward v Hoenig*** [2025] NSWCA 180 – matter concerning the power of the NSW Legislative Assembly to expel a member.
- ***MJZP v Director-General of Security & Anor*** (2025) 99 ALJR 1108 – original jurisdiction matter concerning procedural fairness and Ch III of the Constitution.
- ***Kain v R&B Investments Pty Ltd*** (2025) 99 ALJR 1138 – an appeal concerning common fund orders.

- ***Ravbar v Commonwealth*** (2025) 99 ALJR 1000 – original jurisdiction matter concerning the appointment of an administrator to the Construction and General Division of the CFMEU. Various challenges to validity including the implied freedom of political communication and Ch III of the Constitution.
- ***Commonwealth v Yunupingu*** (2025) 99 ALJR 1562 – an appeal concerning native title and ss51(xxxi) and 122 of the Constitution.
- ***YBFZ v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs*** (2024) 419 ALR 457– original jurisdiction matter challenging the validity of the curfew and electronic monitoring provisions made in the wake of *NZYQ*.
- ***ASF17 v Commonwealth*** (2024) 98 ALJR 782 – an appeal removed to the High Court regarding whether the limit on constitutionally permissible duration of immigration detention identified in *NZYQ* applies in relation to non-citizens who are not cooperative with efforts to remove them.
- ***NZYQ v Commonwealth*** (2024) 97 ALJR 1005 - an original jurisdiction matter in the High Court concerning indefinite immigration detention and Ch III of the Constitution (overruling *Al-Kateb v Godwin*).
- ***Vanderstock v Victoria*** (2024) 98 ALJR 208 – an original jurisdiction matter in the High Court concerning whether an exaction applied to electric cars was invalid as a duty of excise within the meaning of s90 of the Constitution.
- ***AZC20 v Minister for Immigration*** (2023) 278 CLR 512 – an appeal to the High Court concerning the meaning of “matter” in Ch III of the Constitution.
- ***SDCV v Director General of Security*** (2022) 405 ALR 209 – an appeal to the High Court concerning procedural fairness and Ch III of the Constitution.
- ***Citta Hobart Pty Ltd & Anor v Cawthorn*** (2022) 276 CLR 216 – an appeal to the High Court concerning state tribunals and Ch III of the Constitution.
- ***Plaintiff M1/2021 v Minister for Home Affairs*** (2022) 275 CLR 582– an original jurisdiction matter in the High Court dealing with whether a decision maker was required to consider the plaintiff's representations concerning non-refoulement obligations in making non-revocation decision pursuant to s 501CA(4) of the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth).
- ***Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs v Viane*** (2021) 274 CLR 398 – an appeal to the High Court regarding whether the Minister made certain factual findings based on personal or specialised knowledge and whether any errors were material and jurisdictional.
- ***Hobart International Airport Pty Ltd v Clarence City Council & Anor*** (2022) 276 CLR 519 – an appeal to the High Court concerning standing, privity of contract and the meaning of “matter” in Ch III of the Constitution.
- ***Chetcuti v Commonwealth*** (2021) 272 CLR 609 – an appeal to the Full Court of the High Court (from a decision of Nettle J) regarding the aliens power in s51(xix) of the Constitution.
- ***Minister for Immigration v Moorcroft*** (2021) 273 CLR 21 – an appeal to the High Court concerning the “behaviour concern non-citizen” criterion for special category visas in the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth).
- ***Gerner v Victoria*** (2020) 270 CLR 412 – an original jurisdiction matter in the High Court concerning restrictions imposed during the state of emergency arising from the pandemic and whether intra-state freedom of movement is to be implied in the Constitution.

- ***Hocking v Director General of Archives*** (2020) 271 CLR 1- An appeal to the High Court concerning an application by Ms Hocking for access to Sir John Kerr's personal letters to the Queen, held by the Australian Archives.
- ***Smethurst v Commissioner of Police*** (2020) 272 CLR 177 – This was a matter in the original jurisdiction of the High Court, raising issues concerning the execution of a warrant and the implied freedom of political communication.
- ***Masson v Parsons*** (2019) 266 CLR 554 – An appeal from the Full Family Court, raising issues regarding s79 of the *Judiciary Act 1902* (Cth), s109 of the Constitution and whether “sperm donors” can be “parents” for the purposes of the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth).
- ***Comcare v Banerji*** (2019) 267 CLR 373 – A matter removed into the High Court from the Full Federal Court raising issues regarding the use of social media by public servants and the implied freedom of political communication.
- ***Unions NSW v New South Wales*** (2019) 264 CLR 595 – An original jurisdiction matter in the High Court concerning the implied freedom of political communication and electoral expenditure.
- ***Clubb v Edwards; Preston v Avery*** (2019) 267 CLR 171 – Two appeals removed into the High Court, each raising challenges to laws which prohibited certain communications and protest activities in “access zones” around premises at which abortions are provided.
- ***Alley v Gillespie*** (2018) 264 CLR 328 – This was an original jurisdiction matter concerning the *Common Informers (Parliamentary Disqualifications) Act 1975* (Cth) and the proper construction of ss46 and 47 of the Constitution.
- ***Burns v Corbett*** (2018) 265 CLR 304 – This was an appeal from the New South Wales Court of Appeal concerning the question of whether State tribunals (that are not “courts of the States” within the meaning of Ch III of the Constitution) can exercise jurisdiction to determine any of the matters identified in ss75 or 76 of the Constitution.
- ***Graham v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection; Te Puia v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection*** (2017) 263 CLR 1 – this matter raised the question of whether ss501(3) and 503A(2) of the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) are invalid as requiring a Federal court to exercise judicial power in a manner inconsistent with the essential character of a court or as impermissibly limiting ability of affected person to seek relief under s75(v) of the Constitution.
- ***Re Day [No 2]*** (2017) 263 CLR 201 – This was a reference from the Senate to the High Court sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns in relation to s44(v) of the Constitution.
- ***Re Culleton [No 2]*** (2017) 263 CLR 176 – This was a reference from the Senate to the High Court sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns in relation to s44(ii) of the Constitution.
- ***Day v Australian Electoral Officer (South Australia)*** (2016) 261 CLR 1 – This matter concerned the validity of amendments made to the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth). The challenged provisions dealt with the form of the Senate ballot paper and the process for marking it.
- ***Plaintiff M68 v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection*** (2016) 257 CLR 42 – This was an original jurisdiction matter in the High Court challenging, on constitutional and other grounds, the arrangements regarding the detention of asylum seekers in Nauru.
- ***McCloy v State of New South Wales*** (2015) 257 CLR 178– This was a High Court constitutional challenge, based upon the implied freedom of political communication, to aspects of NSW legislation regulating political donations.

- ***CPCF v Commonwealth*** (2015) 255 CLR 514 – This was an original jurisdiction matter in the High Court regarding the executive power of the Commonwealth and the statutory power to expel aliens.
- ***Kuczborski v Queensland*** (2014) 254 CLR 51 – original jurisdiction matter in the High Court regarding Chapter III of the Constitution.
- ***Argos v ACT Minister for Planning*** (2014) 254 CLR 394– appeal to the High Court regarding standing in a judicial review matter.
- ***Plaintiff M150 of 2013 v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection*** (2014) 88 ALJR 735– matter regarding the exercise of the visa cap power under the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth).
- ***Unions NSW v New South Wales*** (2013) 252 CLR 530 – constitutional challenge, based upon the implied freedom of political communication, to aspects of NSW legislation regulating political donations.
- ***Kline v Official Secretary to the Governor General*** (2013) 249 CLR 645 – Appeal to the High Court concerning freedom of information application made to the Official Secretary of the Governor General.
- ***Commonwealth v ACT*** (2013) 250 CLR 441 – Constitutional case concerning the marriage power and the validity of the *Marriage Equality (Same Sex) Act 2013* (ACT).
- ***M76/2013 v Minister for Immigration*** (2013) 251 CLR 322– matter regarding migration detention and questions of statutory construction.
- ***Maloney v R*** (2013) 252 CLR 168 – constitutional challenge to alcohol restrictions on Palm Island.
- ***JTI v Commonwealth*** (2012) 250 CLR 1- constitutional challenge to the plain packaging laws for tobacco products.
- ***M47 v Australian Security Organisation*** (2012) 251 CLR 1 – matter regarding the detention of Sri Lankan asylum seekers and adverse security assessments.
- ***X7 v Australian Crime Commission*** (2013) 248 CLR 92– matter concerning Chapter III of the Constitution and the compulsory questioning of people charged with an offence.
- ***M70 v Commonwealth of Australia*** (2011) 244 CLR 144 - matter regarding the “Malaysian Solution”.
- ***Wotton v Queensland*** (2012) 246 CLR 1 – matter concerning the implied freedom of political communication.
- ***Betfair Pty Limited v Racing New South Wales & Ors*** (2012) 249 CLR 217 –matter concerning section 92 of the Constitution and internet betting.
- ***Queanbeyan City Council v ACTEW Corporation Ltd & Ors*** (2011) 244 CLR 530 - claim alleging that certain fees imposed by a Territory are duties of excise in contravention of s90 of the Constitution.
- ***Spencer v Commonwealth*** (2010) 241 CLR 118 – matter concerning acquisition of property under s51(xxxi) of the Constitution; grants made under s96 of the Constitution and the Commonwealth’s obligations under the *Kyoto Protocol*.
- ***Arnold v Minister Administering the Water Management Act 2000*** (2010) 240 CLR 242 – matter concerning s100 of the Constitution (abridgement of the right to the reasonable use of the waters of rivers); acquisition of property under s51(xxxi) of the Constitution; executive power of the Commonwealth; grants made under s96 of the Constitution and water rights.

- ***ICM Agriculture Pty Ltd v Commonwealth*** (2009) 240 CLR 140 – matter commenced in the original jurisdiction of the High Court, concerning acquisition of property under s51(xxxi) of the Constitution; executive power of the Commonwealth; grants made under s96 of the Constitution and water rights.

Prior to coming to the bar, I worked as a solicitor at Freehills and as a Senior Legal officer and the Deputy Director of Legal Services at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now the Australian Human Rights Commission).

Some examples of publications and seminars:

- Auspublaw article - 'The Voice: imagined legal problems distract from the substance' on AUSBUBLAW (10 May 2023) - <https://www.auspublaw.org/blog/the-voice-imagined-legal-problems-distract-from-the-substance>
- Book review of: 'Judicial review of administrative action and government liability' (7th ed), by Mark Aronson, Matthew Groves and Greg Weeks – 29(4) *Australian Journal of Administrative Law* (2022), p 280.
- Auspublaw article - 'Book forum: on Shipra Chordia's Proportionality in Australian Constitutional Law' on AUSBUBLAW (18 August 2021) - <https://www.auspublaw.org/blog/2021/08/book-forum-craig-lenehan/>
- Contributor to *Constituting Law: Legal Argument and Social Values* (Federation Press).
- Presented papers on NZYQ at the 2024 Constitutional Law Conference conducted by the Gilbert and Tobin Centre for Public Law and the Melbourne University Law School Constitutional Conference.
- Speaker at the NZLS CLE Human Rights Law Trans-Tasman Conference held in August 2024 in Queenstown New Zealand.