



Catholic
Employment
Relations



2026 CER EMPLOYMENT LAW SYMPOSIUM

Wearing every hat

*Leadership in Employment Law - mastering
multifunctional roles as an employer*

2026 EMPLOYMENT LAW SYMPOSIUM

Date: 18 September 2026

Time: 09:30am - 04:00pm

09:30

Welcome and prayer

Registration desk opens at 09:00

09:45

The Strategist

Human flourishing, dignity, well-being and psychosocial safety in Catholic workplaces. Reflections on how ethical leadership and catholic social teaching can build healthy and fair human person centric workplaces.

10:30

Coffee Break & Networking

10:50

The Culture Shaper

Join us for a panel discussion on psychosocial risks in the workplace, exploring what they are, employers' legal and compliance obligations and the implications for duty of care. The session will combine legal insights with practical experience, covering common psychosocial hazards, regulatory trends, enforcement risks and emerging issues such as workplace conduct, organisational change, and AI.

12:00

Lunch Break & Networking

01:00

The Negotiator

Enterprise Bargaining on the front foot - lead bargaining strategically and confidently. Gain practical insights into current bargaining trends, industrial strategy and preparation, workforce communications, expectation management and the effective management of risk throughout the bargaining process.

02:05

The Investigator and Decision Maker

Strengthen your approach to complaints and misconduct by learning how to conduct fair, trauma-informed and legally defensible investigations, apply procedural fairness, and make disciplined decisions that minimise unfair dismissal and other employment law risks.

02:50

Afternoon tea & Networking

03:05

The Technologist

AI in employment decision-making. Leverage AI responsibly while managing legal and ethical exposure. Examine the use of AI, including bias and discrimination risks, requirements for transparency, the development of robust governance frameworks, and key emerging regulatory trends.

03:50

Wrap up & Farewell



Welcome & Address

9:30 - 9:45

Legal, cultural and psychological responsibilities are converging

Set the context for the day – discuss the current position of Catholic employers operating in an environment where legal, cultural and psychological responsibilities are converging.

The Strategist

9:45 - 10:30

The Modern Employer – leading through complexity, risk & change

This session examines the role of the responsible person in a Catholic organisation, focusing on the increasing complexity of governance responsibilities across compliance, risk, workplace culture and psychosocial safety. It highlights the obligation to ensure effective oversight of governance systems, organisational performance and legal compliance. Participants build an understanding of how governance decisions influence workplace culture, including the importance of maintaining safe, respectful and legally compliant environments. The session reinforces the need for responsible persons to exercise integrity, accountability and sound judgement in their decision-making.

It also explores the role of governance in promoting staff wellbeing and managing psychosocial risk, emphasising a proactive and structured approach. Drawing on principles of Catholic social teaching, the session demonstrates how values-based leadership can support effective governance, while ensuring alignment with regulatory requirements and the proper operation of the school.

Human flourishing, dignity, well-being and psychosocial safety in Catholic workplaces. Reflections on how ethical leadership and catholic social teaching can build healthy and fair human person centric workplaces

The Culture Shaper

10:50 - 12:00

Psychosocial Risk - where HR, WHS & legal intersect

Join us for a structured panel discussion exploring psychosocial risks in the workplace, the legal requirements for managing them and the implications for employer duty of care. Introduced by Nick Tindley, the discussion will bring together both legal and practical perspectives. Nick & Kath will examine the evolving legal framework, including employers' compliance obligations, enforcement trends and the potential consequences of failing to effectively manage psychosocial hazards. Jennifer Coen will draw on practical experience in Sydney Catholic Schools, sharing real-world examples of how psychosocial risks present in workplaces and the challenges organisations face in responding to them.

Key discussion topics will include:

- Understanding psychosocial risks and common workplace hazards
- Employer legal obligations and duty of care requirements
- Regulatory trends, enforcement, and emerging risks, including AI and workplace change
- Practical approaches to identifying, assessing, and managing psychosocial risks
- Balancing effective performance management with psychosocial risk and legal considerations.

The Negotiator

1:00 - 2:00

Enterprise Bargaining on the front foot – Lead bargaining strategically and confidently

Enterprise bargaining is no longer simply an industrial relations exercise. It is a critical leadership, governance and risk management responsibility that requires strategic planning, stakeholder engagement and informed decision-making. This session is designed to build participants' confidence and capability to lead bargaining processes effectively, while navigating an increasingly complex industrial relations environment.

Through targeted professional learning and practical case studies, participants will explore the key stages of enterprise bargaining, from preparation and workforce engagement through to negotiation, implementation and compliance. The session will clarify the roles and responsibilities of leaders involved in bargaining and demonstrate how structured governance frameworks can support sound decision-making, minimise risk and strengthen organisational outcomes.

Attendees will gain practical insights into developing a bargaining strategy, identifying priorities, managing stakeholder expectations, communicating effectively with employees and representatives, and responding to emerging challenges throughout the bargaining process. The session will also examine common risks, lessons learned from recent bargaining experiences, and approaches to achieving sustainable outcomes that balance organisational objectives with workforce needs.

By the end of the session, participants will be better equipped to approach enterprise bargaining proactively, manage risk with confidence, and lead negotiations in a way that supports compliance, workforce engagement and long-term organisational success.

The Investigator & Decision Maker

2:05 - 2:50

Conducting fair & defensible investigations, while applying procedural fairness and disciplined decision-making

Investigations are not merely a legal or HR function - in a Catholic organisation, how you investigate, how you treat people through the process, and how you make decisions is itself an expression of institutional values and mission.

The session strengthens participants' approach to complaints and misconduct. It supports targeted professional learning in workplace investigations and procedural fairness.

It reinforces roles and responsibilities, including supervisory arrangements, application of codes of conduct, and the use of delegated authority in decision-making. The panel will discuss and emphasise clear, consistent and defensible governance decisions, supported by appropriate documentation, evidence handling and escalation.

Participants examine common investigation issues and develop practical capability to manage complaints fairly, consistently and in a way that supports compliant and effective governance.

The Technologist

3:05 - 3:50

AI in employment decision-making - Managing the use of AI legally and ethically within a governance framework

AI is increasingly being used across the employment lifecycle, from recruitment, onboarding and workforce planning to performance management, employee communications, learning and development, workplace investigations and the automation of administrative work.

This session examines the legal, ethical and governance implications of using AI in the workplace. It considers emerging risks including staff wellbeing, privacy, data security, bias, discrimination, lack of transparency, inappropriate reliance on automated outputs and the changing responsibilities of employers and employees.

Participants will explore how a practical AI governance framework can help organisations identify appropriate uses of AI, establish clear accountability, maintain meaningful human oversight and introduce proportionate controls based on the level of risk.

The session will provide practical guidance for using AI responsibly and productively in employment settings, while ensuring its use remains lawful, transparent, fair and aligned with organisational values and sound governance practice.

Wrap up

3:50 - 4:00

Event MC, closing, thank speakers, reflection

Reinforce the days narrative – the challenges facing our leaders and how Catholic social teaching and ethical leadership can anchor us. Key takeaways by theme and a practical reflection on what actions we can take. Finish with a call to action – one idea, one change, one conversation that can improve your organisation.

The individual selected for this role will also be MC for the event.

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