



Mary Brennan - Principal Reviewer - Canberra

After 25 years' legal work in the private and public sectors, Mary has extensive experience advising and representing a range of clients on varied and complex legal issues. At the ANU Mary tutored in partnership and company law, covering ethical issues and key areas of risk.

Mary was part of the Commonwealth public service and the ACT Government prior to joining Ashurst in 1991. Commonwealth clients included: CASA, Australia Post and Comcare. Mary oversaw the work for Comcare when it was one of the first Commonwealth agencies to retain private firms for litigation services.

From 2000 Mary was a Partner at Sparke Helmore Lawyers and focused on Commonwealth Government litigation. In addition to Comcare, clients included Professional Services Review (PSR), Medicare Australia and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Mary and her team were appointed to be the legal team assisting Mr Clarke QC with his Enquiry into the handling of Dr Haneef's deportation and subsequent treatment.

In 2001, the ACT Law Society invited Mary to be part of its civil litigation committee, of which she was a member for 12 years. This committee examined many ethical and practice issues facing the profession and balancing the competing interests within it. She was also asked to provide informal, confidential counselling to practitioners against whom complaints had been received.

In her last six years of legal practice Mary was the managing partner of the Canberra office of Sparke Helmore and in her last two, served on the firm's board. The latter role was complex given the differing legal requirements and challenges for a firm with seven offices in Australia. For a client for whom Mary was the relationship partner for five years, she also reviewed procedures and wrote a handbook for its medical committee members to assist them in meeting the legal requirements of the hearings they conducted into practitioners' practices. It was imperative these hearings followed all the established natural justice rules or a Federal Court challenge was inevitable. In the five year relationship, no challenge made to a case in which she or a colleague was involved succeeded. Mary also conducted a number of weekend training sessions of senior members covering a range of topics from recent decisions to sound decision making.

In March 2012 Mary was appointed to the Tribunals hearing serious misconduct complaints against a range of health professionals in NSW. She has also been a member of the Psychology Board of Australia since August 2012, being reappointed in August 2015. In February 2014 she became a sessional senior member of the ACT Civil Administrative Tribunal (ACAT).

In her work with CPM Reviews Mary has personally handled a significant number of cases including complex Code of Conduct reviews and PID matters for agencies like the ATO, Agriculture, Finance and PM&C and chaired Appeal Tribunals for the ACT Government. She has also reviewed sexual harassment and bullying complaints for a number of agencies, including one very sensitive matter involving allegations made against an SES Band 3 spanning several years.

She has also handled matters involving fraud and breaches of agency procedures. These include handling a PID notification about a senior member of the agency awarding large contracts to a company in which the member had an interest. She has also examined allegations against an employee making false data entries into a payroll system over many years. Both cases involved the review of the agencies' IT systems, extensive records and interviews of many staff.

Mary has also regularly quality assured other reviewers' matters and was the General Manager of CPM Reviews from 2013 to 2016. She has a BA LLB (ANU) 1989, a Diploma in Legal practice (ANU) 1990, has a Certificate IV in Government Investigations from the Sydney Institute of Professional Studies, is an accredited mediator through LEADR and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Providing Reviews of Decisions and Actions, Workplace Investigations
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