

Media Release  
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## MacDonnells Law promotes and adds to teams

One of the state's longest established law firms continues to show confidence in its sector by promoting staff and adding new recruits.

### ASSOCIATES

**Donna Brooke has been promoted to Associate** in the Corporate and Commercial team of the Cairns office. She joined MacDonnells Law as an Articled Clerk in 2005 and was admitted as a Lawyer in 2007. While she spent some years working with the MacDonnells Law Commercial Litigation team on debt recovery and civil litigation matters, she is now a strong member of the Commercial team working on various matters including residential and commercial conveyancing, business transactions, business structuring, leasing, and intellectual property.

### Areas of Practice

- Commercial Law
- Securities
- Intellectual Property
- Leasing
- Franchising
- Conveyancing
- Property Law

### Experience

Prior to commencing with MacDonnells Law, Donna gained legal experience working as a volunteer at Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc.

Recently, Donna acted in the sale of a sub lease, which was part of a Crown lease for commercial premises. The matter was complex and included the transfer of numerous sub-sub-leases. In addition, the transaction involved responding to the purchaser with regard to due diligence enquiries and dealing with the lessor and head lessor in obtaining consent. Although our client was based in South Africa, Donna was able to employ advanced IT systems and other resources to facilitate the transaction in a seamless manner.

**Michelle Dawson** specialises and practices predominantly in the area of employment law and workplace relations. **Michelle was recently promoted to Associate** after many years with the firm and in the industry.

Michelle's experience is broad and varied. She worked for a number of years as a legal secretary before becoming a Licensed Conveyancer in NSW. She subsequently worked for quite some time as a conveyancing paralegal at another Queensland firm before commencing her articles of clerkship with MacDonnells Law in 2003. Michelle became admitted to practice as a Legal Practitioner of the Supreme Court of Queensland in 2007.

Michelle also regularly presents seminars on workplace relations issues to peak industry groups and has lectured to journalism undergraduates at JCU with regard to "Media Law and Ethics".

Michelle assists both employers and employees with a range of employment-related matters including unfair dismissal and unlawful termination cases, discrimination and sexual harassment complaints, post-employment restraint and confidentiality issues, claims for damages arising out of breach/es of (employment) contract, claims for reasonable notice, redundancy and transmission of business issues, award interpretation issues, unpaid wage and superannuation claims, and defence of Workplace Ombudsman prosecutions.

Michelle is regularly involved in the provision of strategic advice to employers in relation to disciplinary procedures, human resources policies, and termination of employment. Michelle is also experienced in the area of subcontracting/independent contracting arrangements.

Michelle has represented clients defending Workplace Health and Safety prosecutions and has varied experience with workers compensation law, being an approved panel lawyer delegate for WorkCover Queensland. Michelle has represented clients in all relevant jurisdictions, including the Supreme, District, Magistrates and Industrial Magistrates Courts of Queensland, the Federal Magistrates Court, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, the Australian Human Rights Commission (formerly HREOC) and the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland.

## **Areas of Practice**

### ***Employment Law and Workplace Relations***

- Discrimination and sexual harassment
- Disciplinary procedure
- Termination of employment and associated litigation, including:
  - Unfair dismissal
  - Unlawful dismissal
  - Wrongful dismissal
  - Claims for reasonable notice
  - Enforcement of post-employment obligations
- Redundancy issues
- Industrial disputes
- Award and industrial instrument interpretation
- Human resources policy development and implementation
- Strategic advice - workplace relations
- Workplace investigations

- Independent contractor agreements and advice
- Continuity of employment in transmission of business
- Workplace Health and Safety

### ***Commercial Litigation***

- Contract disputes
- Specific performance
- Defamation
- Recovery of possession
- Debt recovery
- Wrongful dismissal and claims for reasonable notice

**Heather Collins has joined the firm as Associate in the Townsville Office.** She has extensive experience in all aspects of commercial dispute resolution, as well as trade practices, debt recovery and mergers and acquisitions to name a few.

Heather has an extensive background working as in-house counsel for a leading independent finance company and as a lawyer for legal firms across Australia.

### **Areas of Practice**

- Commercial Litigation
- Debt Recovery
- Mergers and Acquisitions
- Trade Practices Act advice and litigation
- Securitisation
- Negotiations
- Regulatory advice, including compliance
- Employment Law
- Anti-Money Laundering / Counter-Terrorism Financing Act advice
- Privacy Act advice
- Liquidations and insolvency
- Building and construction disputes

### **Experience**

Heather's background includes providing advice as in-house counsel for a finance company, as well as practising as a lawyer for legal firms in Queensland, the Northern Territory and New South Wales.

With extensive and broad-ranging skills from commercial litigation to securitisation, Heather brings a depth of understanding and lateral thinking to clients' issues, as well as experience in negotiation and an acute appreciation of the challenges faced by in-house counsel.

## **LAWYERS**

Two legal graduates who have spent about a year with the firm, **Melissa Sinopoli** and **Sam Prain**, have both been offered and have accepted permanent first year Lawyer roles for 2010. Sam will be taking a permanent role in Litigation and Melissa will be taking a permanent role in Commercial.

MacDonnells Law's HR Manager Susan Del Favero said the firm have been having great success with graduate and summer clerk programs and that Sam and Melissa's appointments was an example of "MacDonnells Law recruiting and training our own and building our teams with strong junior lawyers so we are adequately resourced in the future."

**Stuart Baxter** commenced as a commercial Lawyer in Brisbane recently. Stuart will be working mainly with Tony Hogarth, Brian Healey and Michael Potts.

**Glenn Hindmarsh** commenced as a commercial Lawyer recently and has worked for a local firm in Townsville for the past five years and will be a great addition to the team.

**Juanita O'Brien** joined the Cairns commercial team as a Lawyer recently. She was admitted in 1997 however since then her focus has been on commerce and business, completing a commerce degree and holding the positions of Financial Controller, Dealer Principal and Consultant with Pacific Toyota from 1998 to 2009. During that time she also served as the CEO and Executive Director of the Cairns Taipans. Juanita's focus has now shifted back to the legal profession and she is looking forward to developing her legal expertise whilst also using her business skills.

## **About MacDonnells Law**

MacDonnells Law has offices in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville and is one of Queensland's largest independent law firms. It is a full service legal firm with specialist lawyers practising in specific areas of law. It has a long history as a respected institution and celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2009. MacDonnells Law is also a member of the international alliance of commercial law firms, Meritas. Meritas operates on alliances between firms in more than 60 countries working across jurisdictions to provide clients the best of both worlds: a local legal partner with full service capabilities and the cost efficiency and personal attention unmatched by mega law firms. Each member law firm is required to adhere to rigorous and specific service standards. For more information on MacDonnells Law, please visit [www.macdonnells.com.au](http://www.macdonnells.com.au)

### **For further information:**

Kym Howell – Marketing Manager – North QLD

MacDonnells Law

Ph: (07) 3031 9730 or 0437 342 601

E: [khowell@macdonnells.com.au](mailto:khowell@macdonnells.com.au)