



Michael Pagsanjan

Principal

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Executive Summary

Michael Pagsanjan is the Principal at MPS Law and recognised as one of Australia's leaders in native title law.

Michael is listed as a Federal Court approved native title mediator and is a nationally accredited mediator with extensive mediation experience. He is also a trained strategic partnering expert, a skilled negotiator and a governance and risk specialist.

Michael has a proven track record of delivering exceptional results, in both the corporate sector and when acting for various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and corporations in relation to native title and cultural heritage. This has included the negotiation of complex agreements between traditional owners and various stakeholders, the resolution of several native title claims, and the finalisation of Australia's first successful native title compensation determination. Most recently, Michael advised on and negotiated the landmark Yamatji Nation settlement.

Prior to founding MPS Law, Michael held in-house roles in the not-for-profit sector and also worked at an international commercial law firm, playing an important role in its administrative law and judicial review team.

Michael is a two-time finalist in the Partner of the Year Awards (2020 and 2021, native title and pro bono) and was a finalist in the 2021 Australian Law Awards (Managing Partner of the Year). In 2019, Michael was recognised as one of South Australia's emerging business leaders at the InDaily 40 Under 40 Awards. Michael was awarded the Young Lawyer Of The Year by the Law Society of South Australia in 2018. Michael is also ranked among the top lawyers in the Doyle's Guide and Chambers and Partners Asia-Pacific Guide.

Areas of expertise

- Mediation and alternative dispute resolution
- Commercial negotiations
- Native title
- Cross sector partnering, stakeholder relations and community development
- Governance and risk

Admission details

- Admitted as a solicitor and barrister of the Supreme Court of South Australia, 9 June 2009
- Admitted as a practitioner and barrister of the High Court and Federal Courts

Recent Awards

- 2021 Australian Law Awards (Managing Partner of the Year, finalist).
- Partner of the Year Awards (2020 and 2021, native title and pro bono, finalist)
- 2021 Chambers and Partners Asia-Pacific Guide listing.
- Listed in Doyles Guide to leading native title lawyers (2022, 2021, 2010, 2016)
- 2019 InDaily 40 under 40 Award
- 2018 Young Lawyer of the Year (Law Society of South Australia)

Previous experience

2010 – April 2016 Senior Legal Officer
South Australian Native Title Services Ltd
Adelaide, SA

Michael represented Traditional Owners in the prosecution and negotiation of native title claims throughout regional South Australia. Michael also negotiated and drafted native title, land access, mining, petroleum and cultural heritage agreements. In addition, Michael advised not-for-profit corporations on governance and strategic development, and, assisted Traditional Owners and commercial companies in dispute resolution and community development. Michael also appeared in the Federal Court as required.

2006 – 2010 Solicitor (previously law clerk)
DLA Piper
Adelaide, SA

Following a clerkship while studying at University, Michael was immediately appointed as a Solicitor with DLA Piper upon admission to the Supreme Court. Michael was a Solicitor with the Government and Administrative Law team based in the Adelaide office. During this time, Michael supervised a team of Law Clerks and delivered high volume workflow solutions to clients. Michael regularly advised various Government clients on issues of procedural fairness and judicial review, primarily in Immigration and Refugee law.

Qualifications

- Bachelor of Laws and Legal Practice (Hons), Flinders University (2009)
- Bachelor of International Studies, Flinders University (2009)
- Nationally Accredited Mediator (2017)
- Certificate in Cross-Sector Partnering, CQ University (2018)
- Graduate, Company Directors Course, Australian Institute of Company Directors (2018)
- Certificate in Digital Leadership, RMIT University (2020)
- Management Essentials, Harvard Business School, 2020
- Negotiation Course, Scotwork Negotiation, 2020

Directorships and Memberships

- Former Director (2019-2021), Nexus Arts
- Former Director (2019-2021), Australian Refugee Association
- Member, Federal Court list of Approved Native Title Mediators
- Member, Law Council of Australia
- Member, Law Society of South Australia
- Member, Commercial Law Association
- Member, Australian Institute of Administrative Law
- Member, Australian Mediation Association
- Member, Scotwork Negotiation alumni