



Obstetric Medico-Legal

by informa ●●●

13 – 14 AUGUST 2026

NOVOTEL MELBOURNE ON COLLINS

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:



Hilbert Chiu SC, *Barrister, Tenth Floor Chambers*



Dr Nisha Khot, *President, RANZCOG, Clinical Director of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Peninsula Health*



Danielle Cordon, *General Counsel, Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne*



A/Prof Nathan Emmerich, *Associate Professor, ANU, Deputy Chair, ACT Health Clinical Ethics Committee*



Ruanne Brell, *Senior Legal Advisor, Avant Mutual*



Dr Vijay Roach, *Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, Past President, RANZCOG*



Dr John Regan, *Head of Obstetrics, Monash Medical Centre*



Prof Linda Sweet, *Chair in Midwifery, Deakin University & Western Health*



Dr Rashi Kalra, *Director of Public Reproductive Service, Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne*



Alice Tuson, *Registered Midwife, Westmead Hospital*



Alice Robinson, *Director and Principal Lawyer, Polaris Lawyer*



Professor Ryan Hodges, *Program Director of the Women's and Newborn Program and Director of Obstetric Services, Monash Health*



Serena Pellizzeri, *Program Coordinator for MGP & Homebirth Program, Barwon Health*



Dr Harsha Ananthram, *Senior Staff Specialist O&G, Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD*



Erica Thuijs, *Partner, Jackson McDonald*



Prof Steve Robson, *Chief Medical Officer, Avant*



Dr Amber Moore, *Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, St Vincent's Private Hospital and Royal Women's Hospital*



Kate Waterford, *Managing Partner, Maliganis Edwards Johnson*



Associate Professor Danny Tucker, *Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, Associate Professor, James Cook University*



Melissa Freestun, *Perinatal Psychologist, PhD candidate, Birth Trauma*



Prof Tina Cockburn, *Director, Australian Centre for Health Law Research*



Jane Butler, *Principal Solicitor, Remedy Law*

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP | WEDNESDAY 12 AUGUST 2026 | 2:00PM – 5:00PM

From Conflict to Connection: Practical Skills for Communication at Critical Moments in Maternity Care

Associate Professor Danny Tucker, *Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, Associate Professor, James Cook University*

Melissa Freestun, *Perinatal Psychologist, PhD candidate, Birth Trauma*

Prof Tina Cockburn, *Director, Australian Centre for Health Law Research*

From Conflict to Connection: Practical Skills for Communication at Critical Moments in Maternity Care

This 3-hour interactive workshop combines clinical, legal, and psychological expertise to address conflict management in maternity care. Participants will work through real scenarios involving declining recommended care, coercion, adverse outcomes, vicarious trauma, and duty-of-candour conversations, including recent case law such as *Gawthrop v Bendigo Health* [2026]. The workshop equips attendees with a personal conflict profile, practical communication frameworks, and de-escalation skills to prevent clinical moments from escalating into complaints, claims, or psychiatric injury.

Associate Professor Danny Tucker, *Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, Associate Professor, James Cook University*

Melissa Freestun, *Perinatal Psychologist, PhD candidate, Birth Trauma*

Prof Tina Cockburn, *Director, Australian Centre for Health Law Research*

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Thursday 13 August 2026

DAY 1

8:30 Registration & Morning Coffee

9:00 **DAY ONE OPENING**9:05 **OPENING REMARKS** | Opening remarks from the Chair9:10 **OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS**Hilbert Chiu SC, *Barrister, Tenth Floor Chambers*9:40 **PANEL DISCUSSION | Consent and Coercion: Gawthrop v Bendigo Health ([2026] VSC 157)**

- Delve into the landmark *Gawthrop v Bendigo Health* case, examining its implications for birth plans, advance directives, and intrapartum consent
- Engage with a multidisciplinary panel of legal, clinical, and bioethics experts to explore practical strategies for navigating consent in maternity care

Ruanne Brell, *Senior Legal Advisor, Avant Mutual*A/Prof Nathan Emmerich, *Associate Professor, ANU, Deputy Chair, ACT Health Clinical Ethics Committee*Danielle Corden, *General Counsel, Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne*Moderated by Dr Vijay Roach, *Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, Past President, RANZCOG*10:20 **SPOTLIGHT SESSION**

10:50 Networking and refreshment break

11:20 **FIRESIDE CHAT | IVF Medico-Legal Challenges: Ethics, Psychiatry, and Reproductive Rights**

- Complex Cases: When severe mental illness intersects with IVF- how do clinicians decide?
- Ethical Tightrope: Balancing reproductive rights with risks to maternal and fetal well-being.
- Legal Showdowns: What happens when families challenge IVF refusals?
- Emotional Fallout: Addressing grief, loss, and the missing mental health support in the IVF journey.

Dr Juliana Loming, *Head of Psychiatry, Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne*Dr Rashi Kalra, *Director of Public Reproductive Service, Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne*11:50 **Navigating AHPRA Investigations in Obstetrics: What Regulators Actually See and How to Stay Compliant**Dr John Regan, *Head of Obstetrics, Monash Medical Centre*12:20 **The Causation Conundrum: a look at the scope of causation in the obstetric cases**Alice Robinson, *Director and Principal Lawyer, Polaris Lawyer*


12:50 Lunch and networking break

13:50 **Birth Trauma, Breech Birth, and the NSW Inquiry**Dr Andrew Bisits, *Head of Obstetrics specialising in breech, Royal Hospital for Women Sydney*14:20 **PANEL DISCUSSION | Collaborative Care and Risk Management in Maternity and Home Birth Programs**

- Collaborative Care in Barwon's Home Birth Programs: Safety and Escalation Pathways
- Interprofessional collaboration between midwives and obstetricians

Serena Pellizzeri, *Program Coordinator for MGP & Homebirth Program, Barwon Health*Prof Linda Sweet, *Chair in Midwifery, Deakin University & Western Health*Moderated by Joel Tuccia, *Policy & Advocacy Manager, MIGA*

15:00 Networking and refreshment break

15:30 **Confessions of a criminal - what obstetricians think about "obstetric violence"**Harsha Ananthram, *Senior Staff Specialist O&G, Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD*16:00 **Secondary Victims and Birth Trauma Claims: Legal Evolution and Current Status**Erica Thuijs, *Partner, Jackson McDonald*16:30 **CLOSING PANEL | Quality Metrics in Maternity Care: Valid Indicators and Legal Implications**Moderated by Prof Steve Robson, *Chief Medical Officer, Avant*17:15 **CLOSING REMARKS** | Closing remarks from the Chair17:20 Networking Function 

Obstetric Medico-Legal

Friday 14 August 2026

DAY 2

8:30 Registration & Morning Coffee

9:00 **DAY TWO OPENING**

9:05 **OPENING REMARKS | Opening remarks from the Chair**

Danielle Cordon, *General Counsel,*
Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne

9:10 **OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

Dr Nisha Khot, *President, RANZCOG, Clinical Director of Obstetrics & Gynaecology,* **Peninsula Health**

9:40 **PANEL DISCUSSION | Dealing with Refusal: Navigating Patient Autonomy, Consent, and Treatment Guidelines**

This panel will explore the complexities of patient autonomy and consent, particularly in light of recent Victorian guidance regarding patients who refuse or decline medical treatment, even when such decisions may lead to adverse outcomes, such as fetal or neonatal death.

Sarah Johnson-Clarke, *District Clinical Midwifery Consultant Substance Use in Parenting & Pregnancy,* **Western Sydney LHD**

Dr Amber Moore, *Obstetrician & Gynaecologist,* **St Vincent's Private Hospital and Royal Women's Hospital**

Jane Butler, *Principal Solicitor,* **Remedy Law**

10:20 **SPOTLIGHT SESSION**

10:50 Networking and refreshment break

11:20 **Closing the Gap: Improving Maternity Outcomes for Indigenous Mothers and Babies**

Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association

11:50 **Divided at the bedside: multidisciplinary responsibility and the 'birth wars', in practice and in litigation**

When midwifery and obstetric clinicians disagree during pregnancy or labour, the consequences for patients can be catastrophic, and the litigation that follows may be complex. This session examines how courts assess shared and delegated responsibility in multidisciplinary birth settings, including failure-to-escalate findings, documentation gaps, and the challenges of building and defending causation narratives across professional silos. It also addresses the procedural considerations that arise when midwives and obstetricians appear as independent experts on opposing sides, and what practitioners should anticipate when their expert evidence reflects those deeper professional divides.

Kate Waterford, *Managing Partner,* **Maliganis Edwards Johnson**

12:20 **PANEL DISCUSSION | Perivable Birth: Counseling Women with Fetal Abnormalities**

Alice Tuson, *Registered Midwife,* **Westmead Hospital**

Susan Heath, *High Risk Pregnancy Clinical Midwifery Consultant,* **Westmead Hospital**

13:00 Lunch and networking break

14:00 **From Fetal Therapy to Birth: Managing Complex Pregnancies**

Professor Ryan Hodges, *Program Director of the Women's and Newborn Program and Director of Obstetric Services,* **Monash Health**

14:30 **CLOSING PANEL | Responsibility of the Expert Witness**

- Key legal concepts like inherent risk, reasonable person standard, Section 50, and balance of probabilities.
- Criteria for selecting expert witnesses, including recency, expertise, and professional background.
- Addressing gender equity challenges in expert witness representation and fostering inclusivity.

Alice Robinson, *Director and Principal Lawyer,* **Polaris Lawyer**

Dr John Regan, *Head of Obstetrics,* **Monash Medical Centre**

15:15 **CLOSING REMARKS | Closing remarks from the Chair**

Danielle Cordon, *General Counsel,*
Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne

15:20 End of Conference

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VENUE DETAILS

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Conference Package	PRICE	GST	TOTAL	SAVE	PRICE	GST	TOTAL
Two day conference	\$2,495	\$249.50	\$2,744.50	\$400	\$2,895	\$289.50	\$3,184.50
2-Day Conference Pass (Hospital/Government Rate)	\$1,695	\$169.50	\$1,864.50	\$400	\$2,095	\$209.50	\$2,304.50
2-Day Virtual Pass	\$2,395	\$239.50	\$2,634.50	\$400	\$2,795	\$279.50	\$3,074.50
2-Day Virtual Pass (Hospital/Government Rate)	\$1,595	\$159.50	\$1,754.50	\$400	\$1,995	\$199.50	\$2,194.50
Workshop					\$495	\$49.50	\$544.50

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