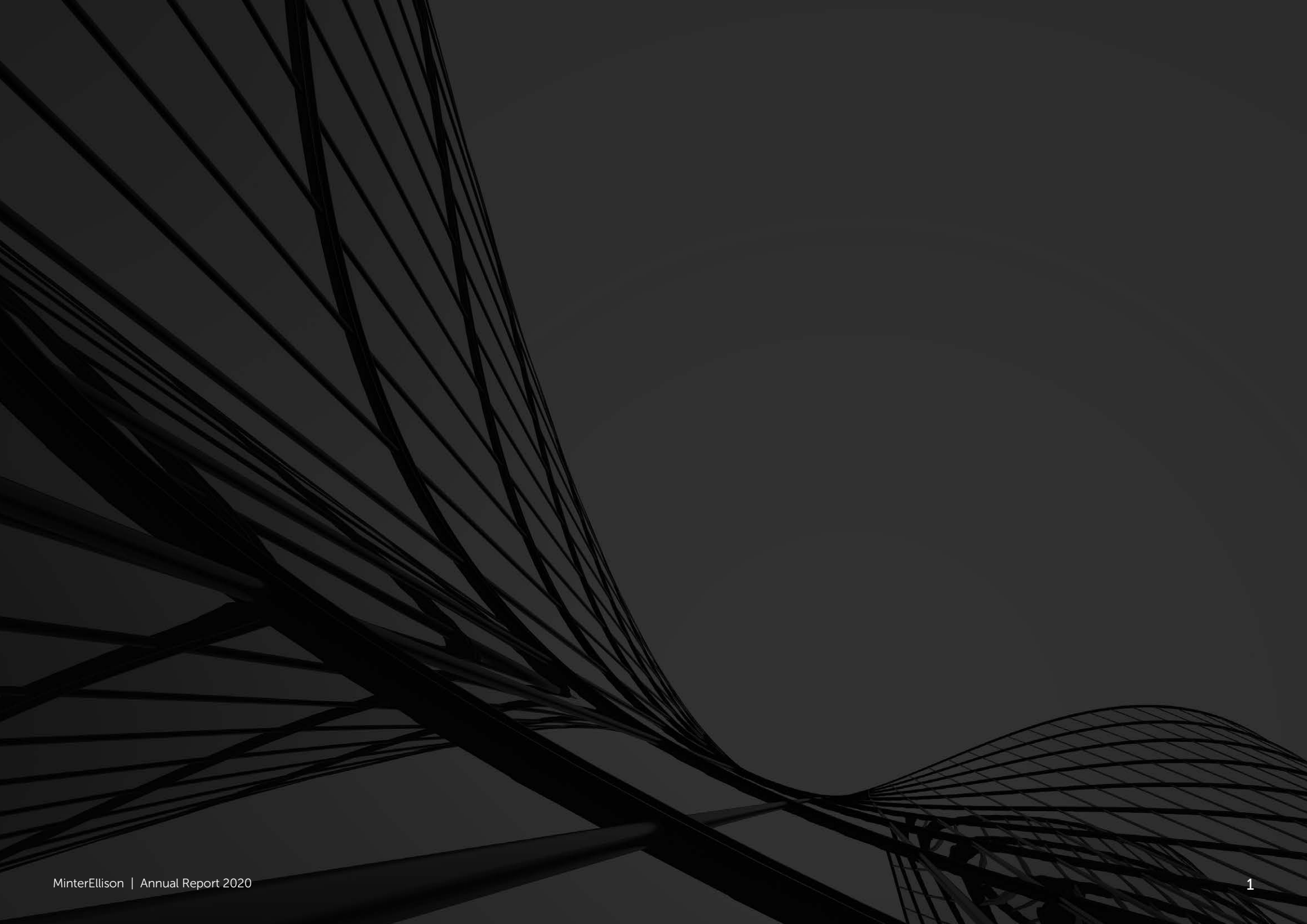


CONNECT

REFLECT

TRANSFORM

Annual Report 2020



## Message from the Chairman

David O'Brien



A challenging, yet  
truly inspiring year ›

In 2020, we, the current custodians of the Firm, were challenged with a one in 100 year pandemic and the first Australian recession in 30 years. The Firm rose to these challenges and ended the year as we commenced it – Australia's largest law Firm by market share, and very well placed to support our clients as they realise the opportunities of a resurgent economy. This was a whole-of-firm effort and was inspirational in its breadth, ingenuity and effectiveness.

In February 2020, we launched our growth ambitions to 2025 at our first Leadership Symposium, which brought together leaders from across the Firm. Like everyone, in March, we were confronted quickly and unexpectedly by COVID-19. By the end of the month, the Firm had rapidly moved to working from home.

No leader wants to be confronted by a crisis like this. The performance of our CEO, our Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and broader leadership was outstanding. Thousands of sound judgements were made by them under considerable pressure, and the sum of these judgements has led us through this challenging time.

Throughout the year, I have been constantly inspired by our people. Their ingenuity has enabled us to emerge from the crisis strongly. Their resilience has been inspiring.

Working deeply on defining our Purpose, strategy and culture in the months leading up to the pandemic prepared us well. It gave us a clear framework for decision making. The 97 percent take up of COVID-leave by people showed the strength of community we have at MinterEllison.

As the pandemic escalated, it was clear that we needed to work remotely and think differently about how we engaged with our clients, our communities and each other. Through the amazing efforts of our Business Operations teams, we moved rapidly to keep our business running. Teams continued to continue support clients without missing a beat. Now, virtual meetings and using technology to work and connect has become the new normal.



## Message from the Chairman

We have been privileged to support clients manage the challenges presented by the pandemic. We were appointed to some significant matters. We advised on the \$2 billion sale of Urbanest, the largest ever student accommodation transaction in Australia. We acted for Transit Systems in its \$698million sale to Sealink Travel Group. Our Technology Consulting team entered into a three-year contract to provide services to the Department of Defence.

We also played a role in shaping some of the key social and economic issues we're facing in Australia today. We advised the Queensland Government on the \$5 billion Future Fund;

we continue to advise on the Northern Territory Government's electricity reform program; and we represented 21 public, private and government clients in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

Supporting our people has been paramount this year. As a Firm, we were really conscious of the effects of lockdown, not just on our ability to work, but on how this was affecting our families. We invested heavily in mental health and wellbeing sessions and made them available to everyone. I'm proud of the way people across our Firm really looked out for one another, especially in Melbourne where the restrictions have been protracted.

Our new industry groups are making great progress, leveraging the myriad competencies we can bring to the table, and enhancing our ability to solve our clients' most complex problems.

We continue to grow our consulting business with 17 percent of our newly appointed partners from our adjacent services. It was also pleasing to maintain our overall partner appointments in such a challenging year with 15 new partners. With 59 percent of new partners being women, we continue to take steps in the right direction to meet our 2025 target of a 40:40:20 partnership.

COVID-19 has certainly taught us the importance of staying connected within our teams, with our clients and the broader community.

Striving to create lasting impacts is our common Purpose; it means we are continually striving for excellence while supporting our people to work in sustainable ways, and this is what makes us a great place to work. I was delighted to see that we were named by Lawyers Weekly as the most attractive Australian firm of choice for legal professionals for the second year in a row.

This Firm excelled in the years immediately after the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) around a decade ago. We are now in a better position than we were then. Coming out of the GFC, the feature which distinguished us from the other major law firms was the diversity of our practice. This remains the case. The future for MinterEllison looks bright. 2020 is a year of which we should be proud.

**David O'Brien**  
Chairman



**//**  
Through the extraordinary efforts of many people, **we quickly expanded our technical capability** and remained productive throughout. **//**



## FY20 key performance achievements

### \$ FINANCIAL

\$653m

total revenue  
2019/20

↑ 4%

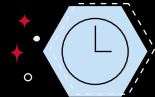
growth  
2019/20

45k+

new matters opened  
for 8,800+ clients

1.7m

billable hours



#### % Revenue by industry



Financial Services	27.0%
Real Estate	10.2%
Energy & Resources	8.6%
Government	7.6%
Health & Aged Care	7.1%
Infrastructure	4.9%
Education	3.6%
Other	31.0%



### PEOPLE

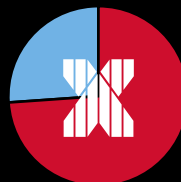


2,500+

partners, consultants  
and staff

74%

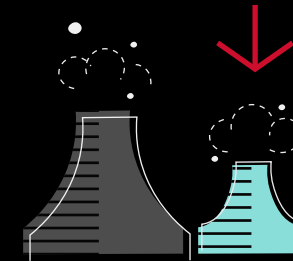
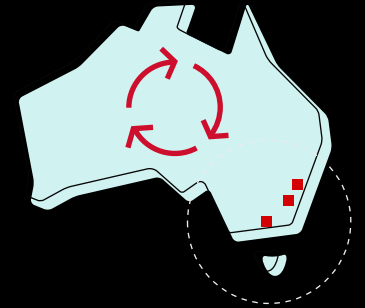
number of ASX 50  
companies acted for



### ENVIRONMENT

100%

green energy in  
Sydney, Melbourne,  
Canberra offices



55%

decrease in greenhouse  
gas emissions from  
previous year

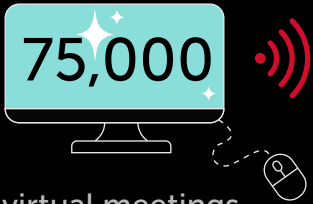
Zero  
emissions  
by 2025



Zero  
carbon Leadership  
Symposium; our first  
corporate event to  
achieve that milestone

## FY20 key performance achievements

### DIGITAL

**75,000**   
virtual meetings

**2,250**   
Facebook followers, a 31% increase on FY19

**312**  
client news/insight/alerts sent to **376k** subscribers

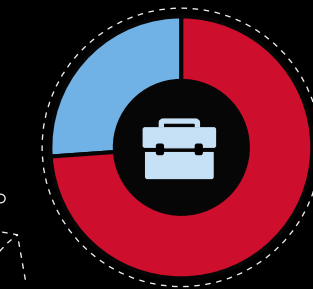
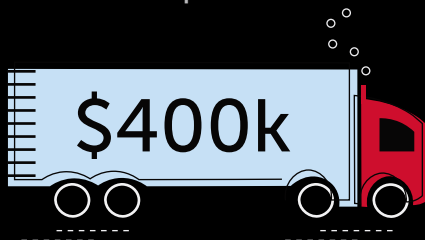
**6.8m** minutes spent in virtual meetings

### COMMUNITY

**62,000**  
community hours contributed

**80+**  
social enterprise and Indigenous businesses supported

**\$400k** in goods and services procured from social enterprises



**74%**  
of lawyers provided pro bono support

**\$250k**  
raised for community relief



### RAP

**2,200**   
pro bono hours



**25** Indigenous and social enterprises partnered with

**500+** people engaged in Reconciliation Action Plan related activities

### AWARDS

Winner of the Environmental Finance 2020 IMPACT Award



Australia Transfer Pricing Firm of the Year  
International Tax Review, Asia Tax Awards 2020

Winner of Chambers Asia Pacific 2020 Outstanding Firm for D&I – International



## Our Purpose, Strategy and Culture

Our Purpose, our values and our 2025 Strategic Ambitions define what we stand for, who we are and what we aim to achieve.

**We create  
lasting  
impacts.**



With our clients, our people  
and our communities.

### PURPOSE >

**We create lasting impacts** with our clients, our people, and our communities

### AMBITIONS > for 2025

To be renowned for our culture, the MinterEllison Way, and for consistently creating lasting impacts with our clients, people and communities.

To redefine the boundaries of what it means to be a law firm and to achieve market-leading rates of growth and profitability.

To have the market-leading position in each of our chosen industries and markets.

### CULTURE >

#### Our values

Authentic  
and enduring  
relationships

Excellence  
without  
attitude

Curious  
and  
innovative

Collaboration  
grounded  
in diversity

Sustainable  
ways of  
working





# Creating lasting impacts: **Our clients ›**

It has been a year of unexpected challenges for our clients.

By building strong and enduring relationships, we have supported our clients through the uncertainty of a global pandemic and found solutions to their most complex problems.

These are just some of the lasting impacts we created with our clients in 2020.



## Creating lasting impacts: Our clients

### \$698m sale of Transit Systems and Tower Transit

Over many years, we have developed a strong relationship with Transit Systems Pty Ltd, advising on a number of M&A transactions as they have grown to become Australia's largest private operator of metropolitan public bus services.

MinterEllison advised Transit Systems and its shareholders on the \$698 million sale of Transit Systems and London and Singapore bus operator Tower Transit Group Ltd to ASX-listed SeaLink Travel Group Limited.

Comprising a large team across our Australian offices, we advised on all Australian law aspects of this multi-jurisdictional transaction and implemented the transaction as a whole, working alongside advisers from Australia, UK, Singapore, USA, New Zealand and Jersey.

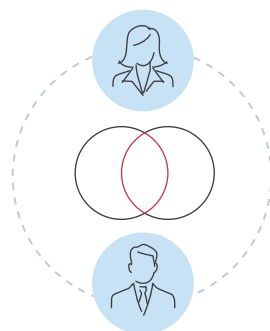
We leveraged our understanding of the businesses, industry, multi-jurisdictional private and public M&A, finance, and regulatory matters, to deliver outcomes across a 14-month period. The transaction was completed in Adelaide in January 2020 against a backdrop of bushfires and the emerging COVID-19 pandemic.

The end result has delivered many positive and lasting impacts. For the Transit shareholders, the transaction allowed each shareholder to have varying interests in the merged business as significant shareholders, a director and CEO, while pursuing other business activities and private objectives including significant international philanthropic projects.

SeaLink has performed well since the merger and continued to provide essential transport services in a difficult environment.

SeaLink is 'dedicated to connecting people, linking communities, sharing experiences, and creating brilliant memories' which aligns well with our Purpose. We look forward to seeing what the future holds for SeaLink and its shareholders.

Jeffrey Ellison (left), Chair, SeaLink Travel Group Limited, (formerly Managing Director and CEO at the time of photo) and Clint Feuerherdt Group CEO, SeaLink Travel Group Limited, (formerly CEO, Transit Systems Group at the time of photo)



**For the Transit shareholders, the transaction allowed each shareholder to have varying interests in the merged business as significant shareholders.**





## Creating lasting impacts: Our clients



### The largest real estate deal in Australia in 2019

Urbanest has been a long-standing client of the Firm for more than 10 years. Over that time, we have worked closely with them to develop, finance, construct, and operate their 14 student accommodation buildings across four states in Australia.

So when the decision was made to sell the business, MinterEllison was their first choice. We worked closely with Urbanest on the A\$2 billion sale of its student accommodation business and property portfolio to Scape Australia, and in doing so, successfully enabled the largest real estate deal in Australia in 2019. This was a monumental deal in the purpose-built student accommodation sector, one of the most exciting and innovative real estate classes in Australia.

**Through it all, our trusted relationships across our Firm at all levels within Urbanest have had lasting impacts.**

logistical challenges of preparing and circulating documents for signing while in lockdown, and running completion electronically over a call (highly unusual for a deal of this size).

Through it all, our trusted relationships across our Firm at all levels within Urbanest have had lasting impacts. Urbanest's investors have built, and now sold, a highly successful portfolio and business. And, over the years, Urbanest's impact on the \$37 billion international education sector, and in particular students and their families, has also been significant; because knowing there is a safe place to live when you arrive in Australia really matters.

Our role involved running the competitive sale process for Urbanest, and negotiating and managing a complex transaction involving numerous structuring and regulatory considerations. This transaction was a truly whole-of-firm effort, and involved every business unit across Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Queensland. In the last few months and weeks of closing the deal, the team worked tirelessly to overcome COVID-19 restrictions, FIRB delays, the





## Northern Territory electricity reforms paving the way for renewable energy

The Firm has been working in the electricity market in the Northern Territory (NT) for a number of years and in particular, played a key role in the separation of companies in 2014-15.

Since then, the market has been developing and is now moving to a full-scale market. The Government has a clear policy to move towards achieving 50 percent renewable energy by 2030, and new market reforms are required to achieve that target.

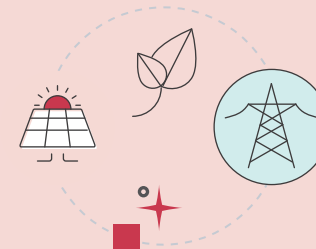
Our team has been on the ground in Darwin working on the Government's electricity reform program. It has been invaluable having a deep understanding of the environment in NT and strong connections in the Darwin community.

These NT electricity reforms will have lasting impacts; by enabling new generation projects to be developed, the Territory will transition to a greener, more secure power system. Without changes to the market rules, it is difficult for private entities to join the market.



The NT is ideally suited to solar power and new solar operators will not only be able to connect to the network, but also operate in a way that enables safe and secure energy supply, with increased efficiencies.

The work is continuing into 2021.



**The reforms will enable new generation projects to be developed, helping the Northern Territory transition to a greener, more secure power system.**

## Far-reaching impacts advising clients in the human services sector

The human services sector plays a vital role in the health and wellbeing of many Australians.

MinterEllison takes great pride in supporting a range of clients in this sector, who are all highly committed to the service of helping people; something which is strongly aligned with our Purpose and cultural values.

Over the past year, our lead team has acted for over 21 clients in the Aged Care Royal Commission and over a dozen clients in the Disability Royal Commission. The work has had a significant impact on regulatory and policy settings in the human services sector.

Drawing from the best of the Firm across a range of practice areas and jurisdictions, the logistics of running two royal commissions concurrently was challenging, but equally rewarding.

The team leveraged lessons learned from the Financial Services Royal Commission; but also charted new ground given the intrinsic nature of the sector in dealing with the human condition, and some of the most vulnerable in our communities.

While COVID-19 gave pause to the Aged Care Royal Commission mid-year, the team swiftly moved into acting for Anglicare, the operator of Newmarch House. Aged care facilities were some of the hardest hit by the pandemic and for Newmarch House in particular, it has been devastating. The team at MinterEllison did all they could to support the client, working 24/7 during peak periods providing extensive support and guidance.

With some of our team having a clinical background in addition to their legal expertise, they were adept at understanding the challenges and pressure points, and could 'speak the language' of the sector in a way that had real cut-through and delivered great value.

The work has had, and will continue to have, lasting impacts. The team feels privileged to have contributed to the transformational work in the aged care and disability sectors during such a pivotal time, and is continuing to support our clients as these reforms unfold over the next few years.



**The team charted new ground given the intrinsic nature of the sector in dealing with the human condition, and some of the most vulnerable in our communities.**

### Multi-disciplinary team brings great value in financial remediation program

Our client required our assistance with addressing their fee-for-no-service issue. This issue arises when there is a failure to deliver ongoing financial advice services to customers who were charged for those services.

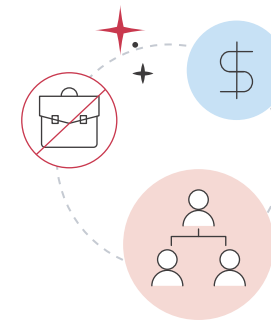
There are many reasons why these failures may arise; our role was to assist our client in identifying issues and then setting up and executing a remediation program.

Led by MinterEllison's Risk Consulting, the fee-for-no-service remediation project comprised a multi-disciplinary team including Legal, Legal Operations, Technology Consulting, and Risk and Regulatory Consulting. More than 70 people from across Australia worked together to bring the best of the Firm to assist the client in rectifying problems and ensure that any wrongdoings were made right.



Given the work needed to happen during some of the harshest lockdowns of COVID-19, the team had to set up an effective way of working closely, yet remotely with the client. We moved quickly to enable working from home, and successfully implemented agile working practices with our client.

This work demonstrates the positive impact that our adjacency teams can bring to our clients and their customers, delivering great value both now and in the long term. The effects have been far-reaching. Working in a truly collaborative way with the client, we've helped to make a real difference in ensuring payments were made as quickly as possible to their customer base and in a fair, transparent and efficient way.



**We've helped to make a real difference in ensuring payments were made as quickly as possible to their customer base and in a fair, transparent and efficient way.**



## Supporting the Victorian Government at the coal face of COVID-19

From the outset, MinterEllison has supported the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) at the coal face of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

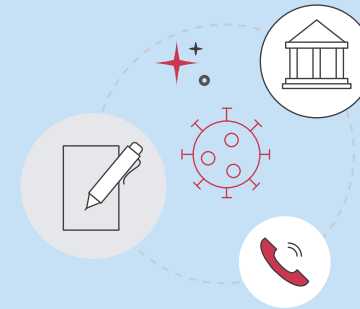
At its peak, Victoria was the hardest hit Australian state in terms of numbers of active COVID-19 cases. It's been a whole-of-firm effort across multiple matters, and we have also had people seconded to the Department assisting with the response.

Notably, from late July, we've provided a 24/7 hotline for DHHS responding to urgent requirements for drafting of directions, guidance relating to directions and associated general COVID-19 related advice. This pool of lawyers has been assisting DHHS with its significant workload, and the need for urgent legal advice across a range of topics including the health, disability and aged care sectors, as well as supporting the work of other key Victorian Government departments.

In addition, we have supported the DHHS in preparing and negotiating contracts for temporary COVID-19 field hospitals at the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre and other metropolitan locations.

The Employment team at MinterEllison has also played an important role in supporting DHHS during the year. Like other state governments, DHHS has needed to constantly issue and update public information and legislative directions in the face of new and emerging information about COVID-19, respond to outbreaks, clusters and issues such as aged care, and draw together the health resources of the entire state.

The impact of our work has been far and wide: from managing the return of overseas travellers and urgent procurement of medical supplies, to occupational health and safety considerations to protect health care workers and the broader public and dealing with community transmission that affected workplaces and restrictions on people movement and activities.



**We've been assisting DHHS with its significant workload, and the need for urgent legal advice across a range of topics including the health, disability and aged care sectors.**



## Commercial and financial reform delivers significant savings and cost efficiencies

Earlier this year, our Technology Consulting team entered into a \$26.4 million three-year contract with the Department of Defence.

The engagement involves leading a cohesive program of work to support and enable Defence's Chief Information Officer Group (CIOG) to implement considerable structural commercial, sourcing and financial reform.

CIOG delivers critical Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services in support of Defence war fighter and corporate capabilities. Following a period of centralising, outsourcing, and transforming ICT, CIOG was faced with increasing complexities due to the size and scale of its ICT environment, obsolescence of legacy environments, and a range of cost pressures.

The new commercial sourcing strategy developed for Defence's multi-billion dollar ICT contracts represents a revolutionary change in the way Defence will engage industry. The strategy stands to deliver greater agility, flexibility and accountability in key Defence and Industry partnerships.

Working with our team, the program now underway consists of five core service streams to realise maximum value from existing spend while enabling the establishment of an innovative suite of future commercial relationships.

This significant contract is the result of a long-standing and trusted relationship developed over the past five years. Lead Partner, Debbie McLaughlin, received a commendation for exemplary contribution to Defence ICT capability in her role as Strategic Commercial Adviser.



**The strategy stands to deliver greater agility, flexibility and accountability in key Defence and Industry partnerships.**



Your outstanding contribution to the commercial and financial reform activities in CIOG has resulted in significant budget savings and cost efficiencies and markedly improved the financial and commercial acumen of personnel across the Group.



**Stephen Pearson**  
Chief Information Officer,  
Department of Defence of Australia

## International teams collaborate with lasting impact in the Asian region

The Asia Pacific region is increasingly becoming the centre of activity in the world economy with most Asian countries responding better than other regions to the global pandemic, and showing continuing growth.

With many opportunities for both inbound and outbound investment, our international teams continue to create lasting impacts with our clients.

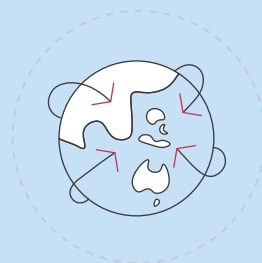
While our international clients have not been immune to the global pandemic, our work has been steady through 2020 and now, as we look to 2021, we are looking at a strong pipeline of work.

Our teams collaborate across Australia, New Zealand, Asia and the UK to bring the best of our Firm to our clients operating in the Asian region. The year was marked by a number of significant matters across a range of jurisdictions and areas of practice.

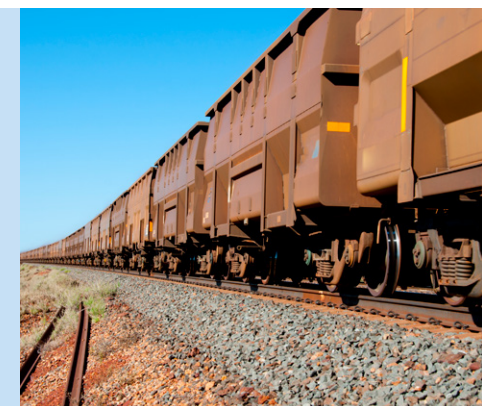
We were appointed by FIFA to provide a full range of tax services for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. Working in partnership with UK firm Hogan Lovells, we were appointed by the UK Government to advise on the negotiations of the UK-Australia and UK-New Zealand free trade agreements.

We advised NYSE-listed Albemarle Corporation on all aspects of its US\$1.3 billion deal with Mineral Resources, one of the largest mining deals in Australia. The deal was unusually complex as it involved the simultaneous completion of four notable transactions: the acquisition of a 60 percent interest in the Wodgina mine, the sale of a 40 percent interest in part of the Kemerton plant, the intragroup sale of a 60 percent interest in part of the Kemerton plant, and formation of the ongoing joint venture with Mineral Resources. Its successful completion was a truly collaborative effort involving 16 practice groups across five offices.

A highlight of the London office's 2020 year was assisting with the Australian launch of Klarna, the leading global payments and shopping service provider and the highest-valued private fintech in Europe, with a post money valuation of US\$10.65 billion. We advised Klarna on all aspects of its entry into Australia, by way of a joint venture with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. Our teams in the UK and Australia delivered an almost continuous round-the-clock service to ensure a successful outcome.



**Our teams collaborate across Australia, New Zealand, Asia and the UK to bring the best of our Firm to our clients operating in the Asian region.**





# Creating lasting impacts: **Our people ›**

Despite the challenges of 2020, the response of our people was extraordinary. Through their outstanding efforts, resilience and care for one another, we have achieved so much.

Here is an insight into the positive impacts created with our people and the support our Firm ensured they received.





## Targeted support on mental health and wellbeing

Mental health is a serious issue in Australia; and there is no doubt that the challenges of restrictions, lockdowns and isolation associated with the pandemic have increased anxiety and stress levels for many.

MinterEllison is committed to sustainable ways of working and recognises that good mental health and wellbeing is essential for people to thrive and perform at their best. We have policies and programs to ensure our workplace environment is a psychologically safe one and we recognise that inclusive leadership is a strategic capability.

In the context of the pandemic, we stepped up our efforts in supporting our people's mental health and wellbeing throughout the year. We made substantial investments in mental health and wellbeing sessions, which were made available to everyone in our Firm. Listening to what our people needed has been paramount to having the right impact, and the response has been encouraging.

MinterEllison was also a founding member of the Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia (CMHAA) that was set up to help people talk about mental health in the workplace without stigma, and to share best practice. Launched in October 2020, we joined other CMHAA members including Microsoft Australia, KPMG Australia, Coles, Commonwealth Bank, Bunnings, Deloitte Australia and Woolworths among others.

Given the particularly challenging COVID-19 restrictions in Victoria, we developed a tailored mental health support program for our Melbourne colleagues which

features one-on-one support, team and practice group sessions with our EAP provider, and a number of other initiatives shaped in response to specific groups including supporting parents through home-schooling commitments and others with eldercare responsibilities.

We are proud to partner with leading organisations across Australia to deliver specialist support and advice to our people and play our part in creating lasting impacts in the community to improve outcomes for all Australians.



## Rapidly mobilising our Firm to work remotely and securely

In the early stages of COVID-19, we identified the immediate need to transition the Firm to a working-from-home scenario, and to rapidly engage an agile team to upgrade our IT infrastructure.

In less than two weeks, we pivoted to support our entire Firm – 2,550+ people – working remotely in individual environments. Although our IT infrastructure team were very much the backline heroes, the collective effort of all our people made remote working a success.

While some of our people were already mobile enabled, we needed to move quickly to stand up our back-end infrastructure to support this at a much larger scale. This included increasing our network links to ensure we had enough bandwidth and upgrading our hardware including our routers. The team pulled out all the stops to make things work in record time; one of our team even jumped in a



cab to intercept a delivery from the airport to ensure new routers were quickly operational.

We enhanced our security to ensure people could log-on safely wherever they were working. We provided flexible support via our online help portal and increased our service desk staff and hours by 40 percent to ensure the business was well supported.

This extraordinary effort demonstrates just what our Firm is capable of; and we have proven that working remotely while also delivering uninterrupted services to our people and our clients is achievable. This is our 'new normal' and we'll continue to invest in refining the experience for all.

## Creating lasting impacts: Our people

### Continuing to build a diverse and inclusive culture

‘Making diversity, in all its forms, central to collaboration’ is one of the key cultural elements of the MinterEllison Way. It helps us to make better decisions and create lasting impacts with our clients, our people and our communities.

The last year challenged us by dispersing us physically, but our commitment to diversity and inclusion was unwavering, brought to life by the passion and participation of our people across the Firm.

### Engaging more diverse leaders

At the beginning of the year, our Board’s Diversity & Inclusion Sub-Committee began the process of engaging a broader, more diverse group of leaders to better represent the diversity that exists across our Firm.

The role of this newly formed group, the Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee, is to actively progress the diversity and inclusion ambitions of the Firm in collaboration with the CEO, Executive Leadership Team, partners and a soon-to-be-formed working group of staff D&I champions.

The new committee has developed, and received Board approval for, its Charter and its role in the governance structure of the Firm. It has also set the priorities for 2021, with a focus on developing inclusive leadership capability, applying a diversity and inclusion lens to the Firm’s branding, along with a potential client charter around sustainable ways of working. The working group will support this important activity.

We have made pleasing progress this year against our 2025 partnership gender target of 40:40:20 – 40 percent women, 40 percent men and 20 percent any gender. We are pleased to report, as of 1 January 2021, we now have 33 percent female partners globally.

### Celebrating diversity and inclusion in all its forms

This year, we celebrated International Women’s Day in all of our offices with panel conversations highlighting the intersection of cultural inclusion and gender diversity. In addition to our work on gender equality, we remain committed to a strong focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion led by Pride, Respect and Inclusion at MinterEllison (PRIME), as well as cultural and disability inclusion. This year, we recognised International Day for People with Disability by focusing on the development of disability employment pathways.

A significant highlight for 2020 was our participation in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. After 20 years of providing pro bono legal advice to Mardi Gras, it was a privilege for representatives of the Firm to march with our own float down Sydney’s iconic Oxford Street.





## Creating lasting impacts: Our people

### Working with our clients and communities

Our commitment to reconciliation with Australia's First Nations people is represented by our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We are currently developing the Firm's second RAP and, this year, we celebrated National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week together virtually due to COVID restrictions.

We continued to raise awareness and share thinking and experiences with our clients and communities: with Woolworths (Diversity & Inclusion); with Anglo American (cultural inclusion); we participated in Global Transforming Women's Leadership Pathways digital event on Women – COVID, Caring and Careers; and with the Male Champions of Change on Disrupting the System – Preventing and responding to sexual harassment in the workplace.



### Lifting our spirits during COVID-19

When Melbourne was in the depths of stage four restrictions due to rising COVID-19 cases, it was easy to feel disconnected from others.

Working remotely and isolating from others made for a long, hard winter. That's why the Infrastructure, Construction and Property (ICP) team took matters into their own hands to lift each other's spirits.

Starting with one partner, the 'ICP Iso Countdown – 42 Days of Happy Songs' was launched. Each day someone was nominated to share a 'happy song' for that day and then they nominated another colleague, and so it rippled throughout the group and through every role level. As lockdown was extended, so too was the countdown.

From Spice Girls to The Angels, and from Motown to Rock, people shared their songs and commented on each other's choices, providing a much-needed platform that helped people to connect in a different way, have fun and build a sense of belonging. As one team member said, "everyone's contribution made it seem as if we're still, and we are, connected."

And for those that had recently joined the Firm, it was a great way to get to know people virtually without having met in person.



//  
Each day someone was nominated to share a 'happy song' for that day and then they nominated another colleague, and so it rippled throughout the group and through every role level. //



# Creating lasting impacts: **Our communities** ›

We're proud of the work we do every day with community organisations, social enterprises and our clients to break the cycles of disadvantage and improve the lives of those most in need in our community.

2020 was a record year in terms of the Firm's pro bono support and community investment, and our impact was wide-reaching.





## Bringing domestic and family violence into the daylight

Domestic and family violence is one of the most significant challenges facing our community and the effects of COVID-19 have only put more people at risk.

MinterEllison is committed to working with various community organisations to make a systemic change and put an end to domestic and family violence. As part of our longstanding partnership with Australia's CEO Challenge (ACEOC), we were proud to once again support its flagship fundraising event in 2020: Darkness to Daylight.

Initially founded by Robert Reed OAM, Special Counsel, and developed by a team of our people working with ACEOC, Darkness to Daylight has grown to become a national event. Participants run or walk 110km overnight to bring the issue of domestic and family violence out of the darkness and into the daylight, and raise much needed



funds and awareness. Each kilometre symbolises a life lost to domestic and family violence on average each year in Australia.

Faced with the restrictions of COVID-19, this year's event became a virtual challenge and participants ran the distance over the month of October. Many of our people and clients got behind this important cause and made a real impact through their involvement, helping the event to raise over \$360,000 in total.

The money raised will help ACEOC continue its vital work equipping workplaces to recognise and support those affected by domestic and family violence.



**MinterEllison, we thank you for your community investment... and the impact you have made in the area of domestic and family violence. With your support we have continued to work to our vision of a world free from domestic violence.**



**Jacque Lachmund**  
CEO of ACEOC

## Exercising around Australia's coastline to support LifeChanger Foundation

As Victoria was in the midst of its second COVID-19 lockdown, we found a unique way to make a difference for young Australians and our Melbourne colleagues.

Some 246 people from across the Firm joined forces with a number of our clients to participate in the KMs 4 Kids challenge and virtually run, swim, cycle and walk around the Australian coastline. The challenge raised important funds for LifeChanger Foundation and its crucial work in providing resources, skills, education and positive pathways for Australia's youth.

Six of our 11 teams were combined MinterEllison and client teams. We were joined by 59 people from EnergyAustralia, Optus, Qantas, Stockland, IAG and a range of construction clients, enabling us to make an even greater impact for our community.

Over the course of a month, we recorded the kilometres covered during daily exercise and followed our virtual progress around the country. In an impressive effort, our teams covered more than twice the route around the Australian coastline.

Not only did our efforts help make a difference to the lives of young people, it was a valuable way to support our Melbourne colleagues through the effects of a difficult lockdown. It gave many of them the opportunity to stay motivated, active and connected with their clients and teams.

## Creating lasting impacts: Our communities

### Driving systemic change to end homelessness

There are more than 116,000 people who are homeless in Australia and many more who are at risk of becoming homeless. This is an issue MinterEllison is passionate about addressing.

We recognise that homelessness is much more than a housing issue – it's about breaking the cycles of disadvantage facing the most vulnerable members of our community. Using our skills, expertise and networks, we're working with community organisations, governments and businesses to drive systemic change at both an industry and individual level in order to end homelessness.

Through our relationships with legal clinic programs and outreach services across the country, we provide pro bono legal assistance to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, handling issues such as debt, fines, housing and victim compensation. We partner with a number of organisations to advocate and build a movement for change.

Here's a snapshot of some of the organisations we're working with to address homelessness and create better futures for those in need.

### The Constellation Project

This project brings together indigenous representatives, people with lived experience and experts in relevant fields to end homelessness.

We're proud to be playing a key role in unlocking capital for the benefit of social and affordable housing, and developing and testing models with a range of organisations, government agencies, banks and regulators.

### Australian Human Rights Commission – disability discrimination

We're working with the Commission to deliver innovative approaches to housing options that improve the lives of young people with disabilities.

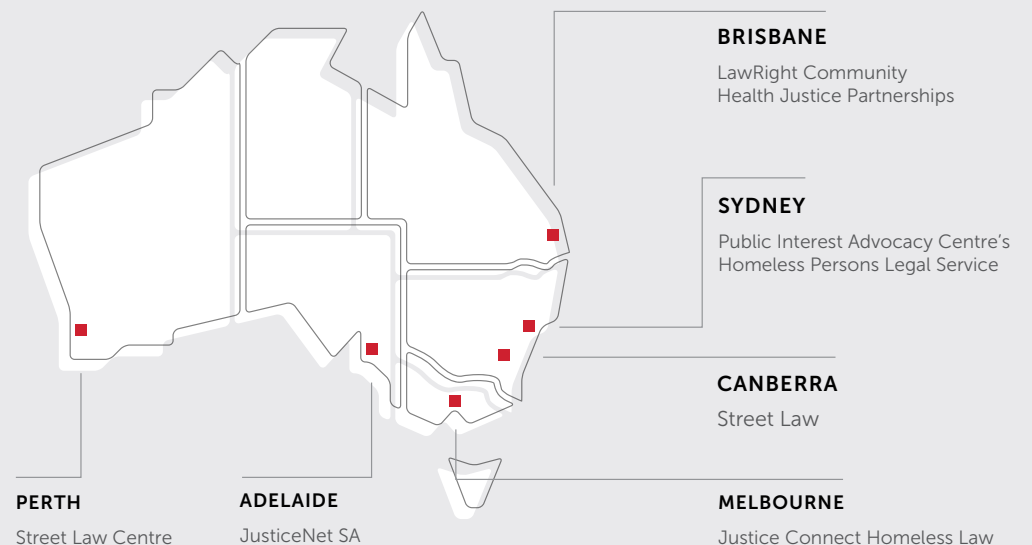
### Housing All Australians

We're supporting Housing All Australians to address the shortage of affordable housing by advising on the organisation's structure and governance models in each state.

We're also assisting on a turn-key development project for The Salvation Army at Box Hill.



### Partners across Australia



## Delivering the commitments of our first Reconciliation Action Plan

In 2020, many people across our Firm were involved in delivering the objectives of our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Through our RAP we have built awareness and understanding of the issues important to First Nations people. We have listened and engaged with, and aimed to understand, Indigenous knowledge and culture. Much of the work undertaken was aimed at building opportunities for greater economic participation through improved educational pathways and supporting Indigenous businesses and community organisations, including Indigenous social enterprises.



MinterEllison has focused on establishing strong relationships with Indigenous organisations and community members. In the past year, we provided more than 2,200 hours of pro bono legal advice to Indigenous organisations, used our purchasing power to procure goods and services from Indigenous enterprises and, in doing so, supported employment pathways. We are on track to double our contribution both in terms of providing pro bono legal services and procurement from Indigenous enterprises in FY21.

Development of the Firm's next RAP is well underway to amplify the impact we can make. We now have more than 200 RAP allies and a strong RAP Working Group. We will continue to participate in key community initiatives such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

### Many Rivers

Our enduring relationship with Many Rivers – a for-purpose organisation providing microenterprise and community economic development, including support to First Nations people – is another example of our RAP in action.

In a collaborative effort involving all practice groups, we have assisted the many individuals supported by Many Rivers, enabling the organisation to increase its impact. We have also provided regulatory advice and support to build its lending business.

### Black Duck Foods

Our relationship with Black Duck Foods is supporting First Nations people to redevelop traditional food growing and country management processes, delivering economic benefits and driving sustainability.

Our pro bono advice includes secretariat support, corporate governance and assisting with business structuring and asset protection. Our digital team has also donated laptops for Black Duck Foods' field use.





### **The Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Arts Centre Collective (APYACC)**

A great example of creating lasting impacts with Indigenous Australians is our relationship with APYACC.

We provide legal advice across a variety of areas to help APYACC continue its important work: increasing capacity for APY art centres, creating a united vision and voice on strategic business initiatives, and collaborating on artistic projects.



The important work undertaken by MinterEllison... has had a significant impact on the lives of Indigenous families in the APY region. MinterEllison staff...have demonstrated incredible expertise, integrity and respect for the Indigenous elders whose vision it is to create a better future for their children and grandchildren through their art centres. The partnership is not only a valued and vital legal resource, it contributes to the sense that injustices of the past can be healed and grows confidence that a better future is possible for remote Indigenous Australians.



**Skye O'Meara**  
General Manager of APYACC





## Industry insights ›

We bring deep industry perspectives to helping our clients with their most complex challenges. Our teams stay at the leading edge of industry issues and proactively look for opportunities to share with our clients. Our Industry Leaders reflect on the many challenges and opportunities of the past year and on what lies ahead.



### Education

COVID-19 had an immediate impact on the education sector, with many operators required to shut their campuses and swiftly move to online and virtual modes of study. We helped clients ensure their operations could continue in compliance with complex and varying regulatory standards, navigate unprecedented financial pressures and ensure they are positioned for the sector's successful rebound.

Throughout the year, we provided whole-of-firm support to the education industry, advising on issues from online learning, privacy and intellectual property to workplace reforms and safety, regulatory matters and impacts of COVID-19.

The financial impact of COVID-19 on our education clients was immediate, with universities in particular required to take unprecedented cost-cutting measures to assure their ongoing financial viability and sustainability. We worked with many Australian universities to implement necessary restructures and reforms, in a complex industrial relations setting.

We worked with providers of tertiary and school education to ensure their ongoing operations could continue in compliance with complex and varying regulatory standards that apply to domestic and international students across the sector.

We have been planning for the return international students, who are fundamental to the continued success of Australia's tertiary education sector. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been engaging with government, the COVID-19 Commission, regulators, peak public and private industry bodies, major public and private providers and support services to plan for their return through a COVID safe corridor.

We have helped our clients position themselves for the sector's successful rebound, supporting tertiary and school education providers on the safe re-opening of campuses, and planning for new and redeveloped campuses to support long-term strategic objectives.

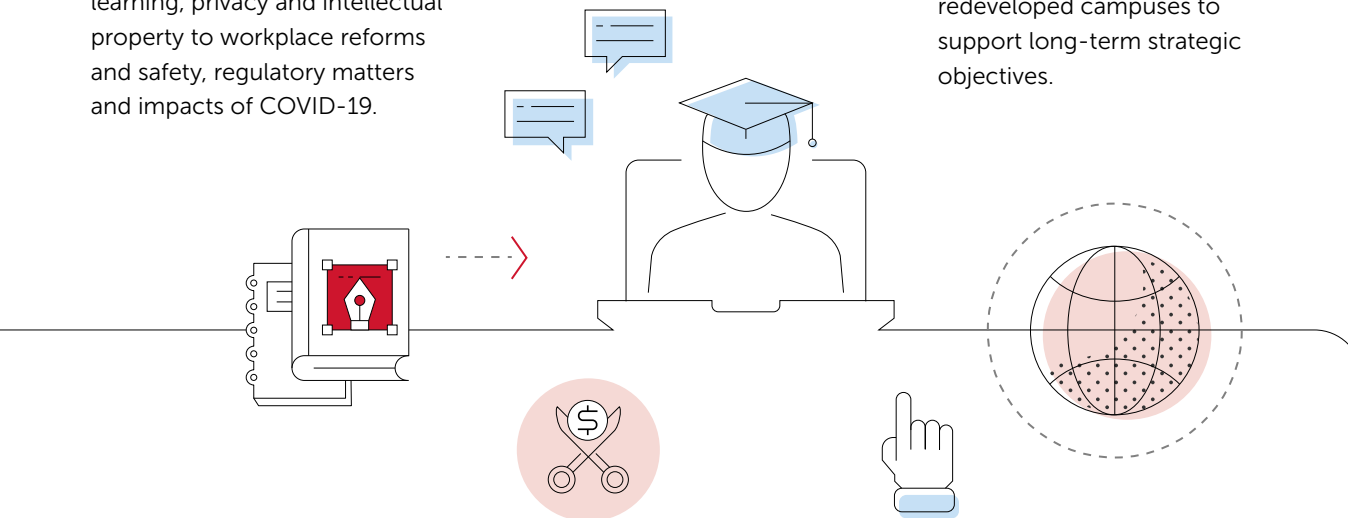
We continue to advise education providers in relation to a broad range of reforms and inquiries, including the new foreign relations legislation, the inquiry into foreign interference in Australian universities, protecting academic freedom and freedom of speech at our universities, reforms to criminalise contract cheating and the forthcoming implementation of new provider category standards.



The year ahead is a critical time for the education sector. We saw fast and sustained growth pre-COVID in international education and Australia aims to maintain its position globally as a sought-after destination for international students. To support this, **we're working closely with key stakeholders to create COVID-safe opportunities and enable long-term, positive impacts** by retaining confidence in the sector.



**Tom Fletcher**  
Industry Leader





## Energy and Resources

A broad industry framing four dynamic sectors – Mining & Metals, Electricity & Renewables, Oil & Gas, and Water – our dedicated Energy & Resources team supports leading private and public organisations, government, regulators and industry stakeholder clients across the full lifecycle of a project and on business-critical issues.

2020 brought significant challenges and opportunities to our energy and resources clients.

Disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic took centre stage as we supported our clients in maintaining operations and intra-state and cross border worker movements in a rapidly evolving restrictions matrix.

Emerging market forces triggered by pressing ESG concerns and an energy market in transition saw sustained growth across the renewables space – particularly batteries and a developing interest in hydrogen. This was further fuelled by government incentives and Renewable Energy Zones, and healthy global sentiment toward renewable opportunities in Australia.

In one significant matter, we advised the Victorian Government on a ground breaking regulatory approach for improved electricity supply and increased power to the state's energy grid, delivering the largest lithium-ion battery in the southern hemisphere – with significant lasting impacts for Victorian electricity consumers.

In the mining and metals sector, we continued to assist longstanding clients with significant mine project expansions and transactions, and juniors and mid-tier operators with new projects and financing.

In 2020, we also supported the boards of some of Australia's largest mining companies with their climate risk strategies – an increasingly significant issue demanding board attention and oversight. This work was supported by our first Responsible Business webinar headlined by MinterEllison's Head of Climate Risk Governance, Sarah Barker – an event which attracted great interest from E&R Boards, C-suite, General Counsel, legal and sustainability executives.



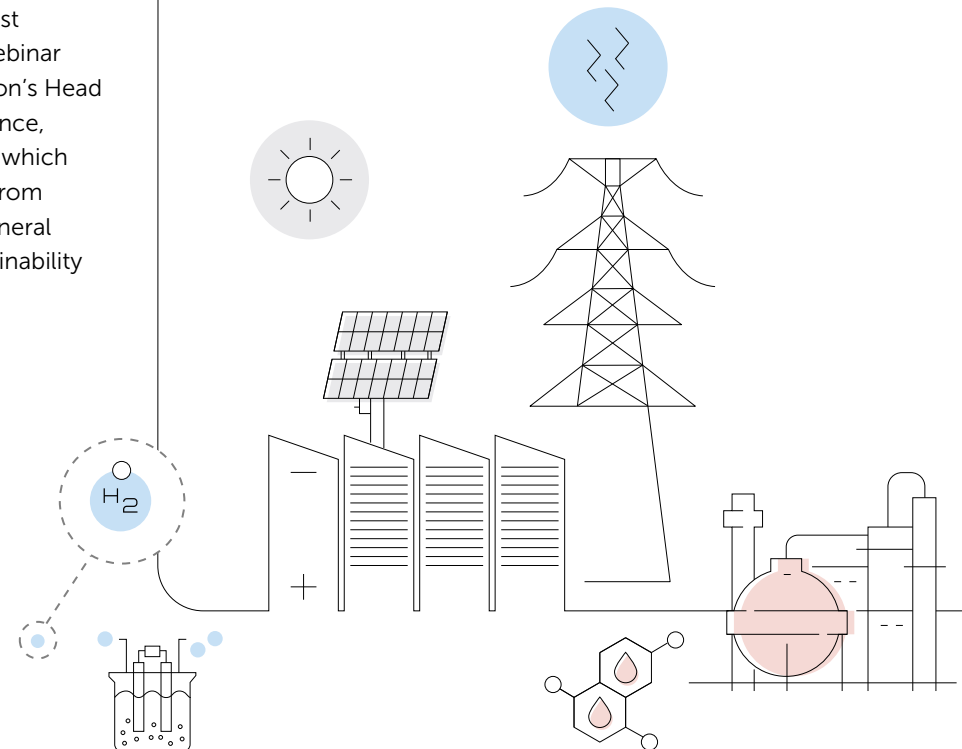
What do we see coming up in the energy and resources industry in 2021? In short, more of the same – change, challenge and lots of opportunity.

**We're excited to be part of it and to bring the best of our technical, industry and commercial expertise to our clients**

to successfully set and execute their 2021 agendas, and together make lasting impacts.



**Simon Scott**  
Industry Leader



### Health

The strength of the health sector is vital to our nation.

Our dedicated health industry team is focused on supporting our clients to reimagine delivery of services across the health and ageing spectrum including managing costs, new technology, workforce shortages and personalised medicine.

Health is one of the largest employing sectors in Australia and its services are critical to our nation. At MinterEllison, we're focused on providing solutions that help our clients to respond to current demands, industry trends, and meet the challenges that lie ahead.

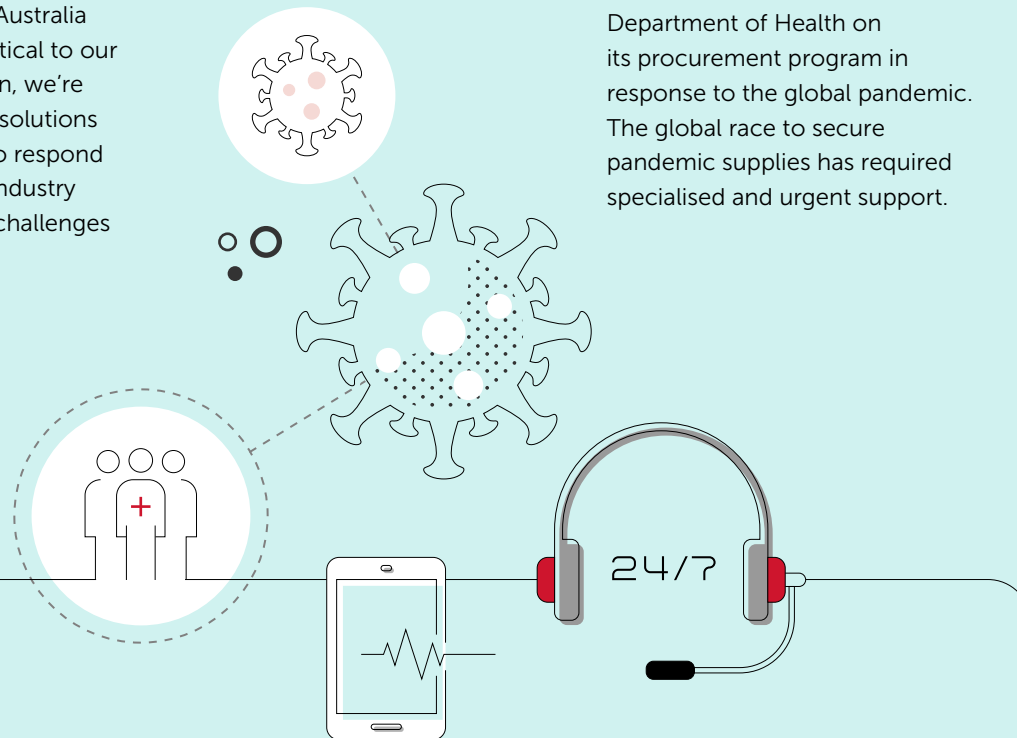
COVID-19 has presented the largest public health challenge in over 100 years. We've seen our healthcare professionals put themselves on the line like never before, facing the brunt of the pandemic and caring for the most vulnerable in our society – putting themselves at risk in the process.

From the outset, we have been supporting the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) across a range of matters including providing secondees to assist in the response to the pandemic in Victoria. We've also provided 24/7 support via a hotline to the Department, providing urgent legal advice on health, disability and aged care. It's been a whole-of-firm effort that continues today.

We've also provided support to the Commonwealth Department of Health on its procurement program in response to the global pandemic. The global race to secure pandemic supplies has required specialised and urgent support.

Our work across the sector has involved providing extensive updates to the rapidly changing impacts for healthcare, from privacy and workplace safety implications of health workers and patients to supporting innovation through regulatory and intellectual property advice.

We have been inspired by the resilience our clients have shown throughout 2020 in managing significant and unexpected challenges in the sector. As we look to 2021 and beyond, we feel privileged to be part of a sector that creates lasting impacts for so many in our community. As the sector continues to transform, we will be supporting our clients to navigate the myriad changes and take advantage of new opportunities and innovations.



**//**  
2020 has presented the most significant and unexpected challenges I have seen in the health sector in my career. It has been a privilege to support our clients at such a pivotal time.  
**Now is the time to make the most of new developments, opportunities and growth in the sector. //**

**Shane Evans**  
Industry Leader

## Industry insights

### Financial Services

In 2020, few industries faced as many significant challenges and uncertainties as Financial Services.

The aftermath of the Royal Commission. The break-up of the industry into its three components. Increased regulation, scrutiny and focus on governance, culture, conduct and accountability.

And of course, the wide ranging impact of COVID, together with the enormous role played by the industry in supporting business and the community.

Our clients turned increasingly to us, and throughout the year we've been in the trenches helping them address these issues.

It has been a hugely challenging time for the sector: from the fallout of the Royal Commission, to the devastation of the 2019/2020 'Black Summer' Australian bushfires and more recently the COVID pandemic. All have had far-reaching and long lasting effects.

In supporting our clients we brought a whole-of-firm mindset to provide holistic, effective and preventative solutions. Pleasingly, our work has been diverse and wide reaching.

We have helped our clients address their product design and distribution obligations.

We supported the development and implementation of a number of remediation programs, critical to helping clients rebuild customer and community trust and respond to regulatory change. In delivering remediation work we brought together expertise from both our legal and consulting teams and across a range of areas including financial services, regulatory and technology.

We helped a big four bank create and implement specific business banking products for customers most in need of support with their finances due to the impacts of COVID and the ongoing effects of the bushfires.

In response to the new ways of working due to the pandemic, reforms to enable entirely paperless mortgage transactions were tabled. Working with another big four bank and the Australian Banking Association (ABA), we provided advice in relation to ensuring the efficacy of paperless transactions. This advice has since been shared with the Federal Attorney General as well as the Titles Office and Attorney General in all Australian states.

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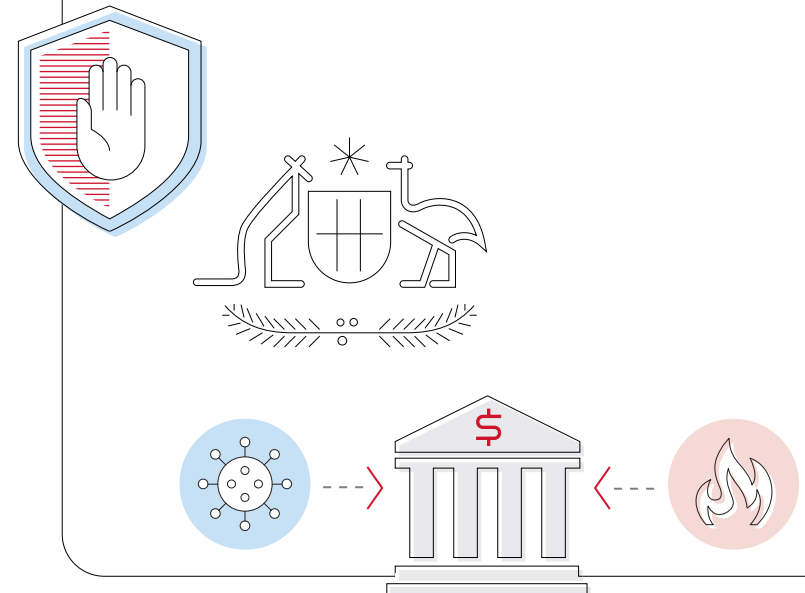
We recognise that when clients select us they put their personal reputation in our hands.

**We therefore focus on safeguarding that reputation by providing reliable, top class advice and valuable insights.**

Industry specialisation, technical excellence, whole-of-firm thinking and the quest to always earn the right to be our clients' first choice are our foundation stones.

//

**Rahoul Chowdry**  
Industry Leader





## Infrastructure

Infrastructure is more than just providing physical assets. The market demands the development of long-lasting, high-performing infrastructure that maximises social return on investment.

Our multi-disciplinary team of experts understands this and the positive, economic impact infrastructure projects provide.

Infrastructure has always been central to supporting jobs and a strong economy, and the importance of that has never been more apparent.

The challenges of COVID-19 have seen a significant shift in the issues facing the sector. Working side-by-side with our clients, our team has helped them navigate this unprecedented time. Whether it be helping to keep their businesses afloat and sites open or finding innovative ways to continue to deliver vital projects, we're continuing to support the public and private sectors on all types of infrastructure projects.

This year, our team relished the opportunity to live our Firm's Purpose and ensure a cutting-edge new cancer treatment centre, the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute Project, proceeded during a global pandemic. The centre will deliver the most technologically advanced and precise radiation therapy ever seen in the southern hemisphere.

Approval to commence the centre's construction was imminent when COVID-19 hit. With patients awaiting the new treatment, delaying the project was not an option. Our team restructured the entire transaction so it could proceed, implementing an alternative delivery model that incentivised the contractor to deliver within budget and on time. The positive impact of this solution was widespread – for our client, the community and the broader economy.

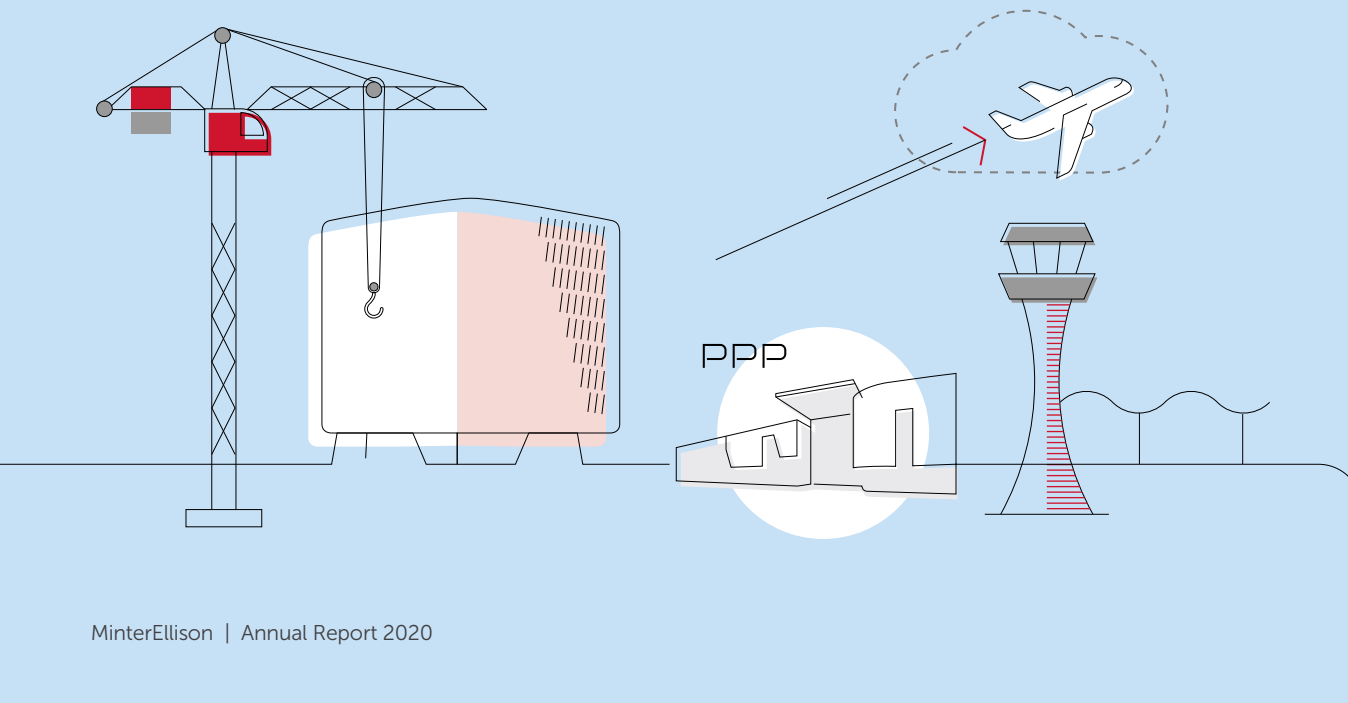
In NSW, our team has been advising the State government on the biggest public transport project in Australia, Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport. This key transport link for Greater Western Sydney, connects communities to the new Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport and to the growing region. A city-shaping project, that will be a major economic stimulus for western Sydney linking residential areas with job hubs including the new Aerotropolis, and connecting

airport travellers to the rest of Sydney's transport system. We continue to bring a range of expertise from across our Firm to the table to support our client.

In South Australia, we have continued to engage with our client, the Crown Solicitor and the Department of Education, on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) to deliver and build two birth to Year 12 schools, vital to the local communities.

**“**  
As we come out of COVID-19, we have a unique opportunity to create lasting impacts in the infrastructure sector. By making the most of our Firm's multi-disciplinary approach, we can help our clients create jobs, effectively deliver vital infrastructure projects that support our community and play a significant role in the economic recovery of our nation.  
**”**

**Nicole Green**  
Industry Leader



### Real Estate and Property

Our Real Estate team is a market leading practice working alongside both private and government clients. We provide strategic advice to complex real estate transactions spanning the development, sale, purchase and leasing of commercial, industrial, residential and retail developments and infrastructure assets.

COVID-19 has presented many new and interesting challenges in the sector this year. While it's been a time of change and uncertainty, it's also been a time of collaboration and innovation as different parties have come together to share concerns, ideas and solutions in response to the crisis.

A key outcome has been the introduction of the National Code of Conduct for Commercial Tenancies. Working closely with the Property Council of Australia (PCA), our team developed and launched a detailed Compendium to provide guidance for landlords and tenants in each jurisdiction to assist them in navigating the National Cabinet's Mandatory Code of Conduct guidelines.

When the Federal Government announced a National Code would give rent relief to tenants, there was significant pressure on real estate clients to quickly determine how to manage this, and deal with different approaches in each state. The Compendium enabled our clients to remain up to date with the constantly changing obligations, consequences and practical issues arising from changes, and the variances across each state.

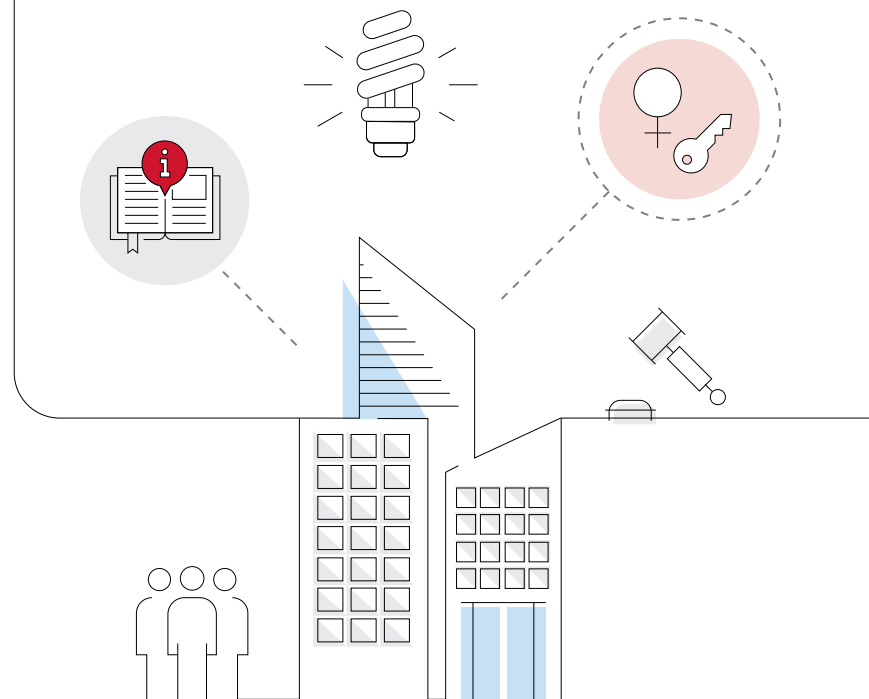
We have also been working with a major not-for-profit, Housing All Australians (HAA), where we are bringing together and coordinating pro bono professional services (including our own) and pro bono construction services to convert or upgrade unused or underutilised buildings (usually owned by other not-for-profits) into fit-for-purpose accommodation for older women who are experiencing homelessness. Unlike other charities, HAA brings a commercial lens to address the shortage of affordable social and public housing in Australia. This pro bono work has given our team a greater sense of Purpose in 2020, in a year which has had a significant impact on so many people.



We've been working closely with our real estate clients and the industry to navigate what has been a challenging year for the sector. We're seeing a shift in what's considered 'hot property' with industrial as a clear front runner, mainly driven by the rapid changes in supply chain and online shopping. As the sector starts to bounce back heading into 2021, **there will be opportunities in all asset classes to deal, invest, develop, finance and re-shape portfolios.**



**Virginia Briggs**  
Industry Leader



### Government

Our expert team supports government at all levels with a focus on advising state, territory, and commonwealth governments as well as a range of public sector entities.

With government policy, stimulus, industry reform, and infrastructure development continuing to shape the economic recovery in Australia, the government sector remains a clear priority for our Firm.

In a year of significant and unexpected challenges, the public sector has played a critical role in supporting Australian citizens. As the effects of the Black Summer Bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, staff at all levels, especially frontline workers and throughout the bureaucracy, have been remarkably responsive, agile, and indefatigable in challenging and ever-changing circumstances.

In the face of the pandemic, there have been a range of new developments including the establishment of drive-through testing centres; COVID tracing apps; new ABS statistical products in response to the urgent need for relevant data to inform Australia's COVID response; fact-tracked procurements to secure PPE supplies in the global race; strategies to secure local supply chains; and vaccine funding and procurement strategies. And with the establishment of the national cabinet, there have been new opportunities for political leaders to work together to navigate their way through the crisis.

Our Firm has been proud to support the public sector in FY20, including:

- Northern Territory Electricity reforms
- Aged Care Royal Commission and Disability Royal Commission
- New South Wales Government – Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport
- Victorian Government – Electricity/Energy
- Victorian Government – Attorney General and Minister for Industrial Relations
- Victorian Government – Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Commonwealth Department of Health
- Australian Taxation Office

This work and these investments made by government will no doubt create lasting impacts for generations to come.

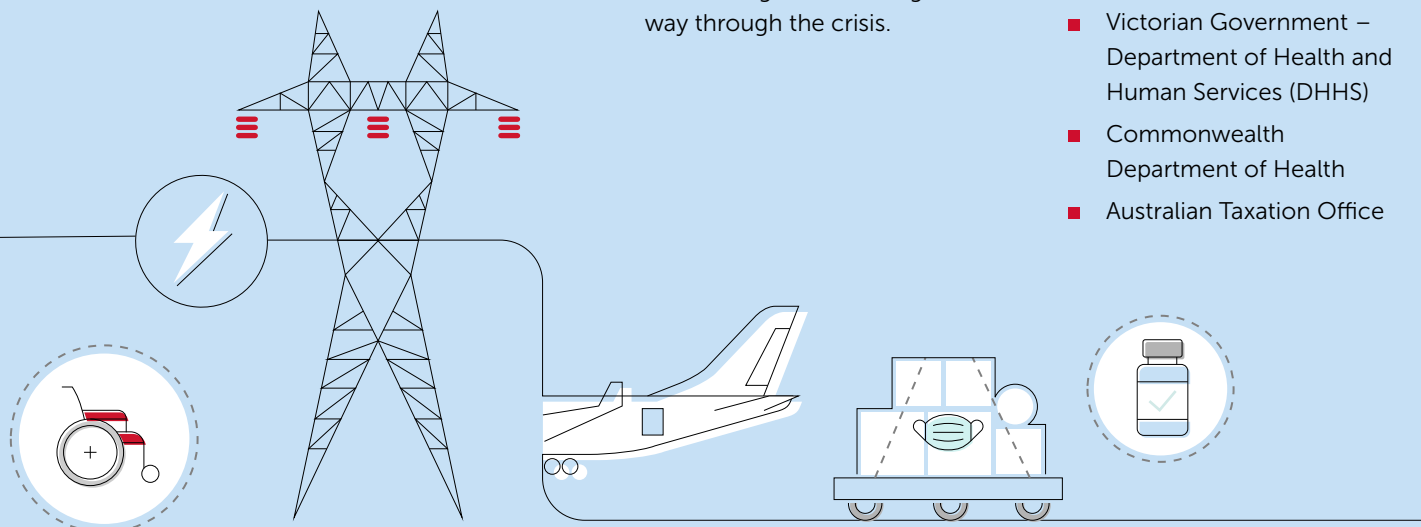
We have a 50-year history of advising governments on many of their most sensitive and high profile matters across Australia. Key to our practice is understanding political and policy environments, and the particular pressures and processes of government. Now with a team of more than 600 government lawyers, and achieving year-on-year growth over the past few years, the government practice contributes close to 25 percent of overall client revenue.



**At a time of significant investment in infrastructure, transport, healthcare, and education projects, alongside a rapid digital transformation agenda, government remains a priority sector for our Firm, and importantly, we continue to provide support at all levels for and in the public interest.**



**Amanda Story**  
National Government Leader





## Sustainability ›

At MinterEllison, sustainability is broader than our impact on the environment. We're undertaking a range of key initiatives to drive sustainability in everything we do.

### Creating a sustainable future for all of us

'Sustainable ways of working' is a core element of the MinterEllison Way. Operating sustainably means that we're helping to create a sustainable future for all our people, our communities, and the environment.

In the past year the Firm launched its innovative Responsible Business practice, combining leading expertise across climate risk governance, sustainable finance, business and human rights, and conduct and culture to provide our clients with a consolidated perspective on these important emerging risk areas.

The Responsible Business team was instrumental in the Firm's recognition as the global Law Firm of the Year at Environmental Finance's inaugural 2020 IMPACT Awards.

In 2020 we began implementing our internal and external Environmental Sustainability Framework.



Internally, our commitment to sustainable ways of working starts with our people's wellbeing. COVID required a rapid and complex response to ensure people were equipped to work remotely. Increased investment in technology, learning and development, and supporting wellbeing were key features of the work undertaken and continue in 2021.



//

I'm given the trust and freedom to work in a way that's most sustainable for me.

**Everyone is genuine and focused on delivering great outcomes.**

//

Luke Gallant  
Workplace





With the guidance of our GreenME Committee (an internal committee driving sustainability initiatives), we have a target to be carbon neutral by 2025 and last year we procured more than \$400,000 goods and services from for-purpose organisations.

Externally, advice to clients reflects our understanding of the link between ecological boundaries and economic growth. Our industry groups bring together capability across the Firm to promote consideration of sustainability risk issues across our commercial practice.

We continue to work with not-for-profit organisations, social enterprises, and Indigenous Businesses who are at the forefront of innovation in sustainable business, from sustainable food production to the circular economy.

### **Climate Measurement Standards Initiative (CMSI) and Australian Sustainable Finance Initiative**

This past year, the Firm provided legal advice to CMSI, an Australian-first collaboration between climate scientists, insurers and the finance sector who have produced new guidance for assessing the physical risks of climate change to homes, buildings and critical infrastructure.

A set of open-source voluntary guidelines have been developed that will provide Australian banks, financial institutions and insurers with consistent scientific and technical guidance on how to assess the risk of climate-related damage to their buildings and critical infrastructure from extreme weather events.

This builds on our work with the Australian Sustainable Finance Initiative (ASFI), an industry-led initiative comprising senior representatives across the banking, insurance, superannuation, investment management, regulatory and community sectors. In late 2020, ASFI released its Roadmap aimed at optimising the financial services sector's involvement in the transition to a more resilient and sustainable economy.





### Global legal community comes together to drive climate solutions

The Chancery Lane Project is a global, pro bono initiative of lawyers driving solutions to climate change by rethinking commercial contracts and laws.

The project supports the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement targets of net zero emissions, limiting global temperature rises to below 2°C and to pursue a limit of 1.5°C.

The project harnesses the collective brain power of lawyers from all areas of practice and levels of seniority – from judges and partners of law firms to junior lawyers, in-house counsel, barristers, academics and law students. The vision is to create 'a world where every contract and law enable solutions to climate change'.

//  
The vision is to create  
'a world where  
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and law enable  
solutions to  
climate change'**  
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Our London office has been involved in the project from day one and members of our Melbourne office joined this year to spearhead the expansion of The Chancery Lane Project into Australia, despite the challenges of holding in-person events. This has involved organising and facilitating virtual hackathons across APAC in 'The Global Big

Hack 2020' and during New York Climate Week 2020. People from across offices and practice groups, together with our clients and other lawyers from across APAC, came together to collaborate and innovate – delivering excellence without attitude. A number of global law firms, including MinterEllison, have already announced that they are updating their precedents to incorporate the terms from the project's Climate Contract Playbooks.

Our clients, including NAB, SEC, Austral, BHP and Wesfarmers, have also been eager to get involved. This is another terrific example of the legal community coming together to drive positive outcomes to address climate change and the chance for all of us to create lasting impacts for future generations.





### Exploring new ways to reverse the effects of climate change

The Climate Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to moderating and reversing the effects of climate change in critical ecosystems. Comprised of people from all over the world, its common goal is to change the world for the better.

As part of our pro bono effort, our Firm has provided legal advice on the Climate Foundation's marine permaculture projects in Tasmania, the Great Barrier Reef, the Solomon Islands and the Philippines. We have provided support and guidance on a range of issues such as immigration law, government liaison and approval requirements, intellectual property, corporate governance and tax, and maritime law.

A significant part of the foundation's work involves exploring innovative approaches to regenerating life in the sea and soils. In July, working with the Foundation's Founder, Dr Brian Von Herzen, our Firm conducted an in-house, two-part seminar series on this topic for our people. 'Being curious and innovative' is a key element of the MinterEllison Way and this series enabled our people to explore new possibilities in combating global warming.

The first session explored innovations in kelp farms and how these help to regenerate ocean productivity as a solution to climate change, and the second session opened up the conversation enabling our people to contribute ideas.

It was incredibly engaging and popular. We felt privileged to hear directly from Dr Von Herzen, and many of our people were highly engaged in being part of the discussion to find solutions that reverse the effects of climate change.

// A significant part of the foundation's work involves exploring innovative approaches to regenerating life in the sea and soils. //



# Spotlight on innovation ›

Our people are curious and innovate, driven to challenge the status quo and to finding better ways. As a result, they generate valuable insights and innovations that create lasting impacts.



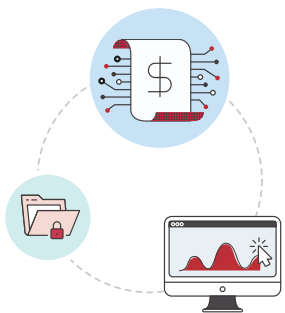
## Payroll Checker: new app has significant impact for clients and their people

In response to client needs on audits regarding potential underpayments of employees, the MinterEllison Workplace group developed Payroll Checker, a project led by Gareth Jolly.

An innovative application, Payroll Checker works at scale to identify employee underpayments. It enables large volumes of data to be analysed more efficiently and effectively, and at less cost to the client.

Previously, these types of audits involved a highly bespoke, complex model and process, typically undertaken by accounting firms. In a truly cross-office collaboration, the new tool developed by MinterEllison no longer requires external accountants and has significantly streamlined the process. The team performing the audit is able to accurately identify underpayments and prepare informative reports with clear reasoning behind any deviations.

MinterEllison has been recognised by the AFR BOSS Most Innovative Companies as one of the 10 most innovative professional services companies in Australia and New Zealand, with Payroll Checker being a core innovation. Adding to our growing list of adjacent services, Payroll Checker is helping us to have significant impact for our clients and their people.



**'...the audit is able to accurately identify underpayments and prepare reports with clear reasoning behind any deviations.'**





## Compendium provides invaluable guidance on COVID-19 in the real estate sector

During 2020, the National Cabinet came together to find solutions to the health and economic consequences of COVID-19.

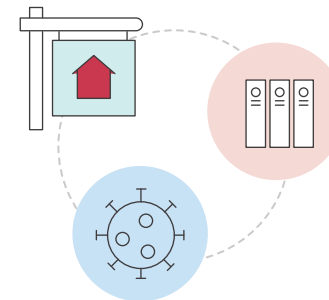
In April, it released commercial leasing principles for landlords and tenants – the COVID-19 National Cabinet Mandatory Code of Conduct and regulations. A key principle was that landlords were required to provide rent relief for eligible tenants.

While the Code aims to balance the interests of landlords and tenants, each state and territory were tasked to legislate as appropriate. This resulted in uncertainty across the industry as each state set out to implement legislation in different ways. The pace of change required to implement the new approach has been incredible, and the circumstances without precedent.

Working closely with the Property Council of Australia (PCA), we have been providing real-time feedback on changes to legislation and launched a detailed compendium about these changes. That compendium has become a vital reference for the industry and continues to help landlords navigate the changes introduced to support tenants suffering financial hardship due to COVID.

In a difficult time, the compendium has helped clients to understand the changes and enabled them to make decisions more easily. It has empowered them to walk the line between protecting their business and applying a spirit of fairness to tenants and the broader community, as intended in the principles.

Working in a truly collaborative and cross-disciplinary way, the team has presented information in a consistent and coherent manner at every step of the way, providing pragmatic solutions and giving reassurance to clients and the industry more generally. The work continues today, with version 16 of the compendium recently released.



**'It has empowered them to walk the line between protecting their business and applying a spirit of fairness...'**

## Practical guidance crucial to our clients in response to COVID-19

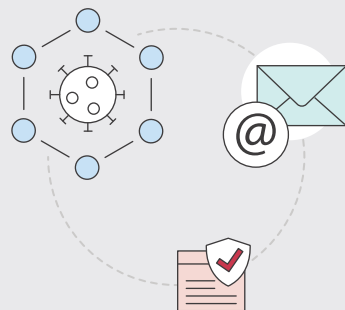
Our COVID-19 Response Team promptly came together early in 2020 to keep our clients and the market up-to-date with timely information and guidance on the issues and implications arising from the pandemic.

Comprising a core group of partners from all lines of business from across our Firm, the team worked collaboratively on a national basis to deliver practical and relevant guidance for clients.

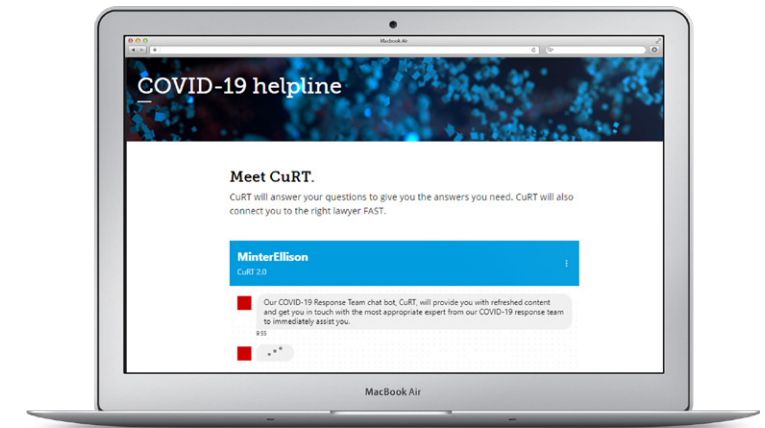
From the outset, our thinking and approach was shaped from the perspective of the client. We put ourselves in the shoes of a business owner or operator and looked at how COVID-19 could or would affect them across a broad range of issues; for example, shutdowns, supplier contracts, tenancies and other contractual obligations, insurance cover and what they could do to minimise impact on employees, customers and the business.

Staying on top of the changes in the law was vital. The JobKeeper legislation was significant and complex with wide impact on business and new public health orders and directions were made very quickly throughout the year in multiple jurisdictions (often applying retrospectively).

Our focus was to communicate the practical impact of the law clearly – to concurrently deliver specialist advice with clear practical guidance that assisted our clients navigate their way through the operational challenges caused by COVID-19.



**‘Our thinking and approach was shaped from the perspective of the client.’**



## Chatbot CuRT enabling 24/7 support

Innovation is a key element of the MinterEllison Way, and the COVID-19 Response Team eponymous CuRT is a great example of that. It started as an idea and in 8 days was made a reality. This 24/7 chatbot provides first response guidance to clients on how they should respond to changing circumstances due to COVID-19.

The Firm's client COVID-19 response earned MinterEllison recognition as one of Australia's Top 20 content marketers for 2020. The award recognised the useful and relevant content created during the pandemic, and how the Firm used digital platforms to connect with clients.



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