

Viola Katotas

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Professional Summary

I am a dedicated and experienced legal professional with over 24 years' experience in the legal and law enforcement sectors. As a barrister at the Victorian Bar for 14 years, I have developed a broad practice encompassing criminal law, family violence, civil litigation, personal injury, and coronial inquests.

My earlier career with Victoria Police, including nine years as a Police Prosecutor and experience in civil litigation and coronial matters, provides me with a unique, practical perspective on the intersection of law enforcement and legal advocacy.

I am a Nationally Accredited Mediator (AMDRAS), and I serve on the Magistrates' Court External Mediator Panel. My leadership experience includes roles in both government and community settings, including my current positions as Vice President of Southport Community Legal Service and Chairperson of the Disciplinary Appeals Board – Education.

Key Qualifications

- Over 14 years' experience as a barrister practising across criminal law, family violence, civil litigation, personal injury/common law.
 - Nine years' experience as a Police Prosecutor/Coroners Assitant, including management of prosecution staff and stakeholder engagement at Melbourne Magistrates' Court.
 - Accredited mediator under the Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards (AMDRAS); experienced in workplace, personal injury, and institutional abuse matters.
 - Vice President of a community legal service; experience in management, governance, and policy.
 - Demonstrated leadership in legal and public service roles, including disciplinary and educational governance boards.
 - Strong commitment to access to justice, community legal education, and pro bono service.
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Professional Experience**Chairperson – Disciplinary Appeals Board (Education Department)**

August 2025 – Present

- Presides over disciplinary hearings concerning public sector employment matters.
- Applies sound judgment and procedural fairness to complex and sensitive issues.

Member – Port Melbourne Primary School Council

March 2025 – Present

- Contributes to school governance, strategic direction, and policy development.

Vice President – Southport Community Legal Service

2023 – Present

- Chairs meetings in the President's absence; will assume Presidency in 2026.
- Oversees governance, legal service delivery, and volunteer support.
- Represents clients in summary pleas and family violence matters.

Nationally Accredited Mediator – Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards (AMDRAS)

2021 – Present

- Member of the Magistrates' Court External Mediator Panel.
- Conducts mediations involving civil disputes, workplace conflict, personal injury, and abuse claims.
- Proficient in online mediation platforms including Zoom, WebEx, and MS Teams.

Barrister – Victorian Bar

2011 – Present

- Appear in a broad range of matters including summary and indictable crime, family violence, civil litigation, coronial inquests, disciplinary proceedings and common law/personal injury.
- Extensive advocacy experience in the Magistrates', County, and Children's Courts, as well as the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).
- Regularly briefed in coronial inquests, representing families, agencies, and interested parties in complex and sensitive matters.

Victoria Police (2000 – 2011)

Acting Sergeant – Civil Litigation Division

Aug 2010 – Jan 2011

- Managed legal matters brought against Victoria Police.
- Ensured compliance with model litigant obligations and liaised with external counsel.

Police Prosecutor

2003 – 2010

- Appeared daily in Melbourne and Dandenong Magistrates' Courts across all lists.
- Managed staff, case allocation, and court strategy.
- Built strong relationships with stakeholders, including VLA and community services.

Coroner's Assistant

2003 – 2010

- Assisted Coroners with the conduct of investigations and inquests into reportable deaths.
- Supported the preparation of briefs of evidence, witness management, and coordination of court hearings.
- Contributed to the effective administration of justice by ensuring matters were properly investigated and hearings conducted efficiently.

Constable – Uniform Division

2000 – 2003

Education

NMAS Mediator Accreditation – Mediation Institute (May 2021)

Cultural Awareness Training – Koorie Heritage Trust (March 2021)

Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice – Australian National University (2010)

Bachelor of Laws – University of New England (2009)

Bachelor of Arts (Police Studies, Politics) – Monash University (1998)

Professional Memberships

- Nationally Accredited Mediator – Resolution Institute (2021–Present)
- Nationally Accredited Mediator – Mediation Institute (2021–Present)
- Member – Australian Institute of Company Directors (2024 – March 2025)
- Member – Common Law Bar Association (2012–Present)
- Member – Criminal Bar Association (2012–Present)

Volunteer & Community Engagement

Vice President and Committee Member, Southport Community Legal Service

- Contribute to strategic planning and governance through regular committee meetings.
- Provide operational support to volunteer lawyers during night service sessions.

- Represent clients in court who are ineligible for legal aid or other funding, ensuring access to justice for disadvantaged community members.

Pro Bono Advocate for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Community Members

- Represented families at Coronial Inquests, including acting for the spouse of a Muslim Indigenous Australian who died in custody.
- Appeared on behalf of parents in a Coronial Inquest concerning the death of their child in a Secure Extended Care Unit.
- Provided representation as a duty lawyer in the Domestic Violence List at Ringwood Magistrates' Court for Eastern Community Legal Services.

Community Legal Education and Service Development

- Contribute to community legal education initiatives aimed at improving public understanding of legal rights and processes.
 - Support the development and improvement of legal services to better meet the needs of vulnerable communities.
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Personal Qualities

- Strong initiative, leadership, and professional resilience
- Effective communicator with excellent planning and organisational skills
- Committed to integrity, fairness, and access to justice
- Calm and courteous under pressure
- Enjoys running and Pilates for personal wellbeing and balance