AGENDA

IN-HOUSE LEGAL SUMMIT AUSTRALIA 2026

28 October I Melbourne CBD

Australia's most practical one-day summit for in-house lawyers — Managing operational execution, compliance enforcement, and cost pressures

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IN-HOUSE LEGAL SUMMIT AUSTRALIA

28 October, 2026
Melbourne CBD

Event overview

Format	In-person and peer reviewed
Audience	In-House Counsel, General Counsel, Legal Operations Professionals
Positioning	Australia's most practical summit for In-House Lawyers
Core Value	Practical blueprints for In-House legal leaders to master operational efficiency, navigate aggressive regulatory enforcement, and drive commercial growth.

About

A peer-driven, high-impact one-day summit designed for General Counsel, Chief Legal Officers, Legal Operations leaders, and Company Secretaries navigating unrelenting cost pressures and aggressive regulatory scrutiny, the Thomson Reuters In-House Legal Summit 2026 is the forum where corporate legal leaders come to master operational execution and commercial strategy.

Taking place on Wednesday 28 October 2026 in Melbourne, IHLS 2026 brings together Australia's foremost in-house legal community for an intensely practical day of strategic panels, high-stakes keynotes, crisis-response deep dives, and closed-door peer problem-solving—moving far beyond generic theory.

Every session is engineered around the critical operational and regulatory realities facing legal leaders heading into 2027: balancing the expanding multi-hat mandate (GC, CRO, and Company Secretary), deploying agile resourcing and legal ops to beat the budget squeeze, proving legal's commercial ROI to the Board, and navigating strict enforcement across mandatory climate reporting, greenwashing, AML/CTF reforms, and volatile global supply chains.

Designed for legal leaders managing complex, high-stakes environments, IHLS 2026 equips delegates with the operational resilience, regulatory foresight, and strategic influence needed to defend the enterprise and enable commercial growth the very next day.

Why attend?

Designed for General Counsel, Legal Operations leaders, and corporate counsel navigating flat budgets and aggressive regulatory scrutiny, the Thomson Reuters In-House Legal Summit 2026 provides actionable blueprints to master operational execution, manage risk, and drive commercial value. From deploying a 48-hour cyber crisis playbook and defending financial-grade climate disclosures to reining in external spend and achieving measurable ROI from AI governance, this summit equips senior legal leaders with the practical strategies needed to protect the enterprise and lead with commercial influence.

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What makes IHLS different?

Peer-Driven & Advisory Board–Curated: Returning for its second year, the agenda is shaped directly by a board of sitting General Counsel and legal leaders to address the immediate to mid-term operational, cost, and regulatory priorities facing lean in-house teams.

Closed-Door Candour Under Chatham House Rule: Features an unscripted, slide-free open circle under the Chatham House Rule, providing a confidential forum to share candid survival strategies, compliance challenges, and budget realities.

✓ Chatham House Rule

Not just the breakouts — every panel, keynote, and fireside chat is built for the kind of honesty you can't get on the record.

✓ Three pressures, one integrated agenda

Operational execution, compliance enforcement, and cost control — tackled together in every session, not siloed into separate tracks.

✓ Built for 2027, not a recap of 2026

From ASIC's pivot to active enforcement to AML/CTF's new regulated perimeter — this agenda gets you ahead of what's coming, not just what's already happened.

✓ Playbooks, not panels

Walk away with a 48-hour cyber crisis framework, AI governance KPIs, and rate-negotiation tactics you can use Monday morning — not just talking points.

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2026 Advisory Panel

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Partner,
Thomson Greer

Deborah Banwell
General Counsel,
Company Director,
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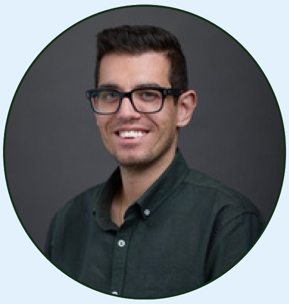

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2026 agenda overview

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Melbourne

8:20 am Registration Open

8:55 am Opening remarks by the MC

9:00 am Industry Keynote

The regulatory and business environment facing GCs in 2027

The modern General Counsel is no longer merely a defensive gatekeeper or technical legal advisor—they are a core architect of enterprise strategy, corporate governance, and commercial resilience. However, this expanded influence arrives at a time of severe macroeconomic volatility and unrelenting margin pressure. Legal leaders are expected to act simultaneously as strategic advisors to the C-suite, trusted partners to business units, Chief Risk Officers anticipating geopolitical and market shocks, and Company Secretaries safeguarding boardroom governance.

Balancing these multifaceted responsibilities requires a rigorous approach to resource allocation and operational efficiency. In an era where corporate mandates demand doing more with flat or shrinking budgets, GCs must master the art of financial and operational discipline. This keynote provides practical blueprints for navigating the multi-hat leadership mandate, ruthlessly optimising external legal spend, and structuring a high-performing, commercially aligned in-house legal function built to thrive in a volatile global market.

- Moving beyond standard panel discounts to deploy assertive rate-negotiation strategies, robust panel benchmarking, and fixed-fee/value-based pricing models that rein in escalating external counsel costs.
- Practical models for assessing true internal capacity, structuring team topology to eliminate low-value work, and balancing senior strategic counsel with operational support without driving team burnout.
- Practical frameworks for balancing overlapping and sometimes competing responsibilities across the GC, Chief Risk Officer (CRO), and Company Secretary roles—ensuring independent legal and risk oversight while actively enabling commercial growth.
- Strategies for translating complex cross-border regulatory exposure, supply-chain vulnerabilities, and operational legal risks into actionable, commercially quantified business metrics that resonate with the CEO, CFO, and Board of Directors.

9:40 am Regulatory Q&A

Panel in the GC's chair: Regulation, technology, and geopolitics through a GC's lens

The current General Counsel remit is multi-dimensional — where regulation, AI, cyber, and geopolitics are just four of the many balls a GC is juggling alongside commercial deal-making, board relationships, talent, and budget. This panel pulls back the lens to ask a broader question: what does it actually feel like to hold the GC mandate right now, when new regulation, emerging technology, cyber exposure, and geopolitical volatility are just four items on a much longer list that also includes commercial deal support, board politics, talent retention, and a budget that never quite matches the risk. Rather than another deep dive into any single threat, this session is a candid, wide-ranging conversation with sitting General Counsel about how they are actually prioritising, delegating, and staying sane while everything competes for their attention at once.

- How GCs are triaging an ever-expanding remit—when regulatory change, AI adoption, cyber risk, and geopolitical disruption all land in the same week, what actually gets a GC's personal attention versus what gets delegated.
- How much technology and regulatory risk is genuinely new versus how much is existing risk simply becoming more visible and better reported to the board.
- Career reflections on building a personal operating model as GC—how panellists structure their own time, teams, and advisors to stay strategic rather than permanently reactive.
- What GCs wish the CEO, CFO, and Board understood about the true breadth of the role, and where their mandate is heading over the next 2–3 years.

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*agenda subject to change

10:20 am Sponsor Keynote

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10:35 am Morning tea break

11:15 am Industry Keynote

From legal gatekeeper to commercial advisor — measuring influence, not just matters closed

For decades, the in-house legal function has been measured by what it prevented: matters closed, disputes avoided, deals de-risked. But as GCs increasingly sit at the strategy table, that scorecard no longer reflects — or protects — legal's real value. The next evolution of the role isn't just about being present in commercial conversations; it's about actively shaping them, quantifying legal's contribution in terms the business already speaks, and knowing when to say "manageable" instead of reflexively saying "no." This session explores what it actually takes to shift legal's internal brand from risk-blocker to growth-enabler — and how to prove it.

- Translating legal and regulatory risk into commercial choices the business can act on — reframing advice from binary "yes/no" positions into risk-weighted options the C-suite can actually decide between.
- Building a practical framework to distinguish genuinely unacceptable risk from manageable, commercially-acceptable risk — and giving business units the confidence to own that second category without escalating everything back to legal.
- Moving beyond "matters closed" and "costs avoided" as the only metrics of legal's value — developing forward-looking KPIs (deal velocity, revenue enabled, risk-adjusted commercial outcomes) that demonstrate legal as a value driver, not a cost centre.
- Practical tactics for influencing executives and the Board — building credibility in the room, choosing the right moment to push back versus enable, and turning legal counsel into a trusted voice in strategic decision-making rather than a final sign-off gate.
- Case studies or war stories: moments where reframing a "no" into a structured "yes, if..." materially changed a commercial outcome.

11:55 am Sponsor Keynote

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12:10 pm Industry Keynote

Anticipating the 2027 enforcement outlook: What legal teams need to prepare for

General Counsel are no longer managing regulatory risk one domain at a time. Climate disclosure, cyber resilience, financial crime obligations, and AI governance are landing simultaneously — often overseen by the same overstretched legal team, frequently with overlapping regulators, and increasingly with personal liability attached for the people signing off. This keynote takes a cross-cutting view of the regulatory landscape heading into 2027, examining not just what's changing in each domain, but how legal teams build one coherent governance and risk framework robust enough to withstand scrutiny across all of them at once.

- Climate and ESG disclosure moving from implementation to enforcement
- Financial crime and sanctions exposure widening the regulated perimeter
- Cyber and data governance under compressed timelines
- AI adoption outpacing AI governance
- The connective thread: how GCs build a single, board-ready risk governance model that satisfies climate, cyber, financial crime, and AI obligations simultaneously — rather than running four disconnected compliance programs — and how to communicate that consolidated risk picture to the CEO, CFO, and Board in language they can act on.

*agenda subject to change

12:50 pm Networking Lunch

1:50 pm Peer-to-Peer fireside chat

Peer-to-Peer fireside chat: AI Governance & tech stack ROI, moving beyond the hype

The honeymoon phase of Generative AI and legal technology is officially over. As corporate legal departments face intense budget scrutiny, General Counsel and Legal Ops leaders must move beyond small-scale pilots and "proof-of-concept" purgatory. The mandate for 2026 is clear: legal technology must deliver measurable, scalable business value.

However, scaling these tools introduces unprecedented legal and operational risks. From algorithmic bias and vendor lock-in to the terrifying risk of waiving legal professional privilege (LPP) through third-party data ingestion, today's legal leaders must be master risk managers as well as tech adopters.

This panel of leading General Counsel, Legal Ops pioneers, and technology experts will discuss how to transition from tech experimentation to safe, enterprise-wide deployment.

- Moving past vague "time-saved" metrics to establish rigorous KPIs that measure true productivity gains, external spend reduction, and speed-to-contract.
- Establishing practical guardrails for corporate AI usage, including vendor risk assessment, mitigating "shadow AI," and protecting attorney-client privilege and work-product doctrine from accidental waiver when querying AI models.
- Strategies for overcoming lawyer resistance to new tools, managing change at scale, and auditing your existing tech stack to decommission underutilised, high-cost legacy software.

2:30 pm Industry Panel

The GC's 48-hour cyber crisis playbook: Legal defence, tech triage, and regulatory containment in the era of automated threats

When a major cyber incident strikes, manual response processes fail and the clock starts ticking immediately. The first 48 hours represent a high-stakes crucible where rapid technical triage and high-pressure legal decisions permanently dictate the organisation's class action liability, regulatory exposure, and brand survival. With the OAIC armed with expanded civil penalties, regulators coordinating joint probes, and class action plaintiff firms monitoring breach alerts in real time, General Counsel cannot rely on generic IT response plans or post-hoc legal reviews.

- Best practices for multi-party retainer structures and protocols when engaging external forensic IT and PR firms, ensuring investigative root-cause reports remain strictly protected from discovery in subsequent class action litigation.
- Balancing compressed, statutory notification windows while facts are still emerging—coordinating cross-agency responses without prematurely admitting liability or inadvertently waiving privilege.
- Moving beyond spreadsheet triage to deploy automated data clean rooms and AI-driven discovery tools that rapidly pinpoint exposed datasets, identify affected individuals, and map actual risk exposure in hours rather than weeks.
- Practical frameworks for listed entities to satisfy market disclosure requirements while maintaining narrative discipline and starving plaintiff firms of early litigation leverage.
- Transitioning the legal and executive team from reactive panic to regular, scenario-tested crisis muscle memory through tabletop breach simulations.

3:10 pm Afternoon tea break

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3:40 pm Industry Keynote

Financial crime, sanctions and supply chain integrity: The expanding role of in-house legal

The role of in-house legal is changing. Financial crime risk, sanctions exposure and supply chain integrity are no longer issues that sit neatly with compliance or risk teams — they are increasingly landing on the desks of general counsel and in-house lawyers, whether or not that responsibility has been formally assigned. As Australia's AML/CTF reforms bring an entirely new population of businesses into the regulated perimeter, and as sanctions regimes and supply chains grow more complex and volatile, in-house legal teams are being asked to advise on, govern, and sometimes personally own risks that go well beyond traditional legal advice.

This session examines how that role is expanding in practice, and what in-house legal teams need to understand to meet it — legally, operationally and strategically.

- What the AML/CTF reforms mean for newly regulated businesses — understanding the practical scope of the reforms, what triggers obligations under the new "designated service" test, and what in-house legal needs to get right from day one
- Sanctions and cross-border payment risks — why cross-border transactions sit at the intersection of AML, sanctions and payments regulation, and the growing legal exposure created by static screening in a fast-moving geopolitical environment
- Third-party and supplier due diligence — the legal team's role in scrutinising outsourced arrangements, group structures and supply chain intermediaries, and where legal liability can arise from inadequate oversight
- Governance responsibilities when legal is not the compliance owner — clarifying where legal's advisory role ends and formal compliance accountability begins, and why personal liability for directors and officers doesn't wait for internal role clarity
- Identifying the point at which a contractual, transactional or operational issue becomes a reportable concern — practical guidance on the "reasonable grounds to suspect" threshold, and legal's role in supporting sound, defensible escalation decisions

4:20 pm Speakers Circle

No slides, no scripts, and strictly under Chatham House Rule

- Guided by a facilitator, this rapid-fire, open-mic circle is a raw, honest discussion for GCs, Legal Ops leaders, and Chief Risk Officers. Bring your compliance horror stories, your legal tech disappointments, and your budget frustrations. This is a safe space to exchange practical survival strategies, debate the true ROI of your legal stack, and figure out how to keep your sanity while wearing five different hats.

4:50 pm Conference Close

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Contact us

*If you have any questions or require any further information, please feel free to contact **eventsanz@thomsonreuters.com**. We would be delighted to assist you.*

Ask me about speaking opportunities

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