

# DOUGLAS FREEBURN

**Barrister**  
**Higgins Chambers**  
Year of call – 2022

## DIRECT CONTACT DETAILS:

Phone: 07 3112 9231  
Mobile: 0400440769  
Email: [dfreeburn@qldbar.asn.au](mailto:dfreeburn@qldbar.asn.au)

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT DETAILS:

Kristen Edwards  
Phone: 07 3221 2182  
Email: [k.edwards@higginschambers.com.au](mailto:k.edwards@higginschambers.com.au)

## AREAS OF PRACTICE

Administrative and public law  
Appellate  
Native title  
Commercial  
Commissions of inquiry  
Professional discipline and regulatory  
Employment and industrial  
Human rights and discrimination

## EDUCATION

Master of Laws at the University of Melbourne (First Class Honours WAM)  
Bachelor of Laws at the Queensland University of Technology  
Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice, College of Law

## CAREER HISTORY

Douglas specialises in the areas of administrative and public law, appellate, native title, commercial law, regulatory law, employment and industrial law, inquiries and inquests and discrimination law.

Prior to his call to the bar in 2022, Douglas gained broad experience in both private and government practice. He spent three years working as a solicitor at Clayton Utz in the Public Sector Group. Douglas also practised in the United Kingdom with the Government Legal Department, and at Crown Law Queensland in the Public Sector Branch (Workplace Law).

## HIGGINS CHAMBERS

Level 29, 239 George Street  
(corner George and Adelaide Streets)  
Brisbane, QLD, 4000  
P: + 61 7 3221 2182  
[higginschambers.com.au](http://higginschambers.com.au)

Douglas has been involved in a diverse range of litigation matters in both Federal and State courts and tribunals and has provided complex advice for public and private sector clients.

### ***Commissions of inquiry***

In 2022, Douglas was appointed as Counsel Assisting in the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme. He appeared regularly in hearings of the Commission (led and unled) and was involved in drafting the Commission's final report published in July 2023.

### ***Administrative and public law***

Douglas has an extensive experience in administrative and public law. He regularly appears in State and Federal courts (both led and unled) in judicial review applications; acting on behalf of government agencies and applicants. Douglas also appears in merits review proceedings, including in migration review cases in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Douglas frequently acts on behalf of the Commonwealth in Federal Court and Federal Circuit Court judicial review applications, including applications for review of cancellation decisions made under ss 501 and 501CA of the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) and the refusal of visa applications under s 65 of that Act.

### ***Native title***

Douglas has expertise in native title. He has acted for both applicants and the State of Queensland in native title determination claims; appearing in both substantive and interlocutory proceedings before the Federal Court. Additionally, he has provided complex advice to both government agencies and native title applicants concerning the conduct of native title claims. Proceedings in which Douglas has acted include, but are not limited to, the Cape York United #1 determination application (QUD673/2014); the Githabul People (Waringh Waringh) determination application (QUD87/2021), the Wulli Wulli People #3 determination application (QUD6006/2000), and the Kabi Kabi First Nation Traditional Owners Native Title Claim Group determination application (QUD20/2019).

Additionally, Douglas has expertise in the compensation regime established under Division 5, Part 2 of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) and has acted on behalf of native title holding groups in compensation claims. He has also advised on matters concerning harm to cultural heritage.

### ***Employment***

Douglas has a background in employment law; having practised as a solicitor at Crown Law in the Workplace Law Team. As Counsel, Douglas has acted in, and advised on, an array of industrial matters including unfair dismissal matters, discrimination claims and claims for unpaid wages. Douglas appeared unled for an appellant local government in the Queensland Industrial Court; successfully appealing a decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission concerning the interpretation of the Queensland Local Government Industry (Stream A) Award – State 2017 (see *Paroo Shire Council v Mason* [2024] ICQ 11).

## **HIGGINSCHAMBERS**

Level 29, 239 George Street  
(corner George and Adelaide Streets)  
Brisbane, QLD, 4000  
P: + 61 7 3221 2182  
[higginschambers.com.au](http://higginschambers.com.au)

## **Regulatory**

Douglas specialises in regulatory matters. He has a particular focus in health profession regulation; appearing for National Boards in review and disciplinary proceedings under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law. Douglas has also appeared before sporting tribunals in discipline matters.

## **Commercial**

Douglas regularly advises on and appears in commercial disputes. He has been engaged in matters involving contract, directors' duties, negligence and other actions. Douglas has particular expertise in vicarious liability and pure economic loss in tort. In 2025, the University of Queensland Law Journal published an article by Douglas about vicarious liability in the context of institutional abuse and the High Court decision in *Bird v DP* (2024) 98 ALJR 1349 (see '*Employment or Nothing: An Analysis of Bird v DP and the Australian Approach to Vicarious Liability in Cases of Institutional Abuse*', (2025) Vol 44(1) University of Queensland Law Journal, 183).

## **Publications**

- '*Employment or Nothing: An Analysis of Bird v DP and the Australian Approach to Vicarious Liability in Cases of Institutional Abuse*', (2025) Vol 44(1) University of Queensland Law Journal, 183.
- '*The Fruits of an Unlawful Demand (Part 2)*', Hearsay, Issue 97 (September 2024).
- '*The Fruits of an Unlawful Demand*', Hearsay, Issue 88 (June 2022).

## **Select cases**

Published cases in which Douglas has appeared as Counsel include the following (unled, unless otherwise indicated):

- *Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme - Final Report* [2023] AURoyalC 2 (led).
- *Ward v Whitsunday Regional Council* [2025] QSC 113
- *DSDJ v Secretary, Department of Social Services* [2024] FCA 1420.
- *Li v Minister for Immigration and Citizenship* [2025] FCA 1689
- *HDTY v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs* [2024] FCA 633.
- *Noor v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs* [2022] FCA 1125.
- *Kopa v Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs* [2025] FCA 524
- *Siale v Minister for Immigration and Citizenship* [2025] FCA 608
- *Cao v Minister for Immigration and Citizenship* [2025] FCA 996
- *Olo v Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs* [2026] FCA 10
- *Bristowe v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs* [2022] FCA 690.
- *Kandel v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs* [2022] FCA 1385.
- *Douglas on behalf of the Kabi Kabi First Nation Traditional Owners Native Title Claim Group v State of Queensland (No 2)* [2024] FCA 385.
- *Douglas on behalf of the Kabi Kabi First Nation Traditional Owners Native Title Claim Group v State of Queensland (No 4)* [2024] FCA 641.
- *Briggs on behalf of the Wulli Wulli People #3 v State of Queensland (No 2)* [2024] FCA 1530 (led)
- *Fischer on behalf of the Gudjala People v State Minister for the State of Queensland* [2025] FCA 1374

# **HIGGINSCHAMBERS**

Level 29, 239 George Street  
(corner George and Adelaide Streets)  
Brisbane, QLD, 4000  
P: + 61 7 3221 2182  
[higginschambers.com.au](http://higginschambers.com.au)

- *Paroo Shire Council v Mason* [2024] ICQ 11.
- *Patel v Minister for Immigration and Citizenship* [2025] FedCFamC2G 1555.
- *BPM23 v Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs* [2025] FedCFamC2G 518.
- *Li v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs* [2025] FedCFamC2G 665.
- *Happi v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs* [2024] FedCFamC2G 1334.
- *Li v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs* [2024] FedCFamC2G 120.
- *CJD18 v Minister for Immigration and Citizenship* [2025] FedCFamC2G 774.
- *AZC23 v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs* [2024] FedCFamC2G 1208
- *Heneghan and Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs (Migration)* [2024] AATA 1108.
- *WZFX and Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs (Migration)* [2024] AATA 1484.
- *Peek and Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs (Migration)* [2024] AATA 2361.
- *Main and Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (Migration)* [2025] ARTA 45.
- *Zohiab and National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIS)* [2025] ARTA 984.
- *Kaur and Australian Skills Quality Authority* [2025] ARTA 491
- *Medical Board of Australia v Mirza* [2025] QCAT 244
- *Chiropractic Board of Australia v Ronan* [2024] QCAT 463.
- *Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia v LYS* [2024] QCAT 209.

## HIGGINSCHAMBERS

Level 29, 239 George Street  
(corner George and Adelaide Streets)  
Brisbane, QLD, 4000  
P: + 61 7 3221 2182  
[higginschambers.com.au](http://higginschambers.com.au)