

ANA COCU LESCU

ENVIRONMENTAL BARRISTER

At the core of my practice, I help organisations and projects get back on track by solving tough planning and environmental law problems. In practice, that means I advise across a project's lifecycle — from the early planning stages through to RMA consenting and compliance. I have worked on commercial and residential developments as well as on infrastructure projects (energy, transport, waste) over the past 20 years across Australia and New Zealand. I was called to the Bar in March 2026.

In addition to resource management, my practice covers the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme, biodiversity conservation, compulsory acquisition of land, contaminated land management, hazardous substances, local government, the Official Information Act, and waste management. I am also active in the ESG space — the governance aspect of environmental regulation. I have explored and written about ESG in my role as lead editor of the Dentons New Zealand ESG Newsletter (2023-2026).

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

RMA AND FAST TRACK CONSENTING

NZTA: options assessment, consenting strategy and business case for Let's Get Welly Moving and the SH58 safety works; consenting part of the SH58 safety works; expert evidence and hearing preparation. Fast Track consenting for Mill Road and Belfast to Pegasus projects.

Wellington City Council: consenting of an expansion to the Southern Landfill waste facility, including advice on mana whenua and community consultation.

Creswell New Zealand: consenting of a commercial water bottling plant in the Bay of Plenty, including evidence preparation (expert and lay).

Wellington Water: resource consent applications for the new Silverstream water mains pipeline bridge across the Hutt River.

Various clients: consenting strategy for subdivisions; advice on consent conditions, staged subdivisions, and development contributions.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Environmental Protection Authority: compliance and enforcement advice under the Climate Change Response Act, Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act and Ozone Layer Protection Act.

Kmart NZ: RMA consenting and compliance matters.

NZTA: RMA consenting and compliance matters for Transmission Gully.

Upper Hutt City Council: review Council's enforcement of noise provisions on non-compliant light industrial site.

Various clients: reporting and surrender obligations under the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme for different classes of participants; obligations towards regulators in NSW, Victoria and Queensland (Australia) following pollution incidents, reporting obligations and level of decontamination work required.

Wellington Water: investigation of RMA non-compliance with Seaview Wastewater Treatment Plant consents.

Whanganui District Council: appeared in the Environment Court seeking vexatious litigant orders.

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COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

Acted for dispossessed owners and acquiring authorities (NZTA and Transport for NSW). Advised through the full process — negotiations, Valuer-General formal valuation, and appeal proceedings in the NSW Land and Environment Court — including briefing land/business valuers and planning experts.

SUBMISSIONS AND POLICY

B Lab: updating B Corp certification standards.

FENZ: obligations regarding historical contamination at training sites.

Ministry for the Environment: proposed container return refund scheme for New Zealand.

Tamaki Regeneration Company: development contributions, including structuring a direct dialogue with Auckland Council.

Transpower: submissions to the Emissions Trading Scheme Review and the Redesign of the Emissions Trading Scheme Permanent Forest Category Review.

Various clients: RMA reform advice on the Natural and Built Environment and Spatial Planning Bills, including how to enable infrastructure in general, and renewable energy generation in particular; ESG baseline obligations for New Zealand operations; drafting contractual liability clauses for land contamination.

QUALIFICATIONS

2008	Bachelor of Laws, University of Sydney, Australia
2004	Master of Laws, University of Sydney, Australia
2002-2003	Diplôme d'études approfondies droit communautaire (Master of Laws – European Community Law), Aix-Marseille III University, France
2002	Maîtrise en droit - mention droit européen, Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne University, France
2001	Licence en droit, Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne University, France
1998-2000	Diplôme d'Études Universitaires Générales Droit, Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne University, France
1998-2002	Bachelor of Laws, Bucharest University, Romania

ADMISSION TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION

2010	Solicitor, Supreme Court of New South Wales
2012	Solicitor, High Court of Australia
2018	Barrister and Solicitor, High Court of New Zealand

LANGUAGES

Romanian native language

English full proficiency

French professional proficiency

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