

LAWHACK 2026: CLIMATE JUSTICE

CLIMATE JUSTICE

LAND, SEA, SKY ARE YOUR GUIDES

LAW IS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR CHANGE

... SYSTEM THAT HAS ALSO PERPETRATED HARM AGAINST FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

LISTEN NATURE IS TALKING TO YOU!

⑩ 1996-2021, 561 CHARGES AGAINST PEOPLE ENGAGING IN CULTURAL FISHING PRACTICES FOR ABALONE UNDER FISHING MANAGEMENT ACT

DIGNITY • HEALING • RESPECT

HOW & WHO?

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IS CRITICAL TO A JUST TRANSITION

RENEWABLES

CLIMATE CONSCIOUS LAWYERING

waves of change!!!

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY NOW!

STOP MINING

CLIENT + COMMUNITY LED

INNOVATION ADVOCACY COLLABORATION

RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS

TRAMA INFORMED, CULTURALLY SAFE, REVERSE MENTORING, KNOWLEDGE SHARING, ECOLOGICAL TRAINING

COMPENSATE COMMUNITY FOR HARM CAUSED

CLASS ACTION

LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

STATUS QUO

DISRUPT THE

EDUCATION, NOT FOR PROFITS, LEGAL

HOLD BIG POLLUTERS ACCOUNTABLE

ANTI-COMPETITION LEGISLATION TO PREVENT MISUSE OF MARKET POWER

ACCESS

GLOBAL SEA TEMP ↑ 0.7°

AUSTRALIA ↑ 0.9°

IMPACTS FOOD & ECOSYSTEMS

EXTREME WEATHER

HEALTH IMPACTS

PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY

RURAL + REGIONAL

EXTEND DUTY OF CARE

STATUS QUO

HOLD BIG POLLUTERS ACCOUNTABLE

ANTI-COMPETITION LEGISLATION TO PREVENT MISUSE OF MARKET POWER

ACCESS

LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

COMPENSATE COMMUNITY FOR HARM CAUSED

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The National Justice Project is located on the unceded sovereign lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and we acknowledge the continuing connection to land, waters, communities and culture of First Nations Peoples. We recognise that the climate crisis is a direct result of colonisation and that First Nations Peoples have always led the care of Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and commit to supporting First Nations leadership and sovereignty as central to climate justice.

First Nations Elder in attendance - Aunty Glendra Stubbs, Elder in Residence, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research

ABOUT LAWHACK

LawHack 2026 was co-hosted by the National Justice Project and the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research.

The purpose of LawHack is for teams of lawyers and legal thinkers to 'hack' a current critical issue by challenging them to formulate bold legal strategy in a one day whirlwind event.

This year, LawHack focused on climate justice to explore the creative use of law as a critical tool to address the climate crisis and its impacts on communities.

Strategic legal action can hold major polluters to account and drive the systemic change needed to create a more sustainable future.

PARTICIPATING TEAMS

Hicksons Lawyers - Hunt & Hunt - Holman Webb | Grata Fund | Gadens | Macquarie University | Shine Lawyers | Wotton Kearney



HOW THE DAY WORKS

Each team of lawyers/law students:

1. Received a detailed [Hack Pack](#) outlining the legal, social and historical context of climate justice and resources to assist in preparing for their challenge
2. Worked alongside expert mentors to develop and refine their strategy
3. Delivered their strategy as a pitch, followed by Q&A before a panel of judges

The purpose was to create bold but achievable legal strategies capable of shifting law, policy, culture and public perception.



LAWHACK STRATEGIES 2026



The big ideas of the day



 This report is an open resource. The ideas presented in this report are freely available for public use.

1 Reform the law to expand corporate liability to include indirect emissions and harms



Strategy Overview: *Expand corporate liability for climate harm and provide remedies for communities affected by emissions. Current laws fail to capture indirect emissions and offer no compensation for impacted populations.*

BREAKDOWN

- Reform the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act (NGER) to include scope 3 emissions, which are indirect emissions from a company's supply chain. Currently, the law only covers scope 1 (direct) and scope 2 (energy-related) emissions.
- Expand civil penalty provisions so that more corporations are held accountable. Under the current system, only about 3% of corporations qualify as "large, designated facilities".
- Establish a regulatory compensation scheme that allows communities affected by corporate emissions to claim compensation without needing to bring individual lawsuits.
- Currently, there is no remedy for vulnerable communities impacted by emissions from large corporations.
- This is possible when the energy regulator has proven under the Act that a corporation has breached the civil penalty provision.
- Ensure any funds collected from civil penalties are held in trust and distributed to the local communities impacted by the emissions breaches.
- Enable community submissions to influence government decisions and strengthen protections for vulnerable populations.

OUTCOME Increase corporate accountability for emissions, provide direct remedies for affected communities, and create a clear legal framework that ensures systemic protection under climate law.



Housing and recovery support services for people impacted by natural disasters

Strategy Overview: *Support people with disabilities in rural communities from the disproportionate impacts of floods. Inaccessible evacuation centres, temporary housing, and recovery services reduce resilience and compound harm. The aim is individual remedies and systemic change for inclusive disaster response.*

BREAKDOWN

When flooding happens, file three coordinated complaints under the Disability Discrimination Act:

1. Local councils (Section 23) – inaccessible evacuation centres.
 2. Commonwealth & National Emergency Management Agency (Section 24) – inaccessible emergency services.
 3. State government (Section 25) – temporary accommodation lacking modifications or support.
- Advocate for a national disability framework for disasters with enforceable action plans.
 - Prioritise conciliation for individual remedies - escalate to Federal Court if needed for declarations of discrimination and mandatory orders.
 - Work with community groups, disability advocacy networks and youth climate movements.
 - Use Hear Me Out AI complaint tools to strategically highlight complaints to the Human Rights Commission and amplify community voices.
 - Emphasise the positive obligations of governments to proactively provide accessible emergency, evacuation, and recovery services.

OUTCOME Secure individual rights, set legal precedent, and embed systemic accountability in emergency management.



Incentivise the adoption of Electric Vehicles with Competition Law

Strategy Overview: *Accelerate electric vehicle (EV) adoption and hold the automotive industry accountable for anti-competitive practices that slow the transition to low-emission vehicles.*

BREAKDOWN

- Challenge anti-competitive conduct in the Australian automotive industry under Section 46 of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010, which addresses misuse of market power.
- The automotive industry has actively lobbied against carbon emission standards, limiting EV availability and keeping petrol cars dominant.
- Use competition law to address environmental, health, and equity harms, combining legal arguments about exclusionary practices with evidence of climate and public health impacts.
- Seek a range of remedies, including injunctive relief to stop exclusionary conduct, declaratory relief to signal accountability, and civil penalties or compensation where relevant.
- Include plaintiffs such as EV manufacturers restricted by the market, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) representing public interest, and advocacy groups like the National Rural Health Alliance.
- Target structural barriers to EV adoption, such as high costs and limited availability, particularly in regional areas and for disadvantaged populations, to ensure equitable access to low-emission vehicles.

OUTCOME Increase EV uptake, reduce reliance on petrol vehicles, improve public health outcomes, and drive systemic change in automotive industry practices to support a low-emission transition.



Introduce a climate-conscious code of ethics for lawyers

Strategy Overview: *Build climate-conscious legal practice and professional ethics. Lawyers currently lack knowledge, collaboration, and accountability around climate impacts, and climate change is treated as a future problem rather than an urgent legal and ethical issue.*

BREAKDOWN

- Create a Climate Collaboration Hub with a physical presence in climate-affected regions.
- Educate lawyers through seminars, ethics guidance lines, reverse mentoring with youth activists, and practical advice for integrating climate ethics into everyday lawyering.
- Embed knowledge-sharing via storytelling from lived-experience experts, annual conferences, research fellows, climate science briefings, university electives, and partnerships with law schools.
- Pilot climate-conscious practice through community legal centres, prioritising trauma-informed, culturally safe, and client-centered approaches.
- Governance and membership structures include advisory roles for lived-experience representatives, multi-tiered sliding-scale memberships, and oversight from legal professional bodies.

OUTCOME Equip lawyers to act as proactive agents of climate justice, embed systemic accountability, and provide climate-focused legal advice.

Personal injury claims for community members in pollution hotspots



Strategy Overview: *Hold large polluters accountable for climate-related health harms, particularly in First Nations communities near coal mining and combustion sites. These communities face high rates of respiratory illness and mortality, while polluters have little incentive to act.*

BREAKDOWN

- Develop community-centered litigation that combines personal injury claims for people living near mines with evidence of broader community health and economic impacts.
- Engage insurers as neutral funders, giving them a financial reason to act while reducing commercial influence and enabling small NGOs to challenge large polluters.
- Conduct two waves of litigation. First, personal injury claims funded by insurers and second, subsidiary claims for broader community losses.
- Consult First Nations communities throughout the process to ensure litigation reflects lived experience and local priorities.
- Seek damages, injunctions, and declarations to establish legal precedent.
- Build a long-term model for systemic accountability that can apply to future climate-related health claims, including other environmental harms and natural disasters.

OUTCOME **Strengthen legal avenues for affected communities, improve corporate accountability, and create a replicable model for climate-related litigation.**

JUDGING CRITERIA

CHANGE: Bold and strategic, showing potential to change the status quo (law, policy, culture and public perception).

HUMILITY: Respects people with lived experience as experts, drivers, and catalysts of change.

ACHIEVABLE: Clearly defined plan and strategy to make change.

NOVEL: Using legal action and advocacy in original, creative and innovative ways.

GROUNDED: Grounded in lived experience by addressing barriers of discrimination and injustice, in particular multi-layered disadvantage and discrimination

EVIDENCE: Informed by research, data and evidence of need.

Special thanks to our incredible judges and mentors

JUDGES

- **Dr Marcelle Burns** – Gomerioi-Kamilaroi woman and Associate Dean of Indigenous Leadership and Engagement in the Faculty of Law at UTS.
- **Dr Bal Kama** – Strategic public law advocate specialising in constitutional law, human rights and climate justice.

MENTORS

- **Dr Keely Boom** – Awabakal woman, lawyer and Executive Officer of the Climate Justice Programme.
- **Professor Beth Goldblatt** – Leading researcher on equality-focused responses to climate change at the University of Technology Sydney.
- **Katrina Bullock (Hogan)** – Journalist, lawyer and Head of Development and General Counsel at the Environmental Defenders Office.

WANT TO CHAT TO US ABOUT LAWHACK?

Please contact the National Justice Project team if you would like to discuss any of the ideas in this report or how you can be involved in future events.

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SPECIAL THANKS



For generously hosting this event.



For their pro-bono assistance in preparing the Hack Pack.