

Robert Watson



Partner | Probity

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Robert is a government probity and procurement specialist with extensive experience advising on a range of procurements and funding agreements. He advises departments and agencies on all aspects of procurement and funding agreements, including probity; procurement strategies; tender and contract development; intellectual property; risk; performance management; compliance; negotiations and contract management.

Before working in private practice, Robert spent six years working for the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. Robert has also lectured at the Australian Defence Force Academy on Contract Risk Management.

Key experience

Robert has advised a range of departments and agencies on the probity risk and compliance issues involved in various projects, including:

- **Mental Health Reform Victoria (MHRV)** – Acting as probity advisors to MHRV, via the Department of Health and Human Services, relating to the implementation of recommendations of the Interim report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.
- **Monash University (Monash)** – providing probity advisory services to Monash on the procurement of its relocation services, general maintenance, hydraulic services and waste management services.
- **National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Partners in the Community (PITC)** – Robert provided probity support in relation to NDIA's PITC WA grants round. This included redrafting of the grant documents, monitoring of the evaluation process, and probity review of the final selection report.
- **NDIA Real Time Claim Payment Platform** – Robert worked with the Agency to develop and draft an approach to market that set out the Agency's broad requirements for a payment platform and invited innovative proposals from the market.
- **NDIA Assistive Technology and Home Modification Pilot** – Robert is currently providing probity support in relation to a multi-stage procurement, seeking to establish an assistive technology pilot panel with human centred design. This includes reviewing the approach to market documentation to ensure compliance from a probity perspective and advice on probity matters which arise in a multi-stage procurement.
- **JNT9101 Enhanced Defence High Frequency Communications System (EDHFCS)** – Robert leads the team which provides probity and commercial legal advice to CASG on the development of a multi-stage procurement process to support this new project for the enhancement / upgrade of the Defence High Frequency Communications System.

- **Victims Assistance Program** – Robert provided advice to the Department of Justice and Regulation in relation to the selective grants process for the Repurchasing of Victims Assistance and Counselling Program.
- **Defence Infrastructure Division** – Robert has been the probity advisor for a number of procurement processes, including multi-million-dollar infrastructure, construction and redevelopment elements at Defence Force bases around Australia.
- **Base Services Retender** – Robert was part of the core team involved in the preparation of the RFT and negotiation of multiple contracts for the provision of base services across Australia. This involved the drafting, evaluation and negotiation of 10 contracts (around \$10 billion over 10 years) for support services at each of Defence's domestic Australian bases. The services included estate maintenance, access control, waste, hospitality and catering, aircraft refuelling and fire-fighting, retail stores, petrols and lubricants, national program services and project delivery services. One of the requirements drafted into the conditions of tender was that tenderers had to show an ability to provide the relevant support services in a minimum of three 'zones' across Australia for their tender to be considered.
- **AIR 2025 Phase 6 Jindalee Operational Radar Network (JORN)** – (around \$1 billion) – Robert advised the Defence Material Organisation in relation to the upgrade and support of JORN. This is an essential piece of infrastructure that provides Australia's wide area surveillance capability and is used to detect and track air and surface targets. The Commonwealth entered into long term acquisition and sustainment contracts. A key issue of the project was the limited nature of the tender and the use of the potential tenderers in the development of the tender documents.
Our team advised on a number of probity issues, including the development of an industry engagement strategy to address the potential involvement of tenderers in the development of the RFT documents and a possible multiparty deed that will extend from the RFT phase into contract transition.
- **AIR 5428 Pilot Training System** – Robert was the lead partner involved in the preparation of the RFT for the acquisition and support of the AIR 5428 pilot training system, including aircraft, simulators and establishment of two training school locations. This was a major project that also involved options for private finance and a complex structure of subcontractors with various complex IP and risk management issues.
- **Electronic Warfare Training System (EWTS)** – Robert was the lead partner of the team involved in advising Defence on the acquisition of the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) next generation EWTS which provides the RAN with realistic electronic warfare activity training for Major Fleet Unit warfare teams.
- **JP 2097 Phase 1B Redfin** – Robert advised DMO on the procurement of Special Operations Vehicles (SOV), including the integration of a networked special operations capability by a third-party supplier.
- **JTF 633** – Robert advised Defence on the procurement of over twenty base support services at each of its bases at the Al-Minhad Air Base, Tarin Kowt and Kandahar in support of the Middle Eastern Area of Operations which involved overseas workers and the risk associated with active war zones.
- **Global Freight Retender** – Robert advised Defence on the retender of its worldwide global freight and customs clearing services.