



HERBERT
SMITH
FREEHILLS



MELANIE DEBENHAM

SENIOR ASSOCIATE

[Perth](#)
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Melanie is an environment, planning and communities lawyer and leads our Perth team.

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BACKGROUND

Melanie has completed a Bachelors of Applied Science (Architecture) from Curtin University in 2003 and a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) from Murdoch University in 2007.

KEY SERVICES

Environment, Planning and Communities
Native Title and Indigenous Heritage

KEY SECTORS

Mining
Oil and Gas

EXPERIENCE

Melanie is an expert on business-critical environment, planning, heritage and native title regulation in Australia. She assists both private and government clients understand the technical and practical impacts of complex and evolving regulation for their business.

Melanie has advised on approvals, regulatory and compliance issues across a range of industry sectors, but with a strong focus on the mining, oil and gas, energy and industrial sectors. Melanie has assisted a large number of significant projects get started in Western Australia and Australia wide, providing strategic and legal advice on approval, land access and operational issues. She has also advised on a number of proposed Australian projects, where stakeholder and activist risk management played a critical role in the environmental approval process.

At the other end of project development, Melanie advises on 'end of life' issues. This includes in the context of transactions and project finance as well as assisting proponents prepare for closure, decommissioning and rehabilitation and manage contamination and legacy liabilities. Melanie has also actively participated in the development of law and policy in this space.

Melanie works collaboratively with her clients to identify and manage legal risk strategically and maximise opportunities the regulatory regime presents. She has been recognised by Doyle's Guide as a Planning and Environment Law Rising Star.

- State and Commonwealth approvals for new port, rail and mine development and expansions for numerous Western Australian iron ore, nickel, mineral sands and gold projects, including one of the world's leading iron ore producers on its future life of asset mining and infrastructure development in the Pilbara region
- Approvals strategy (including environmental plan requirements), general operations environmental compliance and management advice for offshore and onshore oil & gas exploration and production projects
- Greenfields mining, oil and gas (both offshore and onshore) and waste projects in areas with significant environmental and/or community sensitivities including coal mining proposals in Margaret River and the Kimberley, a new major landfill near Perth and hydraulic fracturing projects
- Urban and regional strategic assessments under State and Federal processes
- Threatened enforcement action for alleged non-compliance with conditions of approval and tenure arrangements under both State and Federal regimes, including successfully avoiding formal enforcement action for a number of clients