

Animal Law Trailblazers: Naaman Kranz and Mike Rosalky

The Australian Pro Bono Centre's Laura Toren sat down with Naaman Kranz and Mike Rosalky, joint Principal Lawyers at the Animal Law Institute and founders of Australia's first specialised Animal Law firm, to learn more about their pro bono work in this burgeoning area.

By Laura Toren,
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Laura: Thank you both for speaking to me today! First off, how would you describe Animal Law to readers who might not know much about it?

Mike: Animal Law is an umbrella term that covers many different areas of law. It describes the way that the law regulates the treatment of animals through dedicated legislation, like anti-cruelty legislation, domestic animal legislation and live animal export legislation, but it also describes other areas of law where animals can become involved. It might be that a client has bought a dog from a breeder and that dog develops a congenital condition. The client might then have an Australian Consumer Law complaint. Or perhaps an animal protection organisation wants to challenge a government decision that is going to harm animals, which would fall under Administrative Law.

Naaman: That's exactly right – it's not a discrete area of legal practice. At our firm, [K & R Animal Law](#), we have taken on matters that encompass almost every area of the law, other than perhaps family law. Largely, these matters fall within state and territory jurisdictions, so we've had to get across various areas of law in different states and territories.

When we look at taking on a matter at K & R, we ask ourselves – “Is this going to have a beneficial outcome for animals?”. That's what really defines the scope of our work.

Laura: I'd love to hear about the career paths that led you to practice in Animal Law.

Mike: I decided to study law so that I could help animals. I realised that the laws that govern the treatment of animals in Australia are deficient in that they enable horrific cruelty

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towards certain animals. While there are laws that criminalise cruelty to dogs and cats because they are our companions, the law predominantly exempts acts of cruelty towards agricultural animals or animals used in entertainment or experimentation because these uses benefit humans. I thought that was a terrible injustice and I thought, well, if I want to advocate for the law to change, then I should be a lawyer.

After I graduated, I started volunteering with a community legal centre called the [Animal Defenders Office](#) in Canberra in 2013.

I volunteered with them for about six years and along that journey, I met Naaman. Naaman wanted to start a private Animal Law firm, so we founded K & R Animal Law in 2019. Our work in that firm led to the work that we're doing now with the [Animal Law Institute](#).

Naaman: My career has largely been driven by a desire to use the law to address social justice issues. In 2015, I started volunteering for the Animal Defenders Office and that's where I met Mike and where I started learning how the law is deficient in the way that it protects animals. In my mind, helping animals is the most important social justice issue that I can devote my time to. Then, as Mike said, we started K & R Animal Law which led us to become joint Principal Lawyers at the Animal Law Institute in September 2022.

The Animal Law Institute is a community legal centre that was founded in 2014. We work there three days a week between us. We primarily take on Australian Consumer Law matters for clients who have purchased domestic pets with an underlying congenital health disorder from a breeder. The work involves a combination of giving legal advice and representing clients in the tribunal or court, where we will attempt to create precedents that improve the standards that breeders are required to meet.

Laura: Naaman, you said that you feel the treatment of animals is the most important social justice issue that you could dedicate your time to. Could you elaborate on why it's so important to you?

Naaman: I started to feel this way the more I learned about the way animals are lawfully treated, particularly in the animal agriculture industry.

Billions of animals a year globally are bred in industrial animal



agriculture facilities and live in horrendous conditions, only to be killed in inhumane ways for human consumption or use. Producers want to make as much money from a product as possible, and when that product is an animal, the way they are treated deteriorates. The spaces that they are kept in get smaller and they are treated with a view to maximising profit. What you end up with is the mass exploitation of sentient creatures and laws that protect and facilitate animal industries in achieving these ends.

Anyone who isn't aware of these issues should look at some footage of the way that animals in agriculture are lawfully treated in Australia. You can do that on websites like [Farm Transparency Project](#) or by watching documentaries like [Dominion](#).

It's telling that agricultural gag laws are designed specifically to prevent people from being able to see what happens in these places. In my view, this is because if people knew what was going on, it would have an impact on their choices when purchasing animal products and the profits made by these businesses.

Mike: Our view is that there is no bigger injustice occurring in Australia than the legal treatment of animals used in agriculture, entertainment and experimentation. That's



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because of the intensity of the suffering and because of the huge numbers of the animals that are involved.

There's a large body of animal welfare science which demonstrates that animals have a rich experience of consciousness, experience physical pain in a virtually identical manner to humans, and experience many of the same complex emotions that humans experience. I think it's hugely inequitable for humans to inflict so much suffering on non-human animals just because we can.

Laura: Can you tell me about some of the pro bono work that you've done in the Animal Law space?

Mike: When we were running K & R Animal Law, we probably did 80% of the matters on a pro bono basis. Many of our clients were bringing matters out of the goodness of their hearts, and

because we often shared the same views and concerns that they had about the treatment of animals, we ended up doing a lot of pro bono work.

Laura: Are there any specific pro bono matters that stand out in your memory?

Naaman: There was a matter that I assisted with as a volunteer at the Animal Defenders Office. In this case, nine passionate animal activists locked themselves onto some equipment at the abattoir in Goulburn. They were charged with trespass and resisting arrest. I assisted Tara Ward, who is the Principal Lawyer at the Animal Defenders Office, in representing them on appeal in the District Court.

At first instance, they were given the maximum penalty. On appeal, we got them off with Section 10 notices, so no convictions were recorded.

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All photographs in this article are displayed on the K & R Animal Law or Animal Law Institute websites.

Laura: So how does your work as animal lawyers fit in with your other employment?

Mike: For the last decade or so, we've done a lot of pro bono work in our own time because it isn't related to our other employment. We've spent many hours over the years doing pro bono work at night after our paid work and on weekends.

Laura: Do you feel that your pro bono work has contributed to your professional development?

Naaman: There are skills that I've learned from doing the Animal Law work that have really helped with my other employment. Mike and I both work for a private firm where we get contracted out to provide legal services to government departments. The breadth of the work that we've done in the Animal Law space, having to switch from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and from one area of law to another, has really helped hone my fundamental legal

skills and assisted in my ability to jump into new challenges.

Laura: What advice would you give to lawyers who want to do pro bono work to advance a particular cause?

Naaman: If you work for a private firm and you're passionate about a specific cause, one option would be to go to your Partner and tell them you want to reach out and make connections with a community legal centre that's working in that area. There are a lot of great community legal centres out there, like the Animal Defenders Office or the Animal Law Institute if you're interested in Animal Law.

In the Animal Law space, I think anyone can get involved. It doesn't matter what area of law you have expertise in – you can find a way to use those skills to advance the interests of animals. ■



Mike Rosalky. Mike has been an animal advocate since 2006 after learning how animals are legally and routinely subjected to abhorrent cruelty in the production of animal products, experimentation, intensive breeding, and entertainment throughout Australia.

Mike was admitted as a lawyer in 2013 and has worked as a senior lawyer for several Federal Government agencies, in the private sector, and as a volunteer with the Animal Defenders Office. He has also given presentations in myriad public forums on laws affecting animals and animal activists, contributed to government submissions on laws affecting animals and met with politicians to advocate for law reform to better protect animals. In 2019, Mike and Naaman Kranz founded a private law firm dedicated to helping animals and their human defenders, and in 2022, Mike and Naaman became joint principal lawyers at the Animal Law Institute.

Mike has provided many hours of pro bono legal services to various clients, and he volunteers in the disability sector in a non-legal role.



Naaman Kranz. Naaman is a passionate promoter of access to justice for human and non-human animals. He is dedicated to using the law to help animals, ethical businesses, and people who defend and care for animals.

Naaman was admitted as a lawyer in 2011 and has experience working as a

Special Counsel for a private law firm in Canberra and as a Senior Lawyer for the Federal Government. Naaman has provided pro bono legal services at various community legal centres, including the Animal Defenders Office, where he grew passionate about using the law to defend animals. Naaman has presented on animal law topics at various forums across Australia and taught an animal law subject as a guest lecturer at the University of New South Wales. In 2019, Naaman and Mike Rosalky founded a private law firm dedicated to helping animals and their human defenders, and in 2022, Naaman and Mike became joint principal lawyers at the Animal Law Institute.

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