



Q&A with Jenny Kiss on the ACC In-house Certification Program

Interviews and Profiles

Skills and Professional Development



Why did you decide to participate in ACC's In-house Counsel Certification Program? What made it stand out?

I wanted to benchmark my legal skills and network with other in-house lawyers. ACC is tailored to in-house lawyers and as a global group, it presents a unique opportunity to access international thought leadership across different areas of in-house practice.



Jenny Kiss, general counsel of Public Transport Authority of West Australia, enjoyed the access to international thought leadership provided by the ACC In-house Counsel Certification Program.

Can you share a key takeaway from the program? In other words, what was a key lesson or message that you were able to take back and immediately apply in your legal department?

The development and application of legal risk assessment and heat maps can be done efficiently at both an enterprise-wide or smaller contract or project-based level. As a result of the course, we are now currently working with our internal risk team to ensure legal risk assessment is included appropriately in project risk assessments.

Can you provide an example of a particularly relevant session?

Both the main presenters, Jim Merklinger and Carol Basri, provided informative and engaging sessions on compliance, ethics, and legal risk management. These sessions were also supported by local presenters — lawyers from Australia and New Zealand. Our teams worked on contemporary case studies and I found that preparing and presenting for a proposed legal risk assessment for mining near the Juukan Gorge Caves particularly relevant!

You were a member of the first cohort that completed the ACC In-house Counsel Certification Program in the virtual format over multiple weeks. How did you find the virtual format and did it still provide opportunities to connect and engage with your fellow attendees?

It was challenging on the first session when our time to meet our fellow participants was eaten up by tech issues. However, we soon caught up over a combination of Zoom, email, and WhatsApp. This worked well for our project team colleagues but was not quite the same as meeting in person. Of course, the program was delivered during a global pandemic and we were all experiencing different circumstances. For example, while we were back in the office in Perth with plenty of freedom, others were in full or partial lockdown and at home in lounge wear (not all of them). The presenters were up in the middle of the night and sometimes we could hear the emergency services sirens in the background in New York. It felt like a collegiate way to maintain a close connection with colleagues and we still hope to catch up in person someday!

The certification program intended to explore several core competency areas, including developing stakeholder relationships; law department management and legal services. In your opinion, why are these skills — or core competencies — essential for in-house success?

The truly effective and competent inhouse lawyer needs more than just legal skills. The core competencies covered in the program are essential — but not an exhaustive list. Project management in the legal sphere, as well as legal operations and legal technology are other skills increasingly required of the global in-house lawyer.

Can you provide an example of how the program helped your understanding and delivery of one of these core competencies?

The law department management module confirmed our use of legal technology for tracking areas of legal focus and measuring value to the in-house clients and the business.

Looking back at the course, how will the In-house Counsel Certified (ICC) designation help advance your in-house career?

As an in-house lawyer it is not sufficient to limit your skills to your local jurisdiction. The ICC designation is a good way to maintain a global perspective as a working lawyer. As I am quite experienced in my career, I was looking to add more depth and currency to my advice rather than as a career advance by way of promotion.

Would you recommend ACC's In-house Counsel Certification Program to your colleagues? What advice can you offer other corporate counsel who want to participate in the program, but may need to convince their GC or boss?

Yes, I would highly recommend in-house lawyers at any career stage participate. If you are trying to

persuade your boss, I would start with the “I will be able to do more with less” line of persuasion! One of the benefits in learning how to identify the key legal risks and apply compliance programs and other actions to address them in your organization, is that you will gain a better appreciation for the areas in which your company should be more focused. Of course, you may find that your boss may want to obtain this international recognition before you do — in which case you can participate together.

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