



Empowering In-House Counsel

1. Embedding Structured Legal Reasoning into Corporate Practice

Executive Summary

In-house legal teams operate under sustained commercial pressure. They must manage high-volume contracts, oversee litigation, control external legal spend, and deliver board-level clarity - often within lean teams.

This white paper examines how structured, authority-grounded legal reasoning tools can support in-house counsel as a first-check and risk triage layer. Drawing on the experience of Harshita Nandni, formerly an in-house solicitor at an ASX-listed funds manager, it illustrates how structured AI can redistribute attention toward strategic judgement without displacing external counsel.

2. The Structural Challenge

Corporate legal teams routinely manage:

- high-volume contract review;
- ongoing disputes requiring clear board reporting;
- regulatory exposure across recurring contract types; and
- pressure to reduce unnecessary external spend.

The constraint is not legal competence. It is time and prioritisation.

The recurring problem is this:

How does an in-house team ensure that material risk is surfaced quickly without reviewing every clause at the same level of intensity?

3. Contract Review: From Redlining to Risk Prioritisation

In-house counsel regularly review standard-form contracts with tailored amendments, e.g. AS4000 construction agreements. External firms may be utilised



to provide detailed mark-ups. However, as Harshita observed, the challenge was not the number of edits; it was quickly identifying which issues genuinely altered risk.

Structured legal reasoning shifted that dynamic.

Instead of sifting through substantive and stylistic amendments, review began with:

- identification of enforceability risk;
- mapping contractual provisions to governing authority;
- highlighting statutory exposure, including Security of Payment implications; and
- tanking legal risk by materiality.

This allowed commercial decisions to be aligned with risk appetite more efficiently. The outcome was not faster drafting, but clearer prioritisation.

4. Research as Escalation Filter

A recurring internal decision for in-house counsel is whether to brief external lawyers, with structured legal analysis used as an internal first-check before escalation. By mapping the relevant doctrine and authority internally, Harshita was able to:

- determine whether an issue warranted external briefing;
- reduce unnecessary external spend; and
- provide more precise instructions when escalation was appropriate.

This did not replace external advice. It improved its quality and targeting.

5. Litigation Oversight and Pleadings Analysis

In litigation, the internal burden is not merely summarising pleadings. It is critically analysing them, often over extended periods.

Harshita was particularly interested in the Pleadings Check feature currently in development. In the matter she was managing, pleading exchanges had continued for years. The challenge was not understanding the nuances in the pleadings.

A structured pleadings analysis tool allows in-house counsel to:



- interrogate whether key allegations are legally sustainable;
- map pleaded claims to governing authority;
- identify gaps between asserted facts and required elements;
- detect shifts in argument over time; and
- assess whether amendments materially alter exposure.

For in-house teams managing long-running disputes, this capability strengthens strategic oversight and improves the quality of board-level risk discussions.

Rather than merely summarising content, Pleadings Check is designed to stress-test the legal foundation of what has been pleaded, and in conjunction with legal advice and commentary allows the team to succinctly explain to the wider business any changes in the case.

Pleadings Check is also a useful tool where the legal team (internal and external) may change over the lifetime of the matter and continuity of instructions may be required.

6. Generative Tools vs Structured Reasoning

The rise of generative AI has introduced drafting acceleration into legal workflows. However, acceleration alone does not reduce verification burden.

Structured reasoning systems differ in architecture:

- legal propositions are anchored in primary authority before language is rendered;
- outputs are constrained by encoded doctrinal rules; and
- refusal mechanisms prevent unsupported conclusions.

For in-house counsel, this distinction is significant. The objective is not speed alone, but defensibility.

7. Workflow Integration

Embedding structured reasoning within document environments such as Microsoft Word allows interrogation of contracts directly within workflow. The value lies in identifying material risk as a priority while preserving authority grounding, such that substantive issues are not lost in a sea of stylistic changes.



MiAI's Contract Auditor eliminates the tiresome but necessary task of ensuring continuity and logic throughout documents, thus automating a relatively low-value but important task which historically required senior lawyer oversight to ensure typographical errors are reviewed.

8. Conclusion

Harshita's experience illustrates a broader shift.

When structured legal reasoning is embedded into corporate practice, the benefit is not automation for its own sake. It is redistribution of attention toward material risk, sharper escalation discipline, and improved governance clarity.

For in-house counsel, that shift is consequential.

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