



Curriculum Vitae of Melanie Holt

Overview:

I am a Forensic Document Examiner with over 12 years' experience. I am now conducting a private practice from Southern Sydney, NSW. I have previously been employed by Forensic Document Services Pty Ltd, the NSW Police Force and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in a similar capacity. I am a court-recognised expert who has provided evidence in some capacity in over 200 criminal and approximately 150 civil cases.

Qualifications:

I hold a Bachelor of Applied Science (Honours) in Forensic Investigations. I completed my undergraduate degree at the Canberra Institute of Technology and was awarded the Institute Medal for my academic achievements upon graduation. I went on to complete my Honours at Canberra University. Whilst undertaking my Degree and Honours, I directed my studies towards the field of document examination.

In late 2012, I completed all the requirements of the Diploma of Forensic Document Examination from the Canberra Institute of Technology. This course covered all aspects of forensic document examination including:

- Handwriting and signature comparisons;
- The use of the Electrostatic Detection Apparatus (ESDA), an instrument used to detect latent impressions in paper;
- The Video Spectral Comparator (VSC), an instrument used to examine ink and paper using varying light sources and filters;
- Ink, print and writing implement analysis;
- Examination of identity and security documents;
- Print processes and machine generated documents;
- The restoration and construction of documents; and
- Altered and manipulated documents.

In 2012, I received authorisation from the Forensic Services Group, NSW Police Force to provide expert evidence for the following examinations:

- Handwriting and signature comparisons;
- Detection of indentations including the use of the ESDA;
- Tear / physical comparisons;
- VSC comparison involving written and printed materials;
- Identification of print processes and machine generated documents; and
- Detection of obliterations and altered / manipulated documents.

My evidence has been accepted on numerous occasions in all levels of courts i.e., Local, District, Supreme and Coronial courts in NSW. I have also been accepted as an expert by the courts in Victoria and South Australia.

Whilst employed by the NSW Police Force, I provided forensic document evidence in numerous high-profile criminal investigations. Featured cases include the Lindt Café Siege, the murder of Curtis Chang (outside of NSW Police Headquarters (Parramatta)), the Lin and Hunt Family homicides as well as many other homicide, drug and terrorism related cases.

Whilst working on the Open Advice Review remediation program at the CBA, I examined hundreds of signatures and financial advice documents for evidence of manipulation and forgery.

Since opening my private practice, I have undertaken numerous signature and handwriting examinations for civil proceedings. Such cases have included deceased estates (wills), building and business contracts, deeds of debt as well contracts involving the sale of land and property. I have completed work for both court matters and those being presented before tribunals such as NCAT and the Fair Work Commission.

Certifications:

In 2014, I passed all the stringent requirements for certification by the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners, Inc (ABFDE) and have continuously maintained this certification. I was the first international examiner to be awarded the honour of diplomate. Currently, I am the only Australian examiner to hold this certification.

Other Study/Experience:

During 2007-2008, I was employed on a casual basis by Forensic Document Services Pty Ltd where I received training in many aspects of forensic document examination including ESDA, VSC, microscopes as well as handwriting and signature comparison.

Between June 2010 and February 2016, I was attached to the Document Examination Section of the Forensic Services Group, NSW Police Force. It was here that I received the bulk of my training through the completion of case work supporting major crime investigations.

During my time with the NSW Police Force I provided expert opinions in relation to forensic document matters in over 200 cases. I was also regularly requested to provide expert testimony in court. My evidence has been accepted in all level of courts including Magistrates, District, Supreme and Coronial Inquests.

From 2016-2018, I was employed by Commonwealth Bank of Australia on a major remediation program in relation to financial advice. Here I managed a small specialised forensic team. My daily duties consisted of undertaking signature comparisons and determining the reliability of financial advice documents to be used in the assessment of financial advice.

In March 2018 I opened my private forensic document practice, Documents in Dispute.

In March 2020 I began teaching the document examination subjects forming the Diploma of Forensic Document Examination at the Canberra Institute of Technology. I am also a guest lecture at the Macquarie Business School, Macquarie University and the University of Technology Sydney.

I also hold a Bachelor of Commerce (majoring in Marketing and Legal Studies) from the University of Wollongong.

Continuing Education:

I continue my education by regularly attending document specific workshops and conferences.

Conferences attended include:

American Society of Questioned Document Examiners (ASQDE) – 2011, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019

Australian & New Zealand Forensic Science Society – 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014

Australasian Society of Forensic Document Examiners Inc. – 2008 - 2016

Associations:

I am a current member of the NSW Branch of the Australian and New Zealand Forensic Science Society (ANZFSS), a committee member of Australasian Society of Forensic Document Examiners Inc (ASFDE Inc) and a corresponding member of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners (ASQDE). I regularly attend and present at industry conferences, lectures and meetings. I am also a member of the editorial review board for the Journal of American Society of Questioned Document Examiners (JASQDE).

Publications:

I have prepared the following publications:

- Sequencing ESDA Examinations with the recovery of Trace DNA from Questioned Documents – Honours Thesis May 2013
- Effect of DNA Tape Lifting on the ability of the ESDA to recover latent indentations in paper – Journal of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners, June 2014

Awards:

- Best Poster – Document Examination, ANZFSS Symposium Sept 2014 (Adelaide)
- Institute Medal for Forensic Science – Canberra Institute of Technology, May 2009
- Numerous travel scholarships through ANZFSS to attend conferences and symposiums