



**ATTORNEY-GENERAL  
HON ROBERT McCLELLAND MP**

**REMARKS AT THE  
SPECIAL SITTING OF THE  
FEDERAL COURT OF AUSTRALIA  
TO WELCOME  
HON CHIEF JUSTICE PATRICK KEANE**

***CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY***

**BRISBANE**

**MONDAY, 22 MARCH 2010**

May it please the Court.

It is a great privilege to be here today to welcome his Honour Justice Patrick Keane as Chief Justice of the Federal Court of Australia.

The appointment of a Chief Justice is a rare moment in history. Your Honour is only the third Chief Justice to be appointed to this Court.

Last week, I had the honour of addressing a ceremonial sitting of this Court to farewell your predecessor, the Honourable Dr Michael Black AC, and I am pleased to see him here today to wish you well on this auspicious occasion. In my address, I reflected upon the many changes that the Court had implemented during his Honour's tenure.

Your Honour takes on the role of Chief Justice at an exciting time in the Federal Court's development. With the many virtues that your Honour brings to this office, I have absolute confidence that this Court will have strong and effective leadership in the years ahead.

Your Honour is known for your intellectual talent. Born in Brisbane, you were educated at St Joseph's College and later graduated from the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws with First Class Honours. Your Honour exhibited a particular flair for the law at this early stage. Your Honour won the University Medal in Law in 1976. You then studied at Oxford University where you were awarded a Bachelor of Civil Law with First Class Honours.

It is clear that your Honour's love of reading and learning has not diminished. Your service as a member of the Supreme Court Library Committee from 1989 to 2005 and as Chairman of the Supreme Court Library Collections Subcommittee since 2006 is testament to that.

Your knowledge is not limited to the law. I understand that your Honour's recent contribution to a book on prominent champagne houses allowed you to combine your

prodigious knowledge of history with some of your other passions – a love of France, good food, and fine wine.

You have a remarkable capacity to absorb the written word. In fact, one colleague commented that your Honour appears 'to have the entire case content of Lexisnexis in [your] head'.

Your Honour's achievements throughout your career demonstrate your ability to apply that knowledge in a logical and useful way. By combining this talent with your commitment to justice and passion for the law you have achieved much.

Your Honour was admitted as a solicitor to the Supreme Court of Queensland in 1976 and as a Barrister in the following year. Your Honour had a successful private practice at the Bar until 2005, concentrating principally in commercial and constitutional law.

Your colleagues have said that as a Barrister 'You set a standard of professionalism that was impossible to match'. And your high ethical and professional standards made you an outstanding exemplar for the Bar and the legal profession.

Your Honour's great skill as an advocate was recognised when you were appointed Queen's Counsel in 1988 after just 11 years at the Bar. In 1992, you were appointed Solicitor-General for Queensland. In this role, your Honour appeared before the Full Court and High Court in a great many leading cases.

That your Honour was the only Barrister in Australia to be asked to speak at the High Court Centenary Conference in 2003 demonstrates the great esteem in which you were held. In that same year your Honour was awarded the Centenary Medal.

In 2005, your Honour was appointed to the bench of the Court of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Queensland. It goes without saying that you will be deeply missed by that Court – but as the former Chief Justice commented in his farewell address on Friday, you are sure to be welcomed by this Court in your new role.

In recent years your Honour has helped to define the operation of the law through your appellate determinations. Your Honour's judgements, particularly in criminal trials, will leave a permanent impression on this branch of the law.

That expertise will be invaluable to the Federal Court as it develops its new criminal jurisdiction.

Throughout your career you have always given back to the law. You have served as Deputy Chairman of the Queensland Law Reform Commission and you have maintained memberships of both the American Law Institute and the Australian Association of Constitutional Law Inc. You recently took up the role of President of the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration after serving as a member of the Council since 2006.

As Chair of the Projects and Research Committee your Honour has been responsible for significant projects, including the *Bench Book for Children Giving Evidence in Australian Courts* and the *Solutions-Focussed Judging Bench Book*.

I have observed the collegiate culture of the Federal Court. That is a real strength and your Honour will add to that culture.

Your former colleagues of the Supreme Court of Queensland describe your Honour as witty and good humoured. Your warm and considerate manner is welcomed by colleagues and friends. These attributes will serve your Honour well as you communicate your vision for the future to this Court.

I have observed that your Honour has already turned your mind to the future development of the law and of this Court. I'm sure your Honour will find willing partners in the judges of this Court. They have been real innovators in ensuring that the law – even at this high level – is accessible.

I am confident that with the skills and attributes that your Honour brings to the Court, including your intellect, passion for justice and the law and - most importantly - your

vision, you will join your predecessors as a great leader of this Court, and build on its proud history.

On behalf of the Government and the Australian people, I extend to you my warmest congratulations on your appointment as Chief Justice and welcome you to the Bench of the Federal Court of Australia.

May it please the Court.