



**ATTORNEY-GENERAL  
THE HON ROBERT McCLELLAND MP**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**NEW PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Attorney-General Robert McClelland today announced the appointment of the Honourable Justice Catherine Branson as the next President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

“I am looking forward to Justice Branson leading Australia’s national human rights institution,” Mr McClelland said.

Justice Branson is currently a judge of the Federal Court of Australia, a position she has held since 1994.

“As the Rudd Government works to reinvigorate Australia’s human rights agenda, I am confident that Justice Branson will provide a significant contribution,” Mr McClelland said.

“I look forward to working with her to ensure a fair go for all Australians.”

Mr McClelland also acknowledged the exemplary work and leadership of the current President of the Commission, the Hon John von Doussa QC.

Consistent with the Rudd Government’s new approach to statutory appointments the appointment of Justice Branson involved:

- Public advertisements being placed in the national media seeking expressions of interest and nominations;
- Inviting nominations from non-government organisations and professional bodies;
- The establishment of a panel to assesses all candidates against published criteria; and
- Recommendations being made to the Attorney-General on a number of highly suitable candidates.

Justice Branson will commence her appointment as President in October 2008.

A short biography and statement from Justice Branson is attached

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## **Biography - The Honourable Justice Catherine Branson**

Justice Branson has been a judge of the Federal Court since 1994. Since 2000 she has convened the Court's human rights panel that hears and determines complaints of unlawful discrimination under Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws. Prior to her appointment as a judge, Justice Branson practised as a barrister in Adelaide. She was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1992. She has been the Crown Solicitor for South Australia and the CEO of the South Australian Attorney-General's Department. Justice Branson holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Adelaide.

## **Statement - The Honourable Justice Catherine Branson**

I am honoured and delighted to be appointed as the next President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. I am pleased to be following in the footsteps of the Hon John von Doussa QC, the current President, who is a former colleague on the Federal Court who I have long admired and respected. It is a particular pleasure also to be appointed to fill a position that, some statutory changes aside, was once filled by two other great Australian lawyers who generously befriended me when I was a young practitioner. I refer to the late Dame Roma Mitchell and the late Sir Ronald Wilson.

I look forward to working with the Commissioners and staff of the Commission to advance the functions of the Commission including by promoting discussion, understanding and recognition of human rights in Australia

It is a great privilege to have served as a judge of the Federal Court of Australia for more than 14 years. I thank Chief Justice Black and my other colleagues on the Court for their support and friendship during that time.