



New South Wales Bar Association

30 March 2010

Uninformed debate on sentencing must stop

An article in Saturday's *Sydney Morning Herald*, which classified some District Court judges as "punitive" or otherwise, is completely irrelevant and potentially misleading according to the President of the Bar Association, Tom Bathurst QC.

"The article continues a disturbing recent media trend which attempts to stereotype individual judges on the basis of incomplete sentencing data" said Mr Bathurst.

The article, entitled "the Judge defence lawyers try to avoid" singles out Judge Michael Finnane as a "punitive" judge on the basis that a number of his sentences have been reduced on appeal.

"The article does not take into account the total volume of cases heard by His Honour, let alone the complexity and seriousness of each individual case" said Mr Bathurst.

Without any detailed analysis of each case heard by a particular judge, this kind of uninformed speculation conveys a totally false impression of the administration of justice in this State" said Mr Bathurst.

The article takes a handful of individual sentencing cases and attempts to draw broad conclusions based on a small percentage of matters heard by each Judge.

"It is time for this kind of misconceived debate to stop" said Mr Bathurst.

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