



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

STATEMENT

15 December

132/2008

NEW JUSTICE OF THE HIGH COURT

I am pleased to announce that the Government has decided to recommend to Her Excellency the Governor-General the appointment of Justice Virginia Margaret Bell as a Justice of the High Court of Australia, with effect from 3 February 2009.

Justice Bell will be the 48th person, and the fourth woman, appointed to the High Court since Federation. Her Honour's appointment will follow the retirement of the Honourable Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG after 13 years of outstanding service to Australia's highest court.

Justice Bell is currently a Judge of Appeal of the NSW Supreme Court. Beginning her legal career at the Redfern Legal Centre in 1978, Justice Bell practised as a lawyer for over 20 years before being appointed a Judge of the NSW Supreme Court in 1999.

Her Honour's time in practice included service as a Public Defender, as Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission into the NSW Police Service, and as a part-time Commissioner of the NSW Law Reform Commission. Most recently Her Honour has also served as President of the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration.

In accordance with the Government's public commitment to extensive consultation on appointments to the High Court, I again wrote to State and Territory Attorneys-General, the Chief Justice and other Justices of the High Court, the Chief Justices of the Federal Court and the Family Court and the Chief Federal Magistrate, the Chief Justices of the State and Territory Supreme Courts, the Council of Australasian Tribunals, the Law Council of Australia, the Australian Bar Association, State and Territory Bar Associations and Law Societies, Australian Women Lawyers, the National Association of Community Legal Centres, National Legal Aid, and Deans of law schools.

The Government is grateful to all those who put forward suggestions, which greatly assisted the Government's consideration.

A short biography of Justice Bell is attached.

Media Contact: Adam Sims 02 6277 7300 or 0419 480 224.



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Name: Justice Virginia Margaret Bell

Date of birth: 7 March 1951

Qualifications: LLB, University of Sydney, 1976
Admitted as a Solicitor, 1977
Commenced as a Barrister, 1984
Appointed Senior Counsel, 1997

Judicial offices: Judge of Appeal, NSW Supreme Court, 2008-
Judge, NSW Supreme Court, 1999-2007

Other: Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration
President, 2007-2008
Council Member, 2003-2006
University of Wollongong Law Faculty Advisory Committee
Chair, 2007-2008
NSW Law Reform Commission
Part-time Commissioner, 1998-1999
NSW Bar Association, Criminal Law and Equal Opportunity
Committees, 1997-1999
Royal Commission into the NSW Police Service
Counsel Assisting, 1995-1996
Public Defender, 1986-1989
Public Interest Advocacy Centre Steering Committee, 1982-1984
NSW Sexual Assault Committee, 1983
NSW Law Foundation Board of Governors, 1982-1984
Solicitor, Redfern Legal Centre, 1978-1984