

The Hon Justice Robertson Wright

Robertson Wright SC was sworn in as a judge of the Supreme Court on 25 October 2013.

The Hon Justice Robertson Wright grew up in a small semi-rural community in south-east Brisbane. After time at the local school, he attended Brisbane Church of England Grammar School before his family moved to Sydney, where he attended Knox Grammar School from the age of 14. His Honour said:

My first brush with the law occurred soon after we moved to Sydney. At the age of 15 I started gardening for Sir Victor and Lady Windeyer. Lady Windeyer said that I was better at conversation than gardening. I offer no comment. Nonetheless, as I progressed to university, Sir Victor encouraged me to raid his library when I needed legal texts and discussed my essay topics with me. A justice of the High Court, a scholar, a soldier, an historian and a gentleman, he established for me the benchmark against which lawyers should be measured.

His Honour graduated from the University of Sydney in 1978 with a Bachelor of Arts with first class honours in Philosophy and in 1980 with a Bachelor of Laws with first class honours.

At St Paul's College, his undergraduate home, his Honour was described as very bright, focussed, outgoing and entertaining, with an ability to structure an argument with seemingly little effort. He fully engaged in college life as a senior and philosophy tutor, lubricating the Socratic challenge with glasses of port and conviviality. He also began his long service in the Army Reserve, in the University Regiment, which continued with the Royal Green Jackets during his postgraduate studies at Cambridge, and on his return with the Royal NSW Regiment.

Graduating from Cambridge with first class honours and after a brief time at Mallesons Stephen Jaques, his Honour was called to the bar in 1983 and read with former High Court justice the Hon Bill Gummow AC QC on 8 Selborne Chambers. His Honour then enjoyed the camaraderie of 15 years in Ground Floor Chambers and 14 years in 12th Floor Chambers, taking silk in 2001.

His Honour has been a leading practitioner in competition law and consumer protection, including significant work on behalf of ASIC and other regulatory agencies. He has also served as a part-time judicial member in the legal disciplinary and equal opportunity divisions of the former Administrative Decisions Tribunal. He frequently contributed to legal education at the University of Sydney and the College of Law and in professional seminars and publications. He is a qualified and experienced mediator.

Speaking on behalf of the state's solicitors, Mr Gary Ulman, treasurer of the Law Society, said:

Your work colleagues and friends describe you as very personable, modest and generous, and of the utmost integrity; that you are also unrelenting both intellectually and analytically; and very much your own person. These attributes should stand you in good stead for the task ahead.

His Honour has been appointed first president of the newly-established New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, in operation from 1 January 2014, which draws together 400 members of existing tribunals dealing with about 80,000 matters each year. The attorney general for New South Wales, the Hon Greg Smith SC, speaking for the bar, drew attention to descriptions of his Honour as:

an excellent diplomat, with unlimited reserves of patience and a real talent for getting people to see things your way ... endlessly forgiving and optimistic, traits which I am sure will come in handy when you are leading the biggest tribunal in the country through its formative years.

His Honour has a deep knowledge of and passionate interest in history. Wide reading is complemented three-dimensionally by a Roman centurion's helmet and other artefacts that grace chambers.

His Honour paid tribute to the love and strength he drew from his family, the stimulus from many fine educators, true and loyal friendships and the 'enjoyable privilege' of professional colleagues.

His Honour concluded:

For many people in New South Wales, making application to NCAT will be their sole or principal means of obtaining access to justice. As president of NCAT, I see it as my duty to do all I can to ensure that the tribunal's processes are efficient, transparent and proportionate to the subject matters of the claims. The effectiveness of the tribunal will be judged, and rightly so, by the quality, consistency and timeliness of its decisions. ... I hope and pray that I may be given the gifts necessary to carry out my duties.

The Hon Justice Jacqueline Gleeson

Jacqueline Gleeson SC was sworn in as a judge of the Federal Court of Australia on 22 April 2014.

Her Honour is the eldest of four siblings and the daughter of the former chief justice of New South Wales and then of Australia, the Honourable Murray Gleeson AC QC. Nevertheless, as Jane Needham SC who spoke at her Honour's swearing-in reminded, her Honour's success in the law was not to be taken for granted:

Justice Gleeson, it would be easy only to speak about your lineage in the profession of law and the seeming inevitability that your Honour would follow in the footsteps of your esteemed father, the honourable Murray Gleeson, but to do so would overlook the struggle and austerity of your first years as a junior barrister.

It would gloss over the diligence and determination required to reach the pinnacle of the profession, to be judged by your peers as being learned in the law and granted the rank of senior counsel and then to be appointed to the Federal Court of Australia.

Her Honour's mother Robyn stayed at home to raise her children and during her Honour's swearing-in speech, her Honour said: 'My wellbeing and development was my mother's job and she can justly take credit for any success of mine.'

Of her father, her Honour said:

My father and I are the only lawyers in the family. Occasionally my siblings wonder about my admiration of him. His self-discipline is the virtue that I admire most and which I hope most to emulate in my new role.

Her Honour attended high school at Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College where she excelled at debating and public speaking, participated in tennis and swimming and was a member of the school choir and of the school newspaper's editorial committee and was awarded prizes in French, economics and mathematics. In 1983 her Honour was dux of the school. Her Honour attended the University of Sydney where she completed a Bachelor of Arts in 1986 and a Bachelor of Laws in 1989. Her Honour worked as an associate to the Honourable Justice Trevor Morling of the Federal Court and as a solicitor for the firm of Bush Burke & Company before being called to the New South Wales Bar in September 1991.

Her Honour read with Michael Slattery and Stephen Rares (as their honours were then) as well as with Cliff Hoeben and Malcolm Oakes SC. Her Honour appeared as junior counsel in many leading cases, led by eminent then members of the bar including Chief Justice James Allsop and Justice Arthur Emmett. Her Honour purchased a room on 11 Wentworth Chambers and worked with many of the leading barristers on that and other floors. She practised in many fields, including

construction law and professional disciplinary proceedings.

Her Honour had been practising at the bar for nine years when she was briefed to appear for Mr Alan Jones at the Australian Broadcasting Authority's cash for comment inquiry. This appearance led to her Honour being approached with the offer of the role of general counsel at the ABA, which she accepted, allowing her to pursue her interests in public law and broadcasting law. In 2003 her Honour was offered a position as senior executive lawyer for the Australian Government Solicitor in 2003 where she advised and acted for regulatory agencies, including APRA, the Tax Agents Board, the Companies, Auditors and Liquidators Disciplinary Board, the ABA and the Office of Film and Literature Classification.

In 2005 her Honour completed a Master of Laws focusing on administrative, regulatory and trade practices law.

Her Honour returned to the bar in 2007 and eventually bought chambers on 7 Selborne. Her practice included administrative law, competition and consumer law, professional liability and disciplinary proceedings and taxation. Her Honour was briefed in a number of very significant matters, including the Canberra bushfires litigation in the Supreme Court of the ACT and more recently appeared as counsel for the New South Wales Government at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuses. Her Honour took silk in 2012.

Her Honour served as a member of a professional conduct committee and as a member of the Bar Council for four years.

Her Honour noted that she was the fourth member of 7 Selborne to join the Federal Court after Justices Foster, Hely and Jacobson. Her Honour concluded her swearing-in speech with the following words:

I have a profound respect for the rule of law as a bed rock of our society and economy. I look forward to discharging my role as a judge to the best of my ability and hopefully, a little better.

Commonwealth attorney-general, Senator the Hon George Brandis QC, had no doubts about that ability:

You have been described by your colleagues as dedicated to your work, your clients and your briefs and possessing all the qualities of a highly accomplished member of our profession. Your reputation is as one who applies yourself to your work with intelligence and perseverance. Though these skills and attributes will be missed by the bar, they are the qualities which will be most welcome by your new colleagues on the bench. ... You have been, if I may so, a role model in your field and you will continue to be so.

The Hon Justice Peter Hamill

Peter Hamill SC was sworn in as a judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales on 29 April 2014.

His Honour was raised in Jannali in the Sutherland Shire and attended Jannali Boys High School where he was a keen sportsman and debater.

His Honour began his legal career in 1981 as a clerk in the Court of Petty Sessions. He studied part-time and completed the Barristers Admissions Board exams in September 1986. After a short stint working for a small firm of solicitors at Manly, his Honour served as associate to the Hon Justice Mary Gaudron of the High Court. During his swearing-in, his Honour said of that time:

I was fortunate enough in 1988 virtually or effectively to fall into the position as Justice Gaudron's associate and tipstaff. Associates to High Court judges and judges of the Courts of Appeal often tell stories of the judgments that they have written, the judge only needing to proofread the document and un-split the infinitives. I have no such stories to tell. I spent the entire time that I was with Mary Gaudron just attempting to keep up with her.

In 1989, his Honour was called to the bar, reading with James Allsop (now Allsop CJ of the Federal Court) and Michael King.

Later in that year, his Honour became a founding member of Forbes Chambers where he practised until his appointment. During his swearing-in, his Honour said of Forbes Chambers, 'I cannot imagine that there exists a more committed and rigorous group of criminal lawyers anywhere'.

His Honour's early years of practice were marked by appearances in many jury trials, including in Dubbo, Bourke and Broken Hill, becoming the Western Aboriginal Legal Service's counsel of choice. At his swearing-in, his Honour said, 'some of the friends that I made doing that work in Dubbo and Bourke and Broken Hill and Brewarrina remain among the most important people in my life, and I say that the lawyers that act for the various Aboriginal Legal Services around Australia are amongst the finest people that I have met'.

His Honour developed a solid appellate practice, appearing in more than 150 criminal appeals, including in the High Court. His Honour also appeared in a number of high profile inquests

and commissions of inquiry, including for the family of Tasered Brazilian student Roberto Laudisio Curti and as counsel for Keli Lane at the 2006 inquest into the disappearance of her baby daughter.

Philip Boulten SC, who spoke at his Honour's swearing-in, said:

Justice Hamill, your instructing solicitors often found their cases with you to be very intense – usually intensely enjoyable. You were always alarmingly direct with witnesses and opponents and judges. No-one was ever left wondering what you were thinking.

His Honour mentored numerous readers before taking silk in 2004 and has served on the Bar Association's Professional Conduct committees, the Silk Selection Committee and on Bar Council.

His Honour is a fan of the Collingwood AFL team and the Boston Red Sox baseball team. His Honour remarked that he follows major league baseball 'daily with a fervour that some might say is diagnosable' and that the 'Boston Red Sox represent all that is good and wholesome and right, while the New York Yankees are the manifestation of all things evil'. His Honour also collects Aboriginal artworks and early editions of much sought-after James Joyce books, including multiple copies of *Ulysses*. He also took up cycling and has become, what his Honour said he gathered is known as a 'MAMIL' - a middle-aged man in lycra.

On being appointed to the court, his Honour said:

I return to Justice Gaudron, but only to say that, like so many judges before and after her, her career represents the finest example of the benefits of a fiercely independent judiciary to the maintenance of a fair, just and democratic society. I am proud to be joining a court with a reputation for such independence. Particularly in a time of criminal trial and sentencing by way of media frenzy, it is critical that judges act upon principle and are guided by the rule of law rather than by some ill-defined perception of what the public or politicians or media personalities determine to be an appropriate outcome.

Her Honour Judge Dina Yehia SC

Dina Yehia SC was sworn in as a judge of the District Court of New South Wales on 5 May 2014.

Her Honour arrived in Australia in 1970 from Egypt. Her father had been an officer in the Egyptian Army and was at one point held in secret detention in Egypt during a period of political upheaval. During her Honour's swearing-in speech, her Honour said of her parents' decision to come to Australia:

Today is a long way from December 1970 when my parents, my brother and I arrived in Australia having left Egypt and our very large and close-knit extended family. As a child of nearly eight, unable to speak or understand a word of English, I thought my parents quite mad in choosing to leave our country of birth and our family to come to a foreign land. I was frankly bewildered.

...

It was not long, however, before bewilderment and fear were replaced by understanding and appreciation of my parents' single minded determination to give their children a better future than they thought possible, at the time, in Egypt.

My mother was especially instrumental in that move. For her, education was a religion. And she was a devout believer.

Their decision was especially influential in my life. As an Arab woman I was allowed independence of thought and action that would, no doubt, had been more circumscribed had we stayed in Egypt.

Her Honour graduated from the University of New South Wales with a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws in 1989.

While studying at the College of Law her Honour rang the principal solicitor of the Western Aboriginal Legal Service (WALS), Eric Wilson, from a public payphone and asked for a job. Her Honour's application was successful and she spent the next seven years working for WALS and representing Indigenous people across towns including Bourke, Broken Hill, Wilcannia and Brewarrina. The work was gruelling and relentless – a day in court might have involved representing up to 50 people in a list before boarding a midnight coach to the next town to be greeted by the next day's list. Her Honour would take instructions in hotel rooms and the offences might include resisting arrest or offensive language at a time when such offences would certainly result in prison time. Her Honour said that the many people that she met in the Aboriginal communities taught her the lessons of humility, courage and resistance – they took her Honour into their homes with incredible warmth, generosity and good humour.

Her Honour became a solicitor advocate at the Legal Aid

Commission of NSW before coming to the bar in 1999. During her swearing-in, her Honour acknowledged the excellent work of the solicitors of the Aboriginal legal services throughout Australia as well as the solicitors of the Legal Aid Commission of NSW.

In August 1999, her Honour began practice as a barrister. She read with John Stratton SC and Gerard Craddock SC, who had also taught her Honour criminal law at university. For the next 14 years, her Honour worked at the Public Defenders Office. Her Honour's style of advocacy was described as methodical and meticulous – she had an affinity with juries and understood the implications of social and economic exclusion and disadvantage.

Her Honour took silk in 2009 and that same year her Honour appeared in long-running terrorism trials, *R v Baladjam*; *R v Elomar*. In October 2012 her Honour was appointed as a deputy senior public defender.

In 2013, her Honour appeared in *R v Bugmy*. It was the first time since *Neal v The Queen* in 1982 that the High Court considered disadvantage and Aboriginality. The High Court held that the effects of profound childhood deprivation do not diminish over time and should be given full weight when sentencing the offender. Phillip Boulten SC, who spoke at her Honour's swearing-in, said of this case:

R v Bugmy was the case which some say your Honour was 'destined to argue'. The gallery was packed; people lined up to shake your hand. Your advocacy has been described as 'electrifying'.

Her Honour made a sobering remark on the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the prison population during her swearing-in:

Anyone who truly reflects upon the fact that Aboriginal people make up approximately 27 per cent of the prison population, with Aboriginal women representing over 30 per cent and Aboriginal children approximately 50 per cent of those in juvenile detention, must acknowledge that there is a continuing and distressing crisis.

Her Honour worked on the committee organising the annual Public Defenders Conference and has presented papers on various aspects of criminal law, including being invited to speak to representatives of the International Criminal Court in The Hague in 2005. Her Honour has been involved in legal mentoring programs at the University of Sydney and the University of Wollongong and supervised the Public Defenders' Aboriginal Law Graduate Program.

Her Honour Judge Helen Wilson SC

Helen Wilson SC was sworn in as a judge of the District Court of New South Wales on 28 April 2014.

Her Honour studied arts and law at the University of Sydney. During her studies, her Honour volunteered at the Redfern Community Legal Centre during which time the Hon Justice Virginia Bell was principal solicitor.

Her Honour first worked as a solicitor in the Criminal Division at Legal Aid between 1990 and 1992. The next seven years of her Honour's career were spent in the Office of the DPP, where her Honour served as a senior solicitor between 1992 and 1995, then managing lawyer at the Campbelltown branch from 1995 to 1997 before rising to the rank of trial advocate.

Her Honour began practising at the bar in April 1999, initially as an acting Crown prosecutor before attaining a permanent appointment in 2001. In 2005 her Honour moved to the Newcastle Crown Prosecutors Chambers. Throughout her career, her Honour appeared in hundreds of jury trials as Counsel for the Crown. Notably, her Honour prosecuted former MP Milton Orkopoulos, who was jailed in 2008 for child sexual assault and drugs charges. In 2010 her Honour prosecuted former Catholic priest and school teacher John Denham for the sexual abuse of multiple boys.

Her Honour took silk in 2013. In the two years alone prior to her Honour's appointment, she appeared in nearly 40 cases before the Court of Criminal Appeal. Her Honour has also appeared in the High Court and was previously seconded to the public prosecutor's office in Vanuatu.

Her Honour has also written about human rights for judges in China and prepared a prosecution policy for legal staff in Vanuatu.

Other appointments of note

On 10 February 2014 former solicitor Michael O'Brien was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court of NSW and as an industrial magistrate.

On 10 February 2014 former Crown Prosecutor David Williams was sworn in as a Magistrate of the Local Court of NSW and as an industrial magistrate.

Michael McHugh SC, who spoke at her Honour's swearing-in said:

Judge Wilson, your former colleagues, in the ranks of both the Crown prosecutors and the criminal defence lawyers, are effusive in their admiration. You bring to this role a formidable breadth and depth of experience in criminal law – from Illawarra and Campbelltown to Newcastle and from the Local Court to the High Court. You are renowned for being a forceful cross-examiner and a formidable opponent in the courtroom. A common observation was that your Honour rarely needed to read from a statement during cross-examination, such was the extent to which you were across the brief.

McHugh SC concluded:

The New South Wales Bar Association is satisfied that you are eminently well qualified and suited to a place on the bench of the District Court. Furthermore, your appointment is a clear demonstration on the part of the attorney and the chief judge of confidence in the skill and learning of the Newcastle Bar.

Peter Krisenthal and Antony Evers have been appointed as acting public defenders commencing 14 July 2014 and expiring on 13 July 2015.