



**Valedictory ceremony: the Hon Sir Walter Campbell AC QC**  
Banco Court  
Monday, 20 September 2004 at 9.15 a.m.

---

**The Hon Paul de Jersey AC**  
**Chief Justice**

We gather to commemorate the judicial legacy of the Honourable Sir Walter Benjamin Campbell AC QC, who died peacefully on Saturday, 4 September. I at once again express the sympathy of all of the judges to Lady Campbell, to Deborah and David, to Wallace and Heather, and to all other members of the Campbell family. The court is graced by their presence today.

Sir Walter was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court on 13 July 1967, and served with great distinction until 22 July 1985, when he resigned to take up his appointment as Governor of Queensland. He had served as the State's fourteenth Chief Justice from 18 February 1982. His practice at the bar, to which he was admitted in 1948, was flourishing. Both the Commonwealth Law Reports and the Queensland Reports are replete with reports of cases in which he appeared, many of enduring legal significance. It may not generally be known, for example, that in 1963 he appeared in the High Court as counsel for Hendrikus Plomp. Plomp was convicted of the wilful murder of his wife in the Main Beach surf: the case is early confirmation that a conviction may rest wholly on circumstantial evidence. Sir Walter's practice took him many times to the High Court, and he appeared before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Sir Walter commenced practice at the bar following a distinguished term in the Royal Australian Air Force, which he had voluntarily joined. Unsurprisingly perhaps in view of that service, one of his special interests while at the Bar was aviation law. He represented the Fokker Aircraft Company at an inquiry in Melbourne in about 1960 in relation to a crash at Mackay – the first crash of a Fokker aircraft anywhere in the world. Mr Alex Freeleagus tells me that some of the Melbourne counsel at that inquiry were not a little put out at the involvement of counsel from Queensland. The inquiry was headed by Sir John Spicer, who personally congratulated the then Mr W B Campbell on presenting the best case at the inquiry. It was during a later sitting of that inquiry, in Brisbane, that Mr W B



**Valedictory ceremony for the late the Hon Walter Benjamin Campbell AC QC**

Banco Court

Monday, 20 September 2004 at 9.15 a.m.

---

Campbell took silk. He proudly displayed, in his barrister's and later judge's chambers, a large model of a Fokker aircraft bearing the registration number WBCQC. Mr W B Campbell QC subsequently, in about 1963, appeared for the Ansett company at an inquiry concerning a Viscount crash at Winton. This involvement for Ansett led to his appearing on Channel O's, later Channel 10's, Brisbane television licence application. It was during the Viscount inquiry that Mr W B Campbell QC accepted judicial appointment.

Sir Walter's appointment to the Supreme Court, and his subsequent appointment as Chief Justice, were widely applauded. His judicial legacy displays all desirable hallmarks, and in high measure: fine legal scholarship, reassuring balance borne of wide life experience, and strongly efficient application ... But its signal feature, to my mind, derived from his exceptional personality – gregarious, cheerful, tactful, diplomatic. He was enormously influential, largely as a result of his respected involvement in such a broad range of activities, and he exercised that influence beneficially.

Over the days of last week, in the wake of the funeral, many people spoke to me in glowing terms of Sir Walter, and they invariably emphasised the strength of his warm personality – it would light up a room. I imagine that helped endear him to his barrister – clients. It was certainly a persuasive force during his judicial, and gubernatorial phases. Beyond that, in relation to his fellow human beings, it was undoubtedly his indelible print.

Sir Walter was innovative. There is one illustration I raised a few days ago in another medium, but I feel it is worth repeating. Barristers appointed judges in the 1980's were bemused to abandon secretaries' IBM golf balls for carbon-ribbon manual monsters at the Supreme Court. In the 'outside world', electric typewriters had been in vogue since the late 1960's. They arrived at the Supreme Court in 1983 – 1984, thanks to Sir Walter Campbell. It was also his initiative to allocate secretaries to judges, and he secured a court administrator, relieving the Chief Justice of much mundane work. He implemented measures to streamline the allocation of cases, reducing delay and otherwise increasing efficiency. Sir Walter projected the court into the modern era.

He was an extremely busy person, but did not let outside commitments prejudice his judicial role. Those commitments were substantial. I mention his chairing in the 1970's and 1980's the Commonwealth Remuneration Tribunal and as sole member, the Commonwealth Academic Salaries Tribunal. Also significant was his inaugural involvement in the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration,



**Valedictory ceremony for the late the Hon Walter Benjamin Campbell AC QC**

Banco Court

Monday, 20 September 2004 at 9.15 a.m.

---

and establishing a very important educational thrust, the Annual Supreme and Federal Court Judges' Conference. I should also mention his chairing the Queensland Law Reform Commission in a very productive phase for the Commission, from 1969 to 1973.

As my own experience confirms, the support of one's spouse in this endeavour is an inestimable benefit, and in today saluting Sir Walter, we also pay tribute to Lady Campbell's personal contribution.

This is not the occasion to repeat what I was privileged to say in delivering the panegyric at the State funeral accorded our former colleague on Monday, 13 September. We focus rather today on Sir Walter's judicial contribution, and that was of substantial proportion. His judicial service enriched this court, and contributed vastly to the good judicial government of the people of Queensland, who are the grateful beneficiaries of his judicial legacy.

It is our privilege today to honour a great judge and great Chief Justice.