



Valedictory ceremony on the retirement of the  
Hon Justice G N Williams AO  
Banco Court  
Friday, 1 February 2008, 9.15am

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

We join to farewell our former colleague Justice Williams, following his retirement from the Court on 24 January, when he reached the age of 70 years.

I note with pleasure the presence of the Attorney-General, Chief Judge Wolfe and Judges of the District Court, Justices Dowsett and Logan of the Federal Court, Justices Warnick, Barry and Carmody of the Family Court, Deputy Chief Magistrate Hine and his colleagues, Tribunal members, the Acting Director-General Julie Grantham and her Departmental officers including the Crown Solicitor, as many as eight retired Judges of this Court, the Director of Public Prosecutions Mrs Clare and the Public Defender Mr Devereaux, and Mr Morris Law AM, Chief Commissioner, Scouts Australia – Queensland Branch. Two members of the court – Justice Jerrard and Wilson – cannot be here today, and wish to be associated with the remarks I am about to make.

It is certainly a full-house. We've even had to fold over Sir Harry Gibbs's GCMG banner!

Appointed an acting judge on 7 April 1982, Justice Williams was appointed a permanent member of the Court on 3 December 1982. After 18 years distinguished service, he was appointed as a Judge of Appeal on 14 December 2000. His period of judicial service aggregated to just short of 26 years.

It was always a delight to sit with Justice Williams. I invariably drew vast reassurance from his mental acuity – of long-standing, he graduated in law with first class honours; and also from the large injection of common sense which characterized all his judgments. I mention also the measure of his approach: passion played no part, unless it were passion for the



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rule of law and for the institutional integrity of the Court. His legacy is one of unpretentious excellence.

I will not attempt to catalogue Justice Williams' broad array of achievements, beyond mentioning his chairing the Queensland Law Reform Commission for 3 years from 1993, his presidency of the Queensland Industrial Court in 1998 and 1999, his chairing of the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration from 1988 to 1990, and his serving on the Solomon Islands Court of Appeal since 1993. In addition, he chaired the Rules Committee for 8 years from 1999.

Justice Williams led the work of that Committee with great dedication and undoubted competence and insight. He steered it through the initial development of the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules, the progressive streamlining of those Rules, a substantial review of the *Supreme Court Act* 1995, and a range of miscellaneous issues. He came to that role with very well-established credentials, having chaired a committee which over a number of years had reviewed the Supreme Court Rules, the predecessor to the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules. Justice Williams' distinctive contribution to the development of the procedural law in Queensland especially, was immense.

In the year 2006 he was appointed an Officer within the Order of Australia. That acknowledged not only his brilliant contribution to the law, but also his devotion to community interests, particularly his extensive involvement with the Scouting movement. He has for the last 7 years been Chairman of the Branch Executive of the Queensland Scouting Association.

One of the difficulties in delivering remarks concerning a person of this stature, rests in selecting out the matters for mention, for the array of our former colleague's achievements is very extensive, as may be seen from the excellent display outside mounted by the Supreme Court Library. One of our former colleague's accolades is an honorary doctorate awarded by the University of Queensland, an award of considerable significance in



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reflecting that fine institution's acknowledgement of the utter distinction of his contribution to the Queensland and Australian communities.

Mrs Roberta Williams was and remains his apparent mainstay. A great supporter of the Supreme Court in her own right, she was always there as a source of support and inspiration. She was a much-loved and respected member of the Court community. I personally thank Glen and Roberta, as does Kaye, for their tremendous friendship, loyalty and support over very many years. And I do not presume in expressing that sentiment, with massive gratitude, on behalf of all judges of the Court.

Justice Williams has always been substantially associated with the world of sport. Prominently in 2003, he chaired the Australian Cricket Board's anti-doping committee inquiry into Shane Warne. Events of recent days remind us of the exemplary approach then taken by His Honour. The Judge retired within days of the retirement from professional cricket of Mr Adam Gilchrist. I thought the conjunction of their features interesting – that is, I should make clear, the defining features of the Williams/Gilchrist conjunction: optimal qualification, superlative talent, proven national and international success, deep community and peer respect, and ultimately – as human beings, exceptional decency and balance.

I know Justice Williams will not mind my comparing him with a man some years his junior. The comparison serves in that context to demonstrate another of the Judge's defining features: contemporary relevance.

We wish our former colleague and Mrs Williams well as they move into another chapter of their lives together.