

WELCOME AT THE VALEDICTORY

FOR THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE ALAN WILSON

26 MARCH 2015

The Honourable Justice John H Byrne AO RFD¹

Alan Wilson's initial judicial commitment was in 1998 - for three months, as an Acting Judge of the District Court. So began 14 years distinguished service in four courts of the State and the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Among us today to reflect on his many and varied achievements in the administration of justice, to acknowledge his qualities, and to farewell him are Justices Kiefel and Keane of the High Court; other judicial colleagues, past and present, from this Court; the Federal, Family and Federal Circuit Courts; the District, Land, Industrial and Magistrates Courts; QCAT; the Solicitor-General; Presidents of the Bar Association and Law Society; deans of law schools; statutory officers, including the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Public Defender, barristers, solicitors, Registry staff and other officers of the Court and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General; and friends and family of our esteemed colleague. Judicial and court officers, as well as members of the legal profession in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton, are with us through video-link.

All of you are most welcome to join with the Judges of the Trial Division of the Supreme Court as together we celebrate Justice Wilson's exemplary service to the judiciary, the legal profession and the wider community.

¹ Senior Judge Administrator, Supreme Court of Queensland.

On 24 March 2001, Justice Wilson became a judge of the District Court and the Planning and Environment Court.

In July 2003, he was appointed to the Children's Court.

In those three courts, the qualities that have forged his reputation as a fine judge became apparent.

The judge's diligence and learning resulted in carefully reasoned, timely judgments. Those decisions followed hearings where the judge consistently displayed an equable temperament, patience and judicial skills that quickly established his high standing among colleagues and the legal profession.

His calming demeanour, caring outlook, refined, gentle sense of humour and unquestioned integrity made their mark from the beginning.

In the Planning and Environment Court, Justice Wilson revealed other attributes that would serve the community so well.

His work in that jurisdiction was characterised by innovation: changes that proved to be highly effective in reducing delay as well as expense – public and private – in the resolution of litigation.

Justice Wilson championed active case management, mediation by a court officer, and supervised conclaves of experts. These initiatives facilitated early compromise. They also significantly reduced the length of those, relatively few, cases that could not be resolved without judicial determination.

Justice Wilson earned the admiration of those who appeared before him for excellence both in managerial efficiencies and in the quality of his decision-making.

On 22 October 2009, Justice Wilson was appointed to the Supreme Court, assigned to the Trial Division, and became President of QCAT.

QCAT was an amalgamation of more than 20 tribunals of different sizes, jurisdictions, composition and culture.

Achieving an effectively functioning organisation called for sound leadership and administrative strengths.

A large QCAT attendance today – former and serving members, as well as Registry and administrative staff – is a public tribute to Justice Wilson’s successes in making QCAT a vibrant organisation, committed to delivering prompt, inexpensive, efficient resolution of a range of conflicts, large in number and varied in nature.

Justice Wilson made alternative dispute resolution, especially mediation, integral to the Tribunal’s processes.

His vision for QCAT led him to support the professional development of members and staff through needs-based training. He realised that the acquisition and maintenance of pertinent skills and knowledge mattered to the Tribunal’s actual effectiveness, as well as to its standing in the public eye.

He engaged with others collegially, trusted his team and, as one who knew his style well put it, “focused on the essential and simplified the complex”.

The judge worked closely and constructively with Registry and administrative staff, earning their full cooperation and considerable respect as daily he demonstrated his dedication to, and obvious fitness for, his role as President of the Tribunal.

Judge Kingham, a former Deputy President of QCAT, has said that his “singular qualities ensured he sailed through rough waters without getting wet”.

His legacy to QCAT is impressive by any standard.

More recently, after finishing his five year tenure at QCAT, Justice Wilson has served as a judge of the Trial Division, sitting in all its jurisdictions, civil and criminal, and in the Court of Appeal.

The judge’s contributions to the judiciary extend beyond his labours in court business.

As but one example, he is a member of the governing Council of the National Judicial College of Australia. Over the years, he has trained dozens of judges from around the country in the art of management of cases and the crafting of better judgments. His teaching acumen is legendary.

Justice Wilson’s efforts in judicial education will survive his retirement. Already, he is scheduled to train Solomon Islands judges and magistrates.

Justice Wilson, you leave the Supreme Court held in the highest personal and professional regard by your fellow judges.

It has been a delight having you as one of us, and for all the judges and their partners, a great pleasure that your wife, Lyndie, has been, if I may say so, such a charming participant in the Court community.