David Officer QC (1946 – 2007)

David Officer was the son of Forbes Officer QC and Suzanne. Forbes Officer QC was a hard working leader of the New South Wales Bar. He raised his son in Turramurra. He educated him at Knox Grammar School, Sydney University and St Andrew’s College. He set his son a fine example and gave him as good a start as any. One thing is certain, David made the very most of this opportunity.

He commenced his work in the law at Sly and Russell. He then worked in London for some little time.

He came to the Bar in 1972 and read with RV Gyles (as he then was) and took a room on Tenth Floor Selborne Chambers (then not combined with Wentworth). He practised from that floor until October 2006 when his final illness dictated he cease.

He had a practice of great breadth and depth. He was equally at home in the High Court as he was before magistrates, and he did not disdain the Local Court.

He did common law cases. He had a significant practice in the Land and Environment Court. He did many Family Provision Act cases. He was the protective commissioner’s senior counsel of choice. The work of helping unfortunate people in the care of that office was a source of great satisfaction to him.

In recent times he did cases and gave much advice on the Gaming Machines Act and the liquor licensing legislation.

He appeared for the Forestry Commission in the Terania Creek Enquiry which went for years. He appeared in the Seaview Inquiry into the fatal crash of an aircraft on the way to Lord Howe Island. The Hyland Estate litigation lasted for ten years. David appeared for the testator’s illegitimate son on legal aid. He appeared in the Wentworth v Rogers litigation.

He was a member of the Legal Services Division of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal. No member of the profession could have had a fairer judge than him. He also determined the correctness of the local government behaviour of elected councillors.

He had a powerful intellect which he used to its optimum. He was, disconcertingly to some people, forthright in his honesty. He was an economical advocate. No judge was troubled by repetition from him. No ‘loose’ witness or submission missed his withering attack. He had great judgement, yet, like his father he did not wish for judicial appointment.

He not only did his job with consummate skill but in the process earned the enduring
Justice Terry Connolly (1958-2007)

On the 25th September 2007 my dear friend Terry ‘Tezza’ Connolly died from sudden cardiac arrest while cycling on Red Hill in Canberra. Next Valentine’s Day would have been his 50th birthday. ‘Tezza’ was Mr Justice Terry Connolly of the Supreme Court of the ACT.

Although we had little recent contact, Terry was a faithful friend. He was a man of great integrity, reliable, highly intelligent and generous. Our friendship commenced 30 years ago at the University of Adelaide Law School.

Terry grew up in Adelaide. His father, Pat, who passed away in 1990, was a bricklayer and ebullient grass-roots Labor Party campaigner. Terry matriculated at Woodville High School, he obtained a very high score in the competitive state exams and decided to pursue a career in the law. At Law School Terry achieved early prominence winning best orator in the Jessup International Law Moot held in Washington DC. He was president of the Australia and New Zealand Law Students Association. In 1979 Terry also became national president of Young Labor. Two years later he graduated with honours in Law and Arts. In 1982 he was admitted as a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of South Australia. He achieved further academic cachet obtaining a masters degree in public law from the Australian National University.

His first job was associate to Mr Justice John Gallop, a first class criminal trial judge and cricket aficionado. His honour was then a judge of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory. Terry eventually moved on to work in the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department in Canberra. It was in Canberra that he met and subsequently married Helen Watchirs. She is now Dr Watchirs, the highly regarded Human Rights and Discrimination Commissioner for the ACT. Helen and Terry became parents of two delightful daughters, Lara and Maddy.

Terry embraced ACT politics becoming Attorney-General. He also held portfolios of health, community services, housing and urban services. He was admired and respected by his political opponents. He had that special quality of being able to negotiate diametrically opposed views of political life. In 1995 he introduced a Human Rights Bill in the Australian Capital Territory Assembly which was eventually instrumental to the enactment of the ACT Human Rights Act in 2004.

At the age of 38 he was appointed master of the Supreme Court of the ACT and then, at 45, a justice of the court. There were some devoid of perspicacity who thought his appointment to the Supreme Court unorthodox as Terry had never been in private practise. However, his formidable intellect enabled him to grow rapidly in the job and become a pre-eminent judicial officer much admired by his brother judges and the ACT Bar. He was never tardy with judicial pronouncements mindful always that justice delayed for litigants in hot contest before him was justice denied.

Terry loved good food, wine, stimulating social intercourse and the role of paterfamilias. Episodically we spent many armchair hours solving the world’s problems, assisted by more than enough bottles of claret. Terry also loved animals, especially cats. I fondly recall an amusing occasion concerning an automatic cat feeder he purchased in a pet shop. This device was called ‘Step and Dine’. Essentially a large plastic cylindrical dry food reservoir, it worked by the cat sitting on a

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