

# 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.