

The Hon Justice Peter Hamill

Peter Hamill SC was sworn in as a judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales on 29 April 2014.

His Honour was raised in Jannali in the Sutherland Shire and attended Jannali Boys High School where he was a keen sportsman and debater.

His Honour began his legal career in 1981 as a clerk in the Court of Petty Sessions. He studied part-time and completed the Barristers Admissions Board exams in September 1986. After a short stint working for a small firm of solicitors at Manly, his Honour served as associate to the Hon Justice Mary Gaudron of the High Court. During his swearing-in, his Honour said of that time:

I was fortunate enough in 1988 virtually or effectively to fall into the position as Justice Gaudron's associate and tipstaff. Associates to High Court judges and judges of the Courts of Appeal often tell stories of the judgments that they have written, the judge only needing to proofread the document and un-split the infinitives. I have no such stories to tell. I spent the entire time that I was with Mary Gaudron just attempting to keep up with her.

In 1989, his Honour was called to the bar, reading with James Allsop (now Allsop CJ of the Federal Court) and Michael King.

Later in that year, his Honour became a founding member of Forbes Chambers where he practised until his appointment. During his swearing-in, his Honour said of Forbes Chambers, 'I cannot imagine that there exists a more committed and rigorous group of criminal lawyers anywhere'.

His Honour's early years of practice were marked by appearances in many jury trials, including in Dubbo, Bourke and Broken Hill, becoming the Western Aboriginal Legal Service's counsel of choice. At his swearing-in, his Honour said, 'some of the friends that I made doing that work in Dubbo and Bourke and Broken Hill and Brewarrina remain among the most important people in my life, and I say that the lawyers that act for the various Aboriginal Legal Services around Australia are amongst the finest people that I have met'.

His Honour developed a solid appellate practice, appearing in more than 150 criminal appeals, including in the High Court. His Honour also appeared in a number of high profile inquests

and commissions of inquiry, including for the family of Tasered Brazilian student Roberto Laudisio Curti and as counsel for Keli Lane at the 2006 inquest into the disappearance of her baby daughter.

Philip Boulten SC, who spoke at his Honour's swearing-in, said:

Justice Hamill, your instructing solicitors often found their cases with you to be very intense – usually intensely enjoyable. You were always alarmingly direct with witnesses and opponents and judges. No-one was ever left wondering what you were thinking.

His Honour mentored numerous readers before taking silk in 2004 and has served on the Bar Association's Professional Conduct committees, the Silk Selection Committee and on Bar Council.

His Honour is a fan of the Collingwood AFL team and the Boston Red Sox baseball team. His Honour remarked that he follows major league baseball 'daily with a fervour that some might say is diagnosable' and that the 'Boston Red Sox represent all that is good and wholesome and right, while the New York Yankees are the manifestation of all things evil'. His Honour also collects Aboriginal artworks and early editions of much sought-after James Joyce books, including multiple copies of *Ulysses*. He also took up cycling and has become, what his Honour said he gathered is known as a 'MAMIL' - a middle-aged man in lycra.

On being appointed to the court, his Honour said:

I return to Justice Gaudron, but only to say that, like so many judges before and after her, her career represents the finest example of the benefits of a fiercely independent judiciary to the maintenance of a fair, just and democratic society. I am proud to be joining a court with a reputation for such independence. Particularly in a time of criminal trial and sentencing by way of media frenzy, it is critical that judges act upon principle and are guided by the rule of law rather than by some ill-defined perception of what the public or politicians or media personalities determine to be an appropriate outcome.