

### The Hon Justice Helen Wilson

The Hon Justice Helen Wilson was sworn-in as a judge of the Supreme Court on 3 November 2014. President Jane Needham SC spoke on behalf of the New South Wales Bar.



As a young law student at the University of Sydney, Justice Wilson volunteered to work at the Redfern Community Legal Centre, where she answered phones, helped solicitors with legal research and took instructions from clients needing assistance. At that time Virginia Bell was principal solicitor, and her colleagues at that time included Simon Rice and Andrew Haesler, now Judge Haesler of the District Court.

Her Honour was admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in December 1989. Her first role was as a solicitor in the Criminal Division at Legal Aid, between 1990 and 1992. The next seven years of her Honour's career were spent in the Office of the DPP, where she served as a senior solicitor between 1992 and 1995; then managing lawyer at the Campbelltown branch from 1995 to 1997 before rising to the rank of trial advocate.

Her Honour began practising at the bar in April 1999, initially as an acting Crown prosecutor before attaining a permanent appointment in 2001. In 2005 she moved to the Newcastle Crown Prosecutors Chambers and from there her career progressed from strength to strength. She prosecuted a number of child sexual assault cases, some quite high profile, including the trial of Milton Orkopoulos in 2008.

Her Honour took silk in 2013 and in the ensuing months she appeared in a succession of cases in the Court of Criminal Appeal. In the two years prior to her appointment to the District Court she appeared in nearly 40 appeals before the CCA.

As recently as April 2014 her Honour was sworn-in as a judge of the District Court. Speaking on behalf of the New South Wales Bar, President Jane Needham SC noted the rapid elevation from one court to another:

Justice Wilson, your spell on the District Court bench was all too brief. One wag said to me: 'We did but see her passing by'. Yet I'm told that your Honour made an immediate impression on those at the bar table: that from day one you presided with an air of authority and composure. One example relayed to me was your decision to hand down a non-custodial sentence in a recent matter concerning an Australian soldier suffering from PTSD. By all accounts, your weighing of the service record of the accused and the likelihood of treatment and rehabilitation produced a just and fair outcome.

Justice Wilson joined ten other female judges on the Supreme Court Bench, which Needham SC observed 'rounds out a Women's First XI on this bench'. The president of the Bar Association continued:

It's safe to presume that all judicial appointees in this state are learned in the law and have a wealth of experience in private practice. The people of this state are fortunate that chief justices and attorneys-general, past and present, have a deep pool of talent from which they can draw when the need arises.

Naturally, the bar welcomes today's appointment of a former Crown prosecutor with a formidable breadth and depth of experience in criminal law and a reputation for being a daunting cross-examiner. But of equal assurance to the community, and to the legal profession in particular, are the various qualities collectively known as 'judicial temperament', encompassing a strong ethos of public service and common sense, not to mention courage.

Speaking in reply, Justice Wilson thanked her many well-wishers.

As a regional lawyer and more recently, a regional judge, I generally assume that no one knows who I am - and many do not of course - but even those who do not know me have been, from this bench, kind and generous in their welcome and offers of assistance, gratefully received from all civil judges and, from the profession, who have been warmly positive about my appointment. It has made me feel both very grateful and very humble.

## District Court appointments

### Her Honour Judge Julia Baly SC

Judge Julia Baly SC was sworn-in as judge of the District Court on 1 September 2014.

Her Honour's career has encompassed prosecution and defence, as well as domestic and international criminal law. She graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Arts in 1985 and Bachelor of Laws in 1987. She was admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in December 1987. During her legal studies she worked as a research officer at BOCSAR, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. In 1988 she worked as a solicitor at the Grafton office of the Aboriginal Legal Service, and instructed counsel in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

In May 1989 her Honour moved to the Office of the DPP in Sydney, where she prepared District Court matters. In November of that year she commenced work at the Newcastle office, appearing in short matters. In November 1990 she was appointed as a senior solicitor there, instructing Crown prosecutors in District and Supreme Court trials and appearing on behalf of the Crown in short matters.

Her Honour began practising at the bar in August 1995. She read with Peter Harper in Church Street Chambers, Newcastle and did her criminal reading with Liz Fullerton in Sydney. For a while she remained at the Newcastle Bar, before taking a room in Forbes Chambers. She appeared in complex and

serious criminal trials in the District and Supreme courts, as well as Court of Criminal Appeal and High Court cases.

In 1999 her Honour took leave from the bar to serve as a trial attorney at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. As part of her work with the tribunal she was assigned to a number of cases, the most notable being in connection with frequent, horrendous violations of human rights at a camp in the town of Prejidor, where ethnic cleansing and rape were used as weapons of war.

In 2002 her Honour returned to Australia, whereupon she was appointed as a crown prosecutor. In 2005 her Honour returned to Europe when she was appointed as an international prosecutor to the Special Department for War Crimes in the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo.

In 2008 her Honour worked as an attorney for the Office of the Prosecutor, as co-counsel to prosecutor Brenda Hollis, at The Special Court for Sierra Leone, where former president Charles Taylor was tried for sponsoring atrocities in that country's bloody civil war. When not prosecuting war criminals her Honour was a deputy senior Crown prosecutor in country NSW, based in Lismore and handling the full range of criminal matters. Her Honour took silk in 2013.

### Her Honour Judge Jane Culver

Judge Jane Culver was sworn-in as a District Court judge on 29 October 2014. Her Honour graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of New South Wales in 1989, and she was admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court in December of that same year. For two years she was employed as a solicitor at Mallesons Stephen Jaques and in 1991, when she accepted a position at the New South Wales Crime Commission. In 1996 she moved to the Office of the DPP and became a trial advocate. Her Honour was called to the bar in 2002 whereupon she practised as a Crown

prosecutor. In August 2004 her Honour was appointed as a magistrate of the Local Court, and subsequently as a children's magistrate and coroner. Six years later she was elevated to the position of deputy chief magistrate. One of her Honour's key responsibilities in that role was continuing education and there is widespread praise for the work she did, such as in the deployment of information technology in the Local Court, including iPads for magistrates.

### Deputy Chief Magistrate Chris O'Brien

Magistrate Christopher O'Brien was sworn-in as a deputy chief magistrate on Monday, 3 November 2014. As a solicitor, his Honour served with distinction on the Law Society's Criminal Law Committee for many years. His Honour was appointed as a magistrate of the Local Court in February 2007. Since then, he has sat in most local courts in the outer

Sydney metropolitan area, such as Liverpool, Camden and Campbelltown as well as in the Parramatta Children's Court. In April last year he was appointed coordinating civil magistrate in the Downing Centre.